



# Experience Ultimate Trans-Sib

## Along the way

St Peterburg  
 Moscow  
 Ekaterinburg  
 Barnaul  
 Novosibirsk

Altai  
 Irkutsk  
 Ulan-Uday  
 Ulaanbaatar  
 Beijing

## Leaving from St. Petersburg to Beijing

Just when you thought our trip names couldn't run out of superlatives! "Suppose we made a trip with everything... no, really, with everything?!" we said one rainy November evening about five years ago. "Wouldn't it be a bit, well, long?" Apparently it wasn't – what we thought would be the "Cinderella" of our trips has become one of our most popular, and no wonder – it really has everything in it (well, except Inner Mongolia – but ask us if you want to add it). The highlight, for us, is the Altai Mountains – Neil's own favourite Siberian destination.



## What's included

### FULL ON

#### Train

- > 4-berth rail for complete journey (pre-assigned berths)
- > option to upgrade to 2-berth

#### St. Petersburg

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > 3 hour personalised walking tour with local expert

#### Moscow

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > 3 hour personalised walking tour with local expert
- > transfer to the station on departure

#### Ekaterinburg

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > day trip option
- > transfer to the station on departure

#### Altai

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights home-stay Chermal Village all meals
- > 2 nights camping, equipment provided all meals
- > 1 night home-stay Novosibirsk breakfast supper
- > excursions
- > 2 days rafting Katun River
- > walking tour of Novosibirsk with local expert
- > transfer to the station on departure

#### Irkutsk

- Choice of programmes either Siberian Village or Adventure Trek
- Siberian Village**
- > all transportation
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel Listvyanka Village, breakfast
- > excursion option
- Adventure Trek**
- > all transportation
- > 2 nights Camping, equipment provided, all meals

#### Ulan-Uday

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights home-stay, all meals
- > excursions

#### Ulaanbaatar

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights with Nomads in traditional Mongolian Gers, all meals
- > 2 nights Elstei Ger Lodge (tourist lodge), all meals
- > excursions
- > 1 night 4★ hotel, breakfast
- > City tour of Ulaanbaatar

## In the know...

Lake Baikal is the world's largest, and has more statistics than any other lake.

Russia's legendarily famous novelist, Dostoyevsky, was picked up by the Tsarist Secret Police and condemned to death as a traitor. His execution by firing squad went as far as the order "take aim!" before a reprieve was announced. They chose a Duty Officer who stammered and couldn't say "f-f-f-fire!" for added amusement.

Despite what Fox Motion Pictures might tell you (in "Anastasia") the real-life Anastasia didn't escape the order for the Royal Family to be killed. The final missing bodies were located and DNA-verified in September 2007.



## No ordinary trip

At The Russia Experience we like to ditch the clichés, discard the puff and concentrate on what we do best – bringing to life the world's longest train route: the places visited, the encounters made and the realisation of a journey that is both engaging and rewarding.

We continually look at ways of enhancing the Trans Siberian experience, incorporating seasonal considerations (such as the Harbin Ice Festival), providing the historical context (pay a visit to the only remaining Soviet Gulag) or inviting you to savour the diverse cultural influences of indigenous people (sit down with a shaman, or enjoy the Siberian art of throat singing!).

We have no group departures, our advertised dates always operate (barring anything completely out of our control) and, above all, we will tell you it like it is – allowing you to make the right choice from a portfolio of journeys rich in variety and full of memorable experiences. Sorry! We couldn't resist at least one cliché!



## Visa Requirements

Visitors to Russia, Mongolia and China require visas. These must be obtained prior to departure. Visa processing times for these countries can be up to;

Russia	25 Working Days
Mongolia	10 Working Days
China	10 Working Days

However fast track processing is possible.

Due to the support documents required by the Embassy of Russia (which we obtain), you will need to book your trip before starting to obtain visas.

For full information regarding visas, please refer to our web site.

## Hints and Tips

**TOP TIP!** – You must be able to swim proficiently to take this trip due to the rafting content.

Photocopy your passport including the visas issued pages, airline tickets and insurance policies.

Your passport must be valid for at least six months past the end of your travel dates.

## Travellers Checklist

Day pack, back pack, money belt, first aid kit, heat proof mug, instant coffee, tea bags, sun hat, rafting equipment, mosquito repellent, lightweight jacket, flip flops, swim wear, sun cream, warm jacket (Sep-Apr departures), ski clothing (for those participating), warm waterproof walking boots, photographs of home to show the Nomads, Mongolian children love bubbles!, universal sink plug, bottle opener.

