

Trans-Mongolian East to West Example Rail Tour

Experience this once in a lifetime epic rail adventure from East to West on the Trans-Siberian route.

Departure Dates:

Saturdays until the end of May 2015 from Beijing and then Tuesdays until the end of May 2016 from Beijing.

Beijing – Ulaanbaatar-Irkutsk-Moscow

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Depart Beijing

Morning departure from Beijing up to the Chinese border with Mongolia

Morning transfer to Beijing Main Station to catch the train to Ulaanbaatar. The morning is spent first passing through the seemingly endless suburbs of Beijing before heading into the mountains that shield the north of the capital and through which the Great Wall runs (although it can't be seen from the train any more). Once past the mountains you enter the grasslands of inner Mongolia, a largely flat land of villages and farms.

Evening arrival at the China-Mongolia border at Erlian. This is a long stop as once immigration and customs are completed you usually have a choice either to get off the train and wait at the station or stay on the train and be taken into the sheds where the bogies are changed. The carriages are raised up (with you still in them!) and the new bogies of the narrower Chinese gauge fitted. A unique experience but do remember that the toilets are locked throughout!

Once completed the train continues across the border to the Mongolian town of Zamyn-Ude. The Mongolian immigration formalities are done on the train and are relatively quick. By this time it is late in the night but try and catch some sleep as you continue your journey under darkness through the Gobi desert.

Overnight spent aboard the train, the relatively short overnight run from Beijing to Ulaanbaatar alternating between having a Chinese or Mongolian crew. The train maintains good standards.

Day 2: Arrival into Mongolia

On the train crossing the Gobi and into the grasslands to arrive at Ulaanbaatar. City tour and transfer out to Elstei Ger Camp to experience the open steppe:

If you wake up early this morning you will find yourself in the heart of Mongolia's stoney Gobi desert. Keep your eyes peeled for camels which are quite often spotted along this stretch. Gradually the landscape changes from desert to grassland as you approach Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar in the early afternoon.



Ulaanbaatar is Mongolia's capital and home to around a third of the entire population. It has experienced a major boom in the last 10 years driven mainly by the mining industry and has gone from being a sedate old soviet relic to a wild west boomtown.

Your local Mongolian guide will be meeting you at Ulaanbaatar station from where you will be transferred out of the city to Elstei Ger camp located just over an hour outside of the city but in the totally different world of Mongolia's grasslands. Elstei offers comfortable spacious gers (gers are based on 4 people sharing unless otherwise agreed beforehand) and there are basic toilet and showering facilities as well as a dining area where meals are served.

Your guide will offer a range options for your time at Elstei including visiting local nomads, walking to points of interest on the grasslands and learning about the nomadic way of life. There is also opportunities to go horse riding on the steppe (payable locally) and for much of the year activities such as archery, ger building and even the opportunity to learn how to wrestle Mongolian style. Of course, another favourite activity is simply to relax and take in this extraordinary landscape!

Dinner is included.

Day 3: Mongolia

The morning at Elstei before returning to Ulaanbaatar and a city tour

A full morning at Elstei before returning to Ulaanbaatar after lunch. Mongolia's capital is home to around a third of the entire population. It has experienced a major boom in the last 10 years driven mainly by the mining industry and has gone from being a sedate old soviet relic to a wild west boomtown of skyscrapers and traffic jams largely made up of 4x4s! However, there is much of cultural interest here and the city tour this afternoon will include the Gandan Lama Monastery, the impressive central square, main square and the impressive views and soviet monuments of Zaisan hill.

After the tour check in to your hotel with free time for the rest of the day and evening.

Breakfast and Lunch is included.

Day 4: Depart Mongolia

A final full day at Elstei before an evening departure from Ulaanbaatar on the train to Irkutsk:

A final free day at Elstei until a late afternoon transfer back to the city to catch the train onto Irkutsk. Settle into your cabin and try and get a good night's sleep!

Breakfast is included.

Overnight spent aboard train. A dedicated daily service linking Ulaanbaatar to Irkutsk. It makes many stops and is quite slow but is usually the only option. No first class but we can buy extras berths.



