



# Experience Classic Epic Trans-Siberian

Along the way  
Beijing  
Ulaanbaatar  
Irkutsk  
Moscow  
St. Petersburg

Leaving from Beijing to St. Petersburg

"Couldn't we have the two best en-route stops", you asked us, "but with more time in each one?" "What a great chance to get to the Gobi Desert!" we answered, and "The Epic Trans-Sib" was born. The highlight here, obviously, is getting to Erdenezuu, in Bayan-Gobi. It's built on the site of Genghis Khan's former Great Encampment ("Kuriltai"), and modern "Harhorin" is actually Karakorum. But don't let your eyes miss the other goody here – some super Baikal activity options which include trekking.



## What's included

### FULL ON

#### Train

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

#### Beijing

- > 1 night 4★ hotel

#### Mongolia

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights with Nomads in traditional Mongolian Gers, all meals
- > 2 nights Elstei Ger Lodge (tourist lodge), all meals
- > excursions
- > 1 night 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > City tour of Ulaanbaatar

### NO FRILLS

#### Irkutsk

##### Siberian Village

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, Listvyanka Village, breakfast
- > excursion option

#### Moscow

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

#### St. Petersburg

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

## In the know

Genghis Khan's name is correctly spelt "Chinghiskhan", although his name at birth was Temujin. Despite his reputation for ferocity, the oldest annals of Mongolian history reveal he was frightened of dogs.

"Siberia" means "the sleeping land" and isn't a Russian word – it comes from the Tartar name for the area, "Sibir".

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

The word "Kremlin" isn't Russian – it's from a medieval Tartar word meaning "fortress". There used to be kremlins all over Russia in the days when the Mongols were a threat. There's even one in Siberia, at Tobolsk.



## 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

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

China	07 Working Days
Mongolia	06 Working Days
Russia	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

**A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT NOMAD STAYS**  
When we say "nomad stay" it means exactly that - you are sharing the lives of herdsmen who live on the Mongolian Steepe. There's often no electricity, they don't speak English, and there isn't any plumbing!

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, mosquito repellent, lightweight jacket, flip flops, swim wear, sun cream, warm waterproof, walking boots, universal sink plug, bottle opener, photographs of home to show the Nomads. Mongolian children love bubbles!

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

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



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full on itinerary – 20 days

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## DAY 01

On arrival in Beijing you make your own way to the hotel – any taxi driver will quickly find the address. The convenient location of the hotel positions you to get the most of this legendary Imperial city, where the rich traditions of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism meet with the opulence of the Chinese Emperors and the vibrant realism of contemporary China. Chinese hotels cope badly with the idea of foreigners who haven't yet arrived so we'll have your onward rail tickets delivered once you have checked in, with user hint and, directions to the station. The hotel is in the heart of the golden area of the capital, surrounded by major business centres, tourist attractions and only minutes away from the Wangfujing Street, Tiannamen Square and the Forbidden City.

No meals

## DAY 02

Make your own way to the station giving yourself at least one hour on arrival to complete security (metal-detectors are now in force and there can be queues to use them) and find your train and platform. And then you're heading off, along the most famous railway in the world!

Breakfast

## DAY 03

Early afternoon 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 freshen up and have a light snack before departing for your city tour. Then transfer to Elstei Ger Lodge (70km). With a scheduled stop at the enormous monument to Genghis Khan along the way. It may not be quite traditional in style (since it's made of stainless steel) but it's an astounding edifice and a testament to Genghis's place in Mongolian culture (astonishingly the Communists tried to write him out of official history text-books). Taking the elevator to top of this 10 metre high monument you visit the exhibition hall from where you will have an excellent panoramic view over the complex area and the scenery beyond. 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.

Light Snack, Supper

## DAY 04

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.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 05

After breakfast you will depart for the Bayangobi region. Picnic lunch en-route. Arrival at a herdsman encampment late afternoon. Tonight you are the guests of the herdsman, and you'll stay in a nomadic ger tent.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 06

Depart after breakfast for a day trip through the countryside of Övörkhanga 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" ("Chinghiskhan"), 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 you will have a traditional supper.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 07

Around 10am you make the return trip to Ulaanbaatar. Check into the Bayangol 3★ Hotel. This is a great centrally located property and facilities include 5 restaurants, fitness centre, sauna and minimarket. The balance of today is free to explore more of the city. You can choose to visit the heady atmosphere surrounding the Gandan Monastery 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

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## DAY 08

If you are interested in Mongolian Buddhism you may be interested in making a return visit to the Gandan Monastery this morning, to see the morning prayer-ceremonies in progress. We also suggest you take an opportunity today to purchase picnic provisions for the next leg of your journey, as often this train has no dining car. This evening we will transfer you to the station where you will board the Irkutsk bound train.