## Climate and time – Minimum/maximum Temperatures °C

	May/Jun	Jul/Aug	Sep/Oct
St. Petersburg/Moscow/Ekaterinburg	+15/+22	+15/+30	+8/+24
Altai/Irkutsk	+8/+22	+26/+38	+10/+24
Ulan-Uday/Ulaanbaatar	+15/+24	+26/+42	+10/+25
Beijing	+15/+22	+24/+30	+8/+22

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full on itinerary – 29 days

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## DAY 01

“S Priezdom! Welcome to St. Petersburg!” Our driver will be there to meet you from whichever flight, train or boat you arrive. You’ll then be transferred to your hotel. At check-in, (after 2pm) the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration. This process takes 1–2 hours. Your complimentary InfoPack is full of ideas for getting the most out of your free time. (Please note your train tickets to Moscow will be delivered to the hotel during your two night stay.)

No meals

## DAY 02

After breakfast one of our local expert staff will meet you at the hotel to take you on a three hour walking tour round the highlights – you’ll use public transport around the centre to avoid the traffic jams and get the hang of the system for when you come to use it independently. Our staffers are full of ideas for this walk but are flexible about other ideas if you have your own. Your walk ends in the city centre around lunchtime. If you haven’t pre-booked any of our range of city excursions the rest of the day is your own to explore further.

Breakfast

## DAY 03

You’ll need to check out of your room by 12 noon today but the hotel offers a Left Luggage service for a small fee. Your day is free until your evening departure to Moscow. Reception can book you a taxi to the station. Some of our top suggestions (please check opening times/days before setting off) The Hermitage Collection – Winter Palace. The canals and waterways of the “Northern Venice”. The Russian Museum of Fine Art. The Peter & Paul Fortress-and the Tombs of the Tsars inside the Fortress Cathedral. The Church on the Spilt Blood, nearby the Souvenir Bazaar.

Breakfast

## DAY 04

Early morning arrival in Moscow. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. You’ll then be transferred to the Irbis 3★ Hotel. The facilities available at this hotel include a Restaurant, Lobby Bar, Lobby Wi-Fi access, Luggage Room, Safety deposit boxes and an ATM machine. At check-in, (after 2pm) the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration. This process takes 1–2 hours. Your complimentary InfoPack is full of ideas for getting the most out of your free time. (Please note your Trans-Siberian train tickets will be delivered to the hotel during your two night stay.)

No meals

## DAY 05

After breakfast one of our local expert staff will meet you at the hotel to take you on a three hour walking tour round the highlights – you’ll use public transport around the centre to avoid the traffic jams and get the hang of the system for when you come to use it independently. Our staffers are full of ideas for this walk but are flexible about other ideas if you have your own. Your walk ends in the city centre around lunchtime. If you haven’t pre-booked any of our range of city excursions the rest of the day is your own to explore further. Some of our top suggestions (please check opening times/days before setting off) would include visiting the Moscow Kremlin, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum, or a boat trip along the Mosvka River... perhaps locate some tickets for ballet, opera, circus or a concert this evening? As well as famous classical music traditions Moscow features on the touring schedules of world names in jazz, rock, pop and world music.

Breakfast

## DAY 06

You’ll need to check out of your room by 12 noon today but the hotel offers a Left Luggage service for a small fee. Your day is free until 2pm when a driver is scheduled to take you to the station. This morning you can continue sightseeing – the Lenin Mausoleum is only open in the mornings, and getting there early (it’s in Red Square) helps beat the queues. Although there’s a restaurant car service on board your train you may want to supplement this with some snacks, treats, and fresh fruit that you could buy today. Your transfer from the hotel to Yaroslavsky station is scheduled for 2pm, so please be at the hotel reception where your driver will meet you and will assist your boarding of the Ekaterinburg bound train.

Breakfast

## DAY 07

Your first full day on board the Trans-Sib... travelling through the Ural Mountains. There will be plenty of time to meet fellow travellers and hang out in the dining car which serves a variety of drinks, snacks and meals at reasonable prices. Evening arrive in Ekaterinburg where our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer to Hotel Suite which is centrally located.

No meals

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## DAY 08

Please make a choice of one of the day trip options. It's included in the trip price!