Day 5: On the train

Arrival at the Mongolia Russia border where most of the day is spent:

Early morning arrival at the Mongolia-Russia border at Sukhe-Bator. The stops on each side are long – particularly the Russian side. Mongolia's track is the same gauge as Russia so the bogies do not need to be changed. Customs and immigration formalities are normally processed on the train itself. You should be on your way from the Russia side by late afternoon! Note that train times in timetables now you are in Russia are all Moscow time and so will be 5 hours behind local time at this stage of the journey.

No meals included however the train has a dining car.

Overnight spent aboard train.

Day 6: Arrival Irkutsk

Arrival in Irkutsk with a transfer down to the popular lakeside village of Listvyanka:

Morning arrival in Irkutsk once known as the "Paris of Siberia" and a pleasant and prosperous city regarded as the modern day cultural capital of Siberia that celebrated it's 350th anniversary in 2011. There is plenty of the traditional wooden architecture remaining in the city as well as a vibrant cafe and restaurant culture. Your guide will be waiting for you on the platform with our company name on a sign.

We will take you for a buffet breakfast in the city before heading out of the city for the 1 hour drive following the route of the Angara River down to the village of Listvyanka located close to where the river meets the beautiful Lake Baikal. The lake is among the deepest in the world at 1,642 meters and has exceptionally clear water.

Once settled into the hotel your guide will take you on an approximately 4 hour walking tour of the village which has expanded rapidly over the last decade. You will see the beautiful church and visit the Limnological Museum to learn about the Lake itself and its unique flora and fauna. We will also take chairlift up to a view point for some of the best lake vistas. If you have the time and energy it may also be possible to visit the local fish market. After the tour free time for the rest of the day and evening.

Breakfast is included

Day 7: Listvyanka

Free day in Listvyanka to further explore the village and surrounding forests:

A full free day in Listvyanka to further explore the village and the surround forests. It may also be possible to take a ferry over to Port Baikal or you may choose just to relax and take it all in at your accommodation. The village also has a banya (Russian sauna) you can arrange to visit and which we heartily recommend as the quintessential Siberian experience!

Breakfast is included



Day 8: Depart Irkutsk

Return to Irkutsk with a 2 hour walking tour before departing by train on to Moscow:

After breakfast we drive the 1 hour back to Irkutsk where you have a 2 hour walking tour of the city centre including the park and War Memorial, some of the beautiful churches along the Angara river, the main city centre streets and the statue of Alexander III (the Tzar responsible for the Trans-Siberian railway). After the tour a transfer back to the station for the trip onto Moscow. Settle into your cabin for the first night on this train.

Breakfast is included

Overnight spent aboard the train.

Day 9: On the train

Full day on the train rolling ever on through Siberia:

Today is the last day of really good scenery. The landscape consists of gently rolling hills and dense forests of larch, pine and, of course, birch trees. There are many rivers and ponds and if it hasn't happened before now you will start to comprehend just how vast and quite untouched Russia is. Later this morning you pass attractive and wealthy Krasnoyarsk. After this city the scenery becomes more flat and the forests thin. Late in the evening you reach Siberia's largest city of Novosibirsk.

No meals included however the train has a dining car.

Overnight spent aboard the train.

Day 10: On the train

Full day on the train and your last day in Siberia

Today is your last in Siberia itself. The scenery today is flat, often swampy or forested and with few major settlements. The major city is Omsk but there are also a few other large stops. Late in the evening you enter the rolling hills of the Ural's before reaching Ekaterinburg, prosperous capital of this mineral rich region. This is also the point you can say you have finally left Siberia. Shortly after Ekaterinburg you pass the Europe Asia border for your last section of the journey to Moscow.

No meals included however the train has a dining car

Overnight spent aboard the train



Day 11: On the train

Full day on the train moving ever closer to Moscow

Your last day on the train through a relatively highly populated region by Russian standards – a landscape of farms and small towns and villages. There are a few large cities to stop at but by now most people's minds are focused on the final stop of Moscow reach very early tomorrow morning and perhaps how they are going to cope in this huge city after the simple daily routine of the train.

No meals included however the train has a dining car

Overnight spent aboard the train

Day 12: Arrival into Moscow

Early morning arrival in Russia's capital city of Moscow – 3 hour walking tour of the city and free afternoon.

