

RED EXPRESS - 10 DAYS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Moscow - Red Square, St Basil's Cathedral, Lenin's Mausoleum, The Kremlin
- Trans-Siberian & Manchurian route
- Views of Siberian forest, Gobi Desert, Lake Baikal
- Beijing

INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights economy hotel Moscow incl. breakfast
- Train journey: Moscow - Beijing (4 berth sleeper cabin)

Note: Entrance fees, Russian & Chinese visa fee not included. No meals aboard train.

TOUR MAP



GO GUIDE

Your guide to on the ground...

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Visas are required by all visitors to Russia & China. Booking through GOBUS will allow us in the first instance to procure your invitation to enter Russia, a copy of which will be forwarded to the Embassy in your country & held on record until your visa application, passport & fees are received. If a resident of the UK, we'll supply all visa forms & can arrange visa procurement. If resident overseas, please contact a specialist visa company to procure visa forms and to arrange visa issue. Further visa info is available online at thegobus.com. Please ensure you have at least six months validity on your passport from the date of return.

CLIMATE

Russia & China - Continental, with distinct periods of warm & very cold weather. Summer from mid-May - early Sept is warm with long days. Autumn is brief. By end Nov, temps plummet & snow arrives. Spring brings the great thaw in Mar & Apr. Winter visits - wear very warm attire inc. hat, gloves, long coat & sensible shoes, temperatures in Moscow can drop to -10 degrees celsius, Beijing can also drop below zero at times.

TIME

Time: Moscow GMT +3 & Beijing GMT +8

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Recommendations - Diphtheria, Polio and Tetanus. If visiting Yekaterinburg and undertaking outdoor activities between May-August, a vaccination for tick-borne Encephalitis is strongly recommended.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance is compulsory on our trips. Please ask a member of our reservations team if you would like us to book this for you.

VOLTAGE

Russia - Standard voltage is 220V, 50hz. European style plug with 2 pins.

China - Standard voltage is 220V. 50hz. Chinese plugs come in at least 4 designs.

Check www.kropla.com/electric2 for more info

MONEY

GBP£1.00 = RUB 47 USD\$1.00 = RUB 24

GBP£1.00 = CNY 13.9 USD\$1.00 = CNY 7.03

(subject to fluctuation). The Rouble and Yuan are non-exportable and only available in their respective countries. Exchange USD, GBP or Euro notes in pristine condition. Bureau de Change & ATMs exist in Moscow & St Pete's.

ENTRANCE FEES

Entrance fees are not included.

TIPPING

Tipping is a matter of choice and should only be undertaken if the food and service has been pleasing. Standard practice in restaurants is to leave a cash tip of around 10%. Merciless train porters and baggage handlers often expect exorbitant tips for lugging your baggage a short distance. Our advice is to travel with a backpack/rucksack.

BITS & BOBS

- Can of coke, 330ml RUB 30/CNY 3-5
- Mineral water RUB 30/CNY 2-5
- Meal for 2 RUB 1000-1500/CNY 120
- Beer (local brew) RUB 50-80/CNY 4-10
- Chocolate candy bar RUB40-50/CNY 7

GOOD ADVICE

BRIGHT IDEAS:

- Bring slippers & comfortable clothes for the train.
- Bring a mug, spoon, instant coffee, tea bags & cup-a-soups.
- Bring a small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- Bring USD cash for exchange. Pristine notes only.
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions
- Buy a phrasebook. Practice Russian & Mandarin.
- Bring books, mags, cards, & padlock.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport data pages.

5 THINGS TO DO/SEE:

- Stroll along Red Square, Moscow and spot famous St Basil's and the Kremlin
- Steamy windows. Experience a Russian banya (sauna) with birch twigs
- Once forbidden to all but the emperor and his entourage, the Forbidden City is open for some imperial exploration in Beijing.
- Take a stroll on gargantuan Tiananmen Square - a square for the public and home of Mao's mausoleum.
- Visit the golden and bejewelled Tibetan Buddhist Monastery so beautiful that not even Stalin's purge could bring itself to destroy it.

5 THINGS TO BUY:

- It's got to be a wooden Matryoshka doll. Available in myriad designs and pieces
- Chairman Mao's famous quotation-filled little red book. A classic People's Republic souvenir.
- Blinis with ikra - pancakes & black caviar! Chow down!
- A bottle of Russia's finest drop. VODKA. Many brands available. Look out for Stolichnaya Cristall!
- Blow a bit of cash at Silk Alley Market building, Beijing. Snag bargain casual clothing, bags etc.