Geographical note: Ekaterinburg has borders on both the Western and Eastern sides of town... to the West is the official border between Europe & Asia, and to the East of Ekaterinburg is where Siberia officially begins. The Siberian border was more than symbolic in the C19th – it delineated an area where a more rough and ready system of justice operated, where escaped serfs who had run away from their masters could legally claim sanctuary. For oppressed religious minorities, escaped serfs and others, the one-way trip to Siberia was, ironically, the "highway of hope".

Breakfast, Lunch

- A. **ROMANOV GRAVES** (Europe/Asia Border Monument en-route). Car excursion to site where the Romanov bodies were hidden. Duration; 5-6 hours. No physical exertion involved. Light lunch provided. Year round.
- B. **SIBERIAN COUNTRYSIDE & HISTORIC VILLAGE** Visit to an old village (145 km each way) now under a Preservation Order. Includes home-cooked lunch, exhibitions of local craft, horse cart riding. Duration; 8-9 hours. No physical exertion involved. Year round.
- C. **HIKING TRIP IN THE URALS** Outdoor adventure in an area which is a designated nature park. Car transfer, then 18km walk where you will see a variety of flora and fauna and learn about the indigenous species of wildlife. No special equipment needed. Duration; 8 hours. Lunch provided. 15 June –15 September. Weather permitting.
- D. **SIBERIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE** Combined soft raft (6km) and Forest Hike (12km) – optional cave visit. Good fitness required. Duration; 9-10 hours. Lunch provided. 15 June –15 September. Weather permitting.
- E. **MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE URALS** Trip to start West of the city. After a short drive you start your bike trip on a professional bike for 2-3 hrs. Lunch. Duration; 5 hrs. 15 May-30 Sep. Weather permitting.

## DAY 08

Check out of your room around midnight. Transfer to the station.

## DAY 09

The Barnaul bound train makes a scheduled departure at 3am when hopefully you will be able to settle down and sleep. When you wake up it's still day nine this journey takes 27 hours!

No meals

## DAY 10

Early morning arrival in Barnaul. – the closest major transport hub to the Altai Region. Your guide will be waiting for you at the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. You and your guide will take the intercity bus service (6 hrs) to Chermal Village in the heart of the Altai Mountains. Arrive at the village where lunch will be waiting. This afternoon you will go on a guided walk during which you will learn about the local Altaic people. Time to relax this evening and maybe take a sauna before your traditional home cooked supper.

Lunch & Supper

## DAY 11

Today our local expert guide will share his knowledge of little-known locations where cave paintings can still be made out the signs of ancient civilizations in this area. After a picnic lunch there will be an opportunity (small local cash payment) to ride Altai Mountain Horses – and also learn more about the ancient Chuisky Tract – the route of Genghis Khan's messengers. This evening is a chance to separate what luggage you will need to take with you for the rafting and camping trip – the rest you can leave safely behind in store.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 12

Transfer to rafting launch point. There will be a full safety briefing with your instructor and guide. Then set off for some white water rafting on the Katun River. After a picnic lunch at the riverside you will continue along the Katun River. Then set up camp, followed by supper around the fire. You must be able to swim proficiently to participate in this trip.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 13

Today you will continue rafting along the Katun River, including some softish rapids. Then set up camp, followed by supper around the fire.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 14

After an early breakfast you will set off for Barnaul by road. This journey takes approximately 4 hours. There will be stops along the way allowing you to purchase lunch and refreshments. From Barnaul the journey to Novosibirsk will be made by public bus. (a small local payment is required to cover your luggage fee.) Evening arrival at your home-stay supper with your host(s).

Breakfast, Supper

## DAY 15

After breakfast your guide will meet you at your home-stay to escort you on a guided sightseeing walk of Novosibirsk. Tour ends around lunch time giving you a great opportunity to stock up on supplies for your journey to Irkutsk (although a restaurant car is operated on this service). Evening transfer to station where you will board the Irkutsk bound train.

Breakfast

## DAY 16

On board... The Trans-Sib... travelling eastwards towards Irkutsk. The dining car is the heart of the train. It is a great place to meet fellow travellers and locals alike sharing your experiences of your journey so far with a few drinks which no doubt will include some Vodka or Russian Champagne – and maybe smoked salmon and caviar too!

No meals

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## DAY 17–19 YOU CHOOSE

**Baikal programmes.** Here we give you the option to make a choice of either Siberian Village which is staying in Listvyanka Village on the shores of Lake Baikal OR Adventure Trek, which is available for two or more passengers travelling together, for arrivals between 1st June until 1st September. The Adventure Trek is a camping expedition and requires a good level of fitness. You are required to help the guide carry the equipment provided.