Arrival in Moscow at a somewhat uncivilized early hour rolling into Moscow's large Yaroslavsky station you have finally arrived!

Moscow is the capital of Russia, its largest city with more than 13 million people and, of course, the start of the Trans-Siberian. It is the political and economic centre of this vast country and has many of Russia's most famous sights, not least Red Square and St Basil's Cathedral. With over 800 years of history there is also a wealth of architecture, museums and monuments to a colourful past.

We will be greeting you at the train Station from where you will be transferred by private car (no guide) to your hotel. Please note that we have booked early check-in and breakfast for you.

After breakfast a guide will meet you at the hotel to start a walking tour of central Moscow is both a fantastic way to get orientated in this vast city and will also open up its hidden treasures. Along both the main streets and less visited back roads you will see the diversity of its architectural styles from austere and restrained Russian style to richly decorated Moscow Baroque, elegant Empire, fascinating Art Nouveau and even Pseudo-Chinese and Moorish styles. You will hear stories and legends not found in traditional guidebooks. Did you know that the first department store in Moscow was founded by two Scots? Do you know how Lenin's body is preserved? And why there was a saying in the Soviet time "to be in prison under the flower bed"? Which flower bed? Is that the one outside the former KGB headquarters? Your tour will pass by the most important sites in the city – the Bolshoi Theatre, Tverskaya street, The GUM Department store, Red Square and St.Basil Cathedral.

Free time in the afternoon, perhaps to explore the Kremlin or we can book a range of other private tours in Moscow.

Breakfast is included.



Day 13: Depart Moscow

Moscow – Free time until your departure from Moscow and Russia:

Today is a free until a transfer to the airport or train station for your onward travel from Russia. We sincerely hope that you will have enjoyed your epic journey as much as we have and we look forward to welcoming you back another time!

Breakfast is included.

Prices from:

1 passenger = £2599

2 passengers = £1885 per person

3 passengers = £1865 per person

4 passengers = £1755 per person

What's included?

Train Tickets

Beijing to Ulaanbaatar second class – 1 berth each in a 4 berth cabin

Ulaanbaatar to Irkutsk second class – 1 berth each in a 4 berth cabin

Irkutsk to Moscow second class – 1 berth each in a 4 berth cabin

Accommodation:

1 night on the train Beijing to Ulaanbaatar (shared 4 berth second class sleeper cabin)

1 night Mongolia – Elstei Ger Lodge (shared 4 bed ger)

1 night Ulaanbaatar – Bayangol Hotel 4* (standard room with breakfast)

2 nights on the train Ulaanbaatar to Irkutsk (shared 4 berth second class sleeper cabin)

2 nights Listvyanka – Krestovskaya Pad 3* (standard room with breakfast)

4 nights on the train Irkutsk to Moscow (shared 4 berth second class sleeper cabin)

1 early check-in with breakfast at the Maxima Panorama Hotel 3*, Moscow (standard room with breakfast)

1 night Moscow – Maxima Panorama Hotel 3* (standard room with breakfast)

Transfers:

Private with driver and an English speaking guide (except where stated)

Beijing – Hotel to Train Station

Ulaanbaatar – Train Station to Ger Camp / Ger Camp to Hotel / Hotel to Train Station

Irkutsk – Train Station to Listvyanka / Listvyanka to Train Station

Moscow – Train Station to Hotel (driver only – no guide) / Hotel to Airport (driver only – no guide)



Tours:

All our tours include entrance fees and use professional, licensed guides.

Mongolia – 2 night private tour as described

Irkutsk – 2 night private tour as described

Moscow – 3 hour private walking tour of Central Moscow as described

Also included in this trip:

Meals – As indicated in the itinerary.

Visa Paperwork – Confirmation documentation you need in order to get the visas.

Support – Emergency numbers and contacts for each destination.

Guidebook – Our exclusive Trip Guidebook personalised to your trip.

Financial Peace of Mind – All monies paid to us are legally protected under UK law.

Not included in this tour:

✗ International Airfare to / from the start / finish of your trip – we can recommend a partner for this.

✗ The Russian, Mongolian and Chinese visas.

✗ Travel insurance to cover any medical treatment – we recommend that you have insurance in place.

✗ Discretionary gratuities to drivers and guides.