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FREESTYLE ADVENTURE

GO GUIDE

RED EXPRESS: ITINERARY

DAY 1 - MOSCOW

Moscow - Welcome to Moscow! Make your way to our hotel in the city centre and get checked in. You've got some free time, so maybe check out the buzzing night life, and have a sample of the different varieties of Russia's favourite beverage - Vodka. Do like the locals and try it neat! Overnight - Moscow.

DAY 2 - MOSCOW

Moscow - breakfast. The capital that spawned dozens of spy novels. Moscow lies in the centre of what is known as European Russia. The border between Europe and Asia runs down the West Side of the Ural Mountains just 1300 km (805 miles) east of Moscow. Also to the east of Moscow is the mighty Volga River. Moscow's origins stretch back 850 years and despite a chequered history, it is considered the heart of Russia in all ways. Moscow is a city where ancient Russia meets the Soviet Union and capitalism-boldly illustrated by the golden onion domes of the Kremlin's Orthodox Churches which peer out past Lenin's austere red granite mausoleum and over the massive GUM shopping complex-home to Barbie and Levi jeans. The city is the barometer and epicentre of the changes sweeping through Russia. The city's vitality, chaos and extremes are a direct result of the collapse of Communism and the efforts of its some 9 million citizens to reinvent their lives.

The Kremlin, a north-pointing triangle with 750 metre sides, is at Moscow's heart in every way. Red Square lies along its eastern side, the Moskva River flows to the south. From here, Moscow is best described as spreading out in four distinctive rings of development-each area having its own cluster of museums, elegant buildings, shops and monasteries. Most of Moscow's sights are within the first circle-an area that is easily covered on foot. Good news - Moscow lacks steep hills! Enjoy two full days exploring this fabulous city. Buy yourself a metro pass to hop on and off at underground stations around the capital. Around the famous Red Square you'll find many of the cities highlights; Russia's powerhouse, the mighty Kremlin, the wildly coloured St Basil's cathedral, Lenin's mausoleum and the GUM department store.

If you are feeling cultured out then it's probably time to visit one of Moscow's many restaurants then why not check out the underground club scene, don't worry they are open 'til very late! Overnight - Moscow.

NOTE: If you plan to go to the Kremlin or Lenins's Mausoleum, please don't carry gigantic day - packs/ rucksacks as you'll need to store them before entry into these places on Red Square (the Square is closed during the opening times of the Mausoleum).

DAY 3 - ALL ABOARD

Moscow - Beijing - breakfast. Free day to continue your Russian exploration. Tonight get yourself to the rail station for Train # 20 express to Beijing. Overnight - train.

DAYS 4-9 - TRAIN TO CHINA

Aboard train - Settle into life aboard the Trans-Manchurian Express as it plies it's way across the Urals and large tracts of Siberia. Via Irkutsk and along the shores of breathtaking Lake Baikal, the train heads east eventually branching off the main Trans-Siberian line at Tarskaya, 12km east of Karymskaya (6293km). Then, onwards to the Chinese border. Continuing across the Manchurian Plain, the train edges closer to Beijing. Overnight train.

DAY 10 - BEIJING

Beijing - Early this morning, the train reaches Beijing. If departing Beijing today we recommend you get a late afternoon/evening flight in case of unforeseen delays. Our GOBUS reservations team can arrange accommodation for you in Beijing, please call us to book.

USEFUL INFO

UPGRADES

If a solo traveller wishing to upgrade to a 2 berth exclusively (or wanting to share with another member of the public) or party of 3 wishing to exclusively occupy a 4 berth cabin, please contact us for rates. Upgrades to 1st class cabins are subject to route and availability. Some trains may only be configured with one 1st class 2 berth cabin wagon (containing 9 cabins or 18 seats in total). On services between Irkutsk and Ulan Ude, there are no 2 berth cabins available, and on the once-weekly service between Beijing and Ulaan Baatar seats are offered on a per person basis, so we cannot provide for a 'buy-out' of a 4 berth cabin to be occupied by 2 passengers, if a 2 berth cabin isn't available on that route. Moreover, during period May - October, all routes get particularly busy, and it may prove more difficult to successfully obtain an upgrade to a 2 berth cabin on routes that would normally be easier to second such a cabin under normal circumstances.

