

TRANS-MONGOLIAN HIGHLIGHTS

The Trans-Mongolian all the way from Moscow to Beijing with the highlight stops of historical Ekaterinburg, Irkutsk (for stunning Lake Baikal) and Ulaanbaatar to spend time in the Mongolian Grasslands.



Departure Dates:

Every Thursday year round

Tour Highlights:

- An "All-Rail" holiday
- Historical Ekaterinburg on the border with Europe & Asia
- Spectacular Siberian Scenery & Lake Baikal
- The Grasslands and Open Steppe of Mongolia
- The Imperial Splendours and Great wall in Beijing
- High quality hotels
- Tours in Moscow, Irkutsk & Lake Baikal, Mongolia and Beijing
- Your own cabin cabin on the trains from Moscow to Beijing



Tour Itinerary:

Day 1:

Welcome to Moscow, Russia's capital and its largest city with more than 12 million people. 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. Transfer by private car with an English speaking driver to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to start exploring this stunning city.

No meals included today

Day 2:

Moscow's Kremlin is Russia's political center and of huge importance for anyone interested in the history of both of the early Tsars and of the 20th Century Communist State. The large site contains architectural monuments from 6 centuries including Palaces, Cathedrals (two of which we will enter) and the famous Ivan the Terrible Bell Tower.

This tour also visits the Armoury, a treasure house of ancient Russian regalia, ceremonial tsar's dresses, church hierarchs' vestments, gold and silverware by Russian, European and Eastern masters, arms and armors, royal carriages and ceremonial horse harnesses. The visit includes the exhibit of the Cap of Monomakh, the Tsars' crown that was passed from generation to generation.

The rest of the day is free to further explore Moscow.

Breakfast is included

Day 3:

Free time this morning to explore Moscow before your departure on the Trans-Siberian train. The city has much to offer whatever the weather. Mid-Afternoon transfer to the station for the train to Ekaterinburg. Settle into your cabin which will become your home for the coming days.

Breakfast is included

Day 4:

With luck the gentle rhythm of the train led to a good night's sleep! A full day on the train through a region of farms, small towns and villages interspersed with birch forests. Towards the end of the day you cross the Europe-Asia continental border arriving in Ekaterinburg a short time afterwards. Ekaterinburg is a more representative experience of a Russian city than, say, Moscow and has a rich and fascinating history. It is



surrounded by beautiful, rolling countryside dotted with traditional Siberian villages. Transfer to your hotel to overnight.

No meals included today - the train does have a dining car though

Day 5:

Today we drive 145 km to the beautiful and photogenic 300 year old Koptelovo village. Here we see a traditional Siberian “izba” house - a style suited to the often extreme environment that can be seen right across Siberia. We also visit the local museum to learn about everyday life in this part of Russia and listen to a concert of local folk music. To round the day off take a horse carriage (sledge in winter) ride, the traditional way people moved around these remote villages. Return to Ekaterinburg late afternoon with a free evening.

Breakfast and lunch are included

Day 6:

This morning your guide will take you on a 3 hour walking tour of the city’s highlights. Stop at the central square and see statues of Ekaterinburg’s founders and leaders and learn local stories, legends (and a few jokes!) related to them. Continue to the 1905 Revolution square before the most compelling story will be told at the beautiful Church of Spilled Blood located at the Romanovs’ Death Site and Chapel of St Elizabeth. We also see views of the city from the Hill of Ascension and visit the powerful Afghanistan memorial at the Square of the Red Army. Ekaterinburg also has plenty of architecture including the impressive 19th Century villas of the Ural’s “gold merchants” and monumental buildings in “Stalin’s neoclassicism” style. The tour also includes a visit to the Ural Museum of Minerals, one of the best private collections of minerals and gems in the world.