**Breakfast**

## DAY 09

On board The Trans-Sib... heading towards Russia. When you make the border crossing there will be the usual halt for formalities.

**No meals**

## DAY 10

Early morning arrival in Irkutsk. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform, holding a meeting-board displaying "Russia Experience". Transfer to "Krestovaya Pad 3★Hotel" situated in Listvyanka Village (70km) travelling by road through the forest. The Krestovaya Pad Hotel is set just 50 metres from the shores of Lake Baikal. Hotel facilities include; sun terrace, sauna (local charge) Laundry and Ironing service, restaurant and bar. All rooms have private bathrooms, tea and coffee facilities and a minibar. Wi-Fi is free of charge in public areas. 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 13:00, the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration formalities. 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 18th. 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 - local charge).

**Breakfast**

## DAY 11

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).

**A. SIBERIAN TREK** through the Taiga Forest with a local guide who will explain the wildlife, with a local guide who will explain the eco system and lore of the Taiga. The trek is 4-5 hours long, includes a picnic style lunch and a good level of fitness is required. (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. The excursion is around 5 hours duration. (Jun-Sep)

**C. TALTSY WOODEN MUSEUM** A two hour trip which includes a return transfer by car, and entrance fees to the Taltsy open air wooden museum which is situated on the shore of the Angara river. On arrival you are free to explore independently and there is a tea house here where afterwards you can have a cup of tea and traditional Russian snack (pencakes, pirodzki, etc) This picturesque area shows how life was and has been sympathetically restored as a tourist attraction where you can buy authentic souvenirs. (Year round)

**D. PORT BAIKAL** A day trip to Port Baikal with a local guide taking a ferry from Listvyanka. On arrival visit the Circumbaikal Railway Museum located at the train station then an uphill hike to the White stone viewpoint and to see the old lighthouse. Followed by a visit to a Russian Orthodox Church, lunch and free time walking back to the village. Return by ferry. Duration 5 hours. (May-August)

**Breakfast**

## DAY 12

After breakfast transfer back to Irkutsk city. (Where you will have the option to leave your bags at our local office.) Our local staff will provide a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit. Some of our top suggestions (please check opening times/days before setting off) Decembrist Museum, Volkonsky House and The Epiphany Cathedral. Early evening transfer to the station where you will board the Moscow bound train.

**Breakfast**

*There are two train options for the next leg of your journey. We use Tr#69/79 as the standard option and this train fare is included in the trip price. We also offer Tr#1 for the next leg of your journey for a supplement. Tr#1 is a faster train and the rolling stock is newer, hence the higher fare for this section. (Please note Tr#69/79 = 87 hours travelling time, Tr#1 = 76 hours travelling time). Should you wish to book this option please contact our reservations team.*

## DAY 13-15

On board The Trans-Sib... travelling towards Moscow. The dining car is the heart of social life on the train. It functions as bar, lounge, and take-out snack store, as well as a café serving reasonably priced meals. 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 - and maybe smoked salmon and caviar too!

**No meals**

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## DAY 16

"S Priezdom! Welcome to Moscow!" Very early morning arrival. Our driver will be there to meet you at the end of the platform, and will be hold a meeting-board with your name on. You'll then be transferred to the Panorama 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. Your room will be allocated on arrival. At check-in, the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration. This process takes 1–2 hours. 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. Your complimentary InfoPack is full of ideas for getting the most out of your free time.

Breakfast

## DAY 17

You'll need to check out of your room by 12 noon today. A full day for you to pack in the rest! Own transfer this evening to Leningradsky Station where you will board the St. Petersburg bound train.

Breakfast

## DAY 18

Early morning arrival in St. Petersburg. Our driver will be there to 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 hotel. Your guide will meet you at the hotel and introduce you to the city's highlights – a good basis for starting your own explorations. Although the public transport (used on today's excursion) is similar to Moscow's, there are a few quirks that your guide will show you. After lunchtime you're on your own to explore further.

No meals

## DAY 19

Free day for you to pack in the best of the rest! Perhaps you have pre-booked one of our city based excursions for today. 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 20

Check out of your room by 12 noon. Own transfer on departure.

Breakfast