## SIBERIAN VILLAGE (Option 1)

### DAY 17

Early morning arrival in Irkutsk. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform, holding a meeting-board marked with your name. Transfer to “U Ozera Hotel” (the name translates as “At the Lake Hotel”, although it is not directly at the lake shore) situated in Listvyanka Village (70km) travelling by road through the forest. The facilities available at this hotel include; cafe-bar, Russian “banya” (sauna), safe at the reception. The nearest ATM-machine in the Baikal Hotel (Listvyanka remains a village, and doesn’t have the range of banking services you could expect in a city). The official check-in time is 12 noon, the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration formalities. However if your room is available this will - of course - be allocated to you on arrival. (If your room is not available you will be able to leave your luggage with the hotel reception). You will have a chance to have breakfast before setting off on your walking tour around Listvyanka Village. This will include a visit to the Limnological Museum (this is an exhibition about the Lake, its formation, wildlife etc - it includes multimedia presentations, information about the creatures which live in the darkest depths, and also an aquarium with living aquatic species, including the unique freshwater Baikal seals) and also a small wooden village Russian Orthodox Church dating back to the C18th. You return to your hotel at the end of the walk, with time to relax and enjoy your lakeside surroundings, maybe experience real Siberian “banya” (sauna). (small payment locally at the hotel).

Breakfast

### DAY 18

Choose one activity from the list, it’s all included in the trip price! You’ll need to inform us of your choice before commencing your journey, so that we can have the right staff on hand for when you arrive (please note the Siberian weather puts seasonal limits on some activities – details below). Want to extend your life? Local legend claims that you can get anything from five extra years of life (paddling up to your knees) up to twenty years if you manage to go swimming!

- A. **SIBERIAN TREK** through the Taiga Forest with a local guide who will explain the wildlife, eco system and lore of the Taiga. (May-Oct)
- B. **CIRCUM BAIKAL PICNIC**

Take the Ferry from Listvyanka to Port Baikal which takes around 15 minutes. Walk around Port Baikal, where you will see the train station of the old Circumbaikal rail line. Then you will walk along the rail line to the nearest tunnel (2-3 km). Stopping for a picnic lunch on the shore of Lake Baikal. Return to Port Baikal, ferry back to Listvyanka. (Jun-Sep)

- C. **SNOW MOBILE TRIP** with a local guide through the forest, or even out over the deep frozen lake! Two hours (Dec-Apr)
- D. **DOG SLEDDING** trip for a distance of 10 km. 1 dog sled for each client. (Dec-Mar)
- E. **DO YOUR OWN THING** maybe take off on a cliff side walk, or mosey around the village, or take a dip in Lake Baikal! (Weather permitting!) Balance of day free time to explore the village at your own pace.

Maybe try a local bar?

Breakfast

## DAY 19

After breakfast transfer back to Irkutsk city. You will have the option to leave your bags at our local office. You will be given a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit. We suggest you take this opportunity to purchase refreshments for the next leg of your journey, as often this service has no dining car. This evening transfer to the station where you will board the Ulan-Uday bound train.

Breakfast

## ADVENTURE TREK (Option 2)

### DAY 17

Early morning arrival in Irkutsk. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer to your hotel where you will have the opportunity to have a shower and enjoy breakfast before preparing for your trek. (Leaving your heavy baggage in Irkutsk). After lunch you will depart by hydrofoil (2 hrs) to Bolshie Koty. On arrival there will be a trek of 9km before setting up camp in Sennaya Bay.

Breakfast, Supper

### DAY 18

Trekking along the Baikal shore (25 km). Picnic lunch along the way. Set up camp at Semenikha Bay.

Breakfast, Lunch & Supper

These dossiers are designed to provide you with a guide to our trips, the places visited, accommodation used and to give you a flavour of your daily itinerary. You will be travelling in parts of the world where the unanticipated and the unusual are all part of the experience and, as a result, the unexpected can happen and we may on occasions need to vary your plans. These dossiers do not form part of any contract.

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## DAY 19

Trekking to Goloustnoe Village (9 km). Return to Irkutsk by public bus. Where you will have the option to leave your bags at our local office. You will be given a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit. We suggest you take this opportunity to purchase refreshments for the next leg of your journey, as often this service has no dining car. Evening transfer to the station where you will board the Ulan-Uday bound train.