After lunch (own arrangement) drive 15 km north-west to a monastery dedicated to the Romanov’s family located on the spot where the Bolsheviks tried to hide the corpses of the Tsar and his family in a secret grave. Today this is a Russian Orthodox pilgrimage site including a grave and seven wooden churches. Continue on to the continental border of Europe and Asia 20 km west of the city. On the way we make a short stop at the Memorial of Victims of the GULAGs. The Main Obelisk “Between Europe & Asia” allows you to straddle the continental divide and you also get a Certificate with a glass of sparkling wine!

Evening transfer to the station for your onward train to Irkutsk. From this point on you have entered Siberia!

Breakfast is included

Day 7:



The scenery today is flat, often swampy or forested and with few large settlements. The major city is Omsk but there are also a few other large stops. This is a day for relaxing, socializing and getting into a good book!

No meals included today - the train does have a dining car though

Day 8:

The last full day on the train in this section of the trip passing prosperous Krasnoyarsk after which the scenery is particularly pleasant consisting 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 untouched this part of Russia is as the sun sets on the endless taiga of Siberia.

No meals included today - the train does have a dining car though

Day 9:

Arrival in Irkutsk, regarded as the modern day cultural capital of Siberia, famed for its traditional wooden architecture, complimented by a vibrant cafe and restaurant culture.

Transfer from the station the 1 hour drive following the route of the Angara River down to the village of Listvyanka located close to where the river meets beautiful Lake Baikal. The lake is among the deepest in the world at 1,642 meters and has exceptionally clear water.

Breakfast and time to settle in to your accommodation before your guide will take you on a 4 hour walking tour including the beautiful church and Limnological Museum to learn about the Lake itself and its unique flora and fauna. We also take chairlift up to a view point for some of the best lake vistas. If time we can also visit the local fish market before a free evening.

Breakfast is included

Day 10:

A free day in Listvyanka to further explore the village and the surrounding forests and view points. It may also be possible to take a ferry over to Port Baikal or perhaps just 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 11:



After breakfast drive the 1 hour back to Irkutsk for 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. Evening transfer to the station for your onward train.

Breakfast is included

Day 12:

The morning is spent on the train heading towards the Russia- Mongolia border. You will notice a change in the people with many more Asian faces as you pass through Buryatia which has strong cultural ties with Mongolia. This is a remote and pretty section of the trip with a hint of an old Asian culture ever present. You reach the Russia-Mongolia border at Naushki around lunch time. The stops on each side are long but manageable as Mongolia 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 Mongolian side by nightfall.

No meals included today

Day 13:

Early morning arrival in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar - Train #362 Arrives 05:40 local time - a truly unique destination and for many a real highlight of their Trans-Siberian trip. Early, west to east, arrivals will have breakfast and a chance to shower in the city. Before heading out to Elstei ger camp you will have a city tour of Ulaanbaatar. Mongolia's capital is home to around a third of the entire population and has experienced a major boom in the last 10 years, largely driven by the mining industry. However, there is much of cultural interest here and the city tour includes Gandan Lama Monastery, the impressive Sukhbaatar square and the impressive views and Soviet monuments of Zaisan Hill.

Continue on to a ger camp stopping at the 40 meter high Genghis Khan Equestrian Statue that sees the most famous of Mongols survey the endless grasslands. The camp offers comfortable spacious ger accommodation and separate toilet, showering and dining facilities. A range of options are available including visits to local nomads, hiking the grasslands and learning about the local nomadic way of life. There are 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, you can simply relax and take in this extraordinary landscape as well.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included

Day 14:



A full day at the ger camp to enjoy this unique experience with assistance from your guide when required. Today is a good opportunity to range further into the steppe from the ger camp either by foot or horseback and, if the guide is notified the night before the kitchens can arrange a packed lunch to take.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included

Day 15:

Early morning transfer to the station to catch the train on to Beijing - Train #24 Departs 07:15 local time. The day is firstly spent in the steppe but that gradually gives way to the stoney Gobi desert - keep an eye out for camels! Evening arrival at the Mongolia-China border at Zamyn-Ude. The Mongolian exit formalities are completed on the train before a much longer stop is on the Chinese side.