GOBUS will advise on an individual basis, the status of upgrade possibility.

LUGGAGE - SUITCASE OR BACKPACK?

A frameless backpack/rucksack in favour of an unwieldy suitcase is recommended for your Trans-Siberian journey, as complimentary portage is not offered anywhere. Suitcase wheels get mired in the snow making it difficult to wheel your luggage, there are more than plenty of stairs to climb and rigid cases are hard to store in the cabin.

TIME

One of the most disorienting aspects of the Trans-Siberian trip is working out what time it really is! Having gotten used to Russian Time (where you'll spend a lot of time on the train) where everything works to what is known as Moscow Time, when you hit Mongolia or China, the time will change again. Mongolia has 2 time zones, though you'll only pass through one, and China has 3 time zones, though only Beijing Time is used for all Chinese trains). All long-distance Russian trains run on Moskovskaya Vremya or Moscow Time in Russia, the abbreviation for which is MB in Cyrillic or MV in English. It has to be this way in a country that has 11 time zones. All timetables, station and train clocks and announcements are Moscow Time. Mongolia is 8 hours ahead of GMT. China is 8 hours ahead of GMT and operates in one time zone, so clocks

are set according to Beijing time, meaning, given the size of the country, sunset and sunrise can occur at peculiar times! Pack a travel alarm clock.

YOUR TRAIN IS DEPARTING - LIFE ABOARD

Leave the tux and party dress at home. Attire onboard the Trans-Sib is definitely informal. The Russian attire of choice is a jogging ensemble and slippers. You'll want to be similarly comfortable as you stretch out for the journey ahead. Temperatures are regulated regardless of season. Generally, each train is around 15 wagons long. At the end of each wagon is a WC/wash basin. A wagon attendant mans each wagon. All main Trans-Sib trains have a buffet/dining wagon. In addition to serving a variety of meals and snacks, it's a good place to relax away from your cabin with a drink.

Crossing a huge chunk of the planet, the train makes many stops of varying duration - sometimes a few minutes, sometimes for up to 30 minutes. Travelling with common people, the journey can be a great way to meet people from all walks of life. Sort out a game of chess or cards, get to grips with a chunky novel, aspire to mastering the Russian language, sleep, write a bestseller, enjoy a cuppa with newfound travelling chums and enjoy the changing panorama from your cabin window.

WHAT'S THERE TO EAT ABOARD?

Contrary to popular belief, you won't starve! All the main Trans-Siberian, Mongolian and Manchurian trains have a Buffet/Dining wagon. The service is provided by whichever country you are crossing. Food is café quality at reasonable prices, payable in local currency. Don't expect an extensive menu. Typical meals in the Russian Buffet/Dining wagon include ham and eggs for breakfast, schnitzel and potatoes for lunch or dinner, with soups and salads for starters. The Buffet/Dining wagon also sells beer, Russian champagne, vodka, chocolate and snacks, subject to availability - so bring your own supplies too! The Mongolian Buffet/Dining wagon will invariably offer rice and mutton based dishes. The Chinese Buffet/Dining wagon will offer Chinese staples - noodles and suchlike. During the peak season, the Buffet/Dining wagon can get very busy, so be sure to pack plenty of your own food supplies! You can also buy food from the many vendors on station platforms when the train stops.

LUGGAGE STORAGE

Train cabins offer a surprising amount of storage space for luggage. The 2 bottom bunks can be lifted to provide access to storage compartments. In addition, there is storage space near the ceiling for luggage. It's a good idea to keep money, cameras and other valuable on one's person when the cabin is empty, and luggage should be locked at all times. As trains are used by regular people including Chinese, Mongolian and Russian traders, they like to use up a vast degree of available luggage space for their contraband stock. However, you are entitled to enough space to store what is yours. Sometimes, a sharp gesticulation does the trick. Alternatively, the provodnitsa can be summoned. You'll only have to find a home for your luggage when you first board. From that point, your main luggage will stay in storage within your cabin until you disembark.

The go guide & information contained herein has been compiled with care and in good faith. It is as accurate an illustration as can be given with regard to the proposed itinerary. Circumstances beyond our control such as inclement weather or local conditions could force us to amend the proposed itinerary. This document does not form part of a contract between the client and GOBUS and their affiliates. Any costs shown may be subject to change but are an accurate reflection of costs at the time of writing this go guide. Please also be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and remain the responsibility of the traveller and not that of GOBUS

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