**Breakfast**

## DAY 20

Arrival early morning in Ulan-Uday. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer to your host(s). After breakfast a guided trip to Atsagatsky Buddhist Lamasery, and the strange history of its Abbot Dorjiev and his role in the life of Russia's last Tsar. After the monastery, try the cuisine of Buryatia for lunch with a village family. Return to host(s) for traditional supper. If you rate comfort over authenticity hotel upgrades are available.

**Breakfast, Lunch, Supper**

## DAY 21

Visit to the Ivolginsky Datsan. Excursion to Tarbagatay, a village with traditional brightly painted house, home to the "Old Believers", whose simple life of hard work and avoidance of luxuries have led some to call them "Russia's Amish" – they claim to be the true branch of Russian Orthodox Christianity, and refused to accept religious reforms of the C17th.. when they fled to Siberia to escape the persecution that followed.

**Breakfast, Lunch, Supper**

## DAY 22

Early morning transfer to the station where you will board the Ulaanbaatar bound train. At midnight you will make the border crossing into Mongolia with the usual halt for formalities.

**Breakfast**

## DAY 23

Early morning arrival in Ulaanbaatar. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer from the station to a hotel with a chance to shower and have breakfast.

This morning you will depart for your city tour at 10.30am. This includes the Gandan Monastery ceremony. After lunch you will depart Ulaanbaatar for the Bayangobi region. Evening arrival at a herdsman encampment. Tonight you are the guests of the herdsmen, and you'll stay in a nomadic ger tent.

**Breakfast, Supper**

## DAY 24

Depart after breakfast for a day trip through the countryside of Övörkhongai Province in the direction of Harhorin (two hours of off-road driving each way). Our route takes us into the Orkhon Valley, a World Heritage Site, which can be called the birthplace of Mongolian civilisation – the sites of the earliest metal working (which created the weapons that made the Mongolian empire great) are located here. We stop for a picnic lunch amid the stunning scenery. This afternoon we arrive at modern Harhorin – the settlement Genghis Khan would have known as Karakorum. It was here at the legendary gathering of clans that they declared Genghis the Great Khan, and his military campaigns of conquest began. Nothing is left of the ancient settlement, but on its site is the (rather later) monastery of Erdene Zuu, one of the most important Buddhist centres in Mongolia... and on the grounds of the monastery is the single turtle statue that remains of Genghis's great Royal Court. Come back to our nomadic host family and will have a traditional communal supper with them.

**Breakfast, Lunch, Supper**

## DAY 25

This morning depart to our tourist Ger Lodge. Evening arrival at Elstei Ger Lodge. This is a different experience from staying with nomads, as Elstei is purposely set up for foreign visitors. This evening, chill out and relax after the long journey.

**Breakfast, Lunch, Supper**

## DAY 26

With no specific activities planned you can choose to chill out, read, sunbathe, go walking, or (for a small payment made directly to them locally) you can go horse riding with local

nomad horsemen. A relaxed evening in the bar, after supper there are occasional impromptu performances of live Mongolian music, where you might hear the Morin Khuur (horse-head lyre), the cimbalom, or native Mongolian throat-singing.

**Breakfast, Lunch, Supper**

## DAY 27

Around 10am you make the return trip to Ulaanbaatar. Check into the Bayangol 4★ hotel. This is a great centrally located property and facilities include 5 restaurants, fitness centre, sauna and a supermarket. The balance of today is free to explore more of the city. You can choose to return to the heady atmosphere surrounding the Gandan Monastery (which you'll have already visited when you were in the capital last time), or visit the Choijin Monastery Museum, or the Bazaar... log on and pick up your email in one of the numerous internet cafes on Peace Avenue, have a latte and French pastries in the new generation of new-age coffee stores, go souvenir shopping in the peculiar grandeur of the Central Department Store, or pick-up some snack food for the train in the Store's food department... in the evening a wide range of traditional and new style Mongolian eateries are vying with European style places, Irish pubs and German beer halls to enjoy, usually with live music later on.

**Breakfast**

## DAY 28

Early morning transfer to the station where you will board the Beijing bound train. Time to leave the Capital On The Steppes – today's train journey meanders through amazing sun parched scenery of the Southern Gobi. Later that evening there comes the Chinese border formalities after which you are free to get some sleep.

**Breakfast**

## DAY 29

Don't oversleep today, as it's possibly some of the most spectacular scenery of the entire route, as you leave the desert scenery behind and pass by mountains and rice paddy fields. Afternoon arrival at Beijing Central Station. For services in China and beyond please refer to our web site or brochure.

**No meals**

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