Breakfast is included

Day 16:

Wake up in China's Inner Mongolian grasslands before a series of tunnels and impressive views lead you through the mountains that shield Beijing. Late morning arrival in China's capital - Train #24 Arrives 11:40 local time. Beijing has it all - history, imperial majesty, modern masterpieces, delicious cuisine, and a vibrant local culture. Transfer to your hotel by private car and English speaking guide.

Note that unlike many stations along the Trans-Siberian route the guide is not usually able to meet you on the platform in Beijing. You will find the guide as you exit the station building.

This afternoon a private tour to the vast Tiananmen Square, the largest city square in the world and home to the Mao Mausoleum and Monument to the People's Heroes. To the north of the square is the equally vast palace complex of the Forbidden City. We'll walk up the middle axis from South to North taking in the splendour of the most important central buildings before finishing in the ancient small garden by the north gate. Directly north of the Forbidden city is Jingshan park where we will climb the beautifully landscaped "Coal Hill" for one of Beijing's best views over the Forbidden City. Return to your hotel with the rest of the day free.

No meals included today

Day 17:

Today we will be showing you one of China's most famous sights - the Great Wall. We visit the dramatic and less crowded Mutianyu section 70km from Beijing set amongst spectacular mountain scenery. Dating back to the 6th Century and largely rebuilt in the 16th century during the Ming Dynasty it is one of the best preserved sections of the wall largely due to the high standard of construction.



On the way back to the city we stop at the 2008 Olympic sites of the spectacular Bird's Nest Stadium and the aquatics centre known as the Water Cube - external viewing only.

Note that instead of or in addition to the Olympic venues we can also arrange for you to visit one of Beijing's markets such as The Pearl Market, Panjiayuan Antique Market, the Silk Market or visit some of the galleries of the 798 Art Zone - just ask us for more details!

Breakfast and lunch are included

Day 18:

Free time for any final sightseeing or last minute shopping for souvenirs if time. Your local guide will have arranged a time to meet you in the hotel lobby for a transfer to the airport in good time for your flight out of China. We sincerely hope that you have had a fantastic Trans-Siberian experience!

Breakfast is included



Hotel Information:

Moscow - Peter 1 Hotel 4*

Great location and easily walkable to Red Square and the Kremlin make this hotel one of the more reasonable lower end 5* options in Moscow.

Ekaterinburg - Chekhov Hotel 3*

Our hotel of choice in Ekaterinburg offering good comfort and excellent service with some character which is missing from most options in this city.

Listvyanka / Lake Baikal - Krestovaya Pad 3*



A good position with views overlooking the village and valley and good standard rooms. Some rooms have lake views and there is a good restaurant and deck.

Mongolia - Elstei Ger Camp

Located just over an hour from Ulaanbaatar in the open steppe Elstei offers a unique Mongolian ger experience with a good degree of comfort.

Beijing - Kapok Hotel 4*

Stunningly designed boutique hotel located just to the east of the Forbidden city making the perfect blend of design, comfort and great location.

Train Information:

Train 16 or 60 Moscow to Ekaterinburg

Good fast service for opening part of the Trans-Siberian from Moscow to Ekaterinburg via Kazan and is considered one of the better trains in Russia.

Train 70 / 80 Ekaterinburg to Irkutsk

Running from Moscow to Irkutsk and beyond. The standard is good and although it does not have first class carriages, we can buyout additional berths.

Train 362 Irkutsk to Ulaanbaatar

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

Train 24 Ulaanbaatar to Beijing

Train 24 services the relatively short overnight run from Ulaanbaatar to Beijing alternating between having a Chinese or Mongolian crew. Maintains good standards.

Whats included - based on 2 people travelling?

8 nights' hotels as listed above (subject to availability)

Rail travel, as described based on your own sleeper cabins (subject to availability and based on 2 people)

All tours and excursions as detailed

Meals as listed in the itinerary

Whats NOT included

International Airfare to / from the start / finish of your trip

The Russian, Mongolian and Chinese visas

Travel insurance to cover any medical treatment

Discretionary gratuities to drivers and guides

