

HIGHWAY TO CHINA - 15 DAYS

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUSIONS TOUR MAP

- Moscow
- Trans-Siberian & Mongolian route
- Irkutsk - former Cossack garrison & trading centre
- Views of Siberian forest, Gobi Desert, and Lake Baikal
- Ulaan Baatar - set on banks of the Tuul River
- Beijing

- 2 nights economy hotel Moscow included breakfast
- 3 nights homestay Irkutsk including breakfast & return rail station transfers
- 3 nights economy hotel Ulaan Baatar including breakfast & return rail station transfers
- Train journey: Moscow - Beijing (4 berth sleeper cabin)

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



GO GUIDE

Your guide to on the ground...

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Visas are required by all visitors to Russia, Mongolia & 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. It is your responsibility to ensure you procure your visa in a timely fashion.

TIME

Moscow GMT +3, Beijing & Ulaan Bataar GMT +8

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Recommendations - Hep A, Diphtheria, Polio & Tetanus. Malarial risk - south-west China. 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 and Mongolia - Standard voltage is 220V, 50Hz AC. Sockets require a Continental or European plug with two round pins.

China - Standard voltage is 220V, 50Hz AC. Chinese plugs come in at least 4 designs: 3-pronged angle pins as used in Australia; 3-pronged round pins as used in Hong Kong; 2-pronged flat pins as used in the USA; or 2 round narrow pins as used in Europe.

Check www.kropla.com/electric2 for more info

MONEY

GBP£1.00 = RUB 47 USD\$1.00 = RUB 24
 GBP£1.00 = TUG 2321 USD\$1.00 = TUG 1174
 GBP£1.00 = CNY 13.9 USD\$1.00 = CNY 7.03
 (subject to fluctuation). The Russian Rouble, Mongolian Tugrik and Chinese 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 and 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 RUB30/TUG460/CNY3-5
- Mineral water RUB30/TUG350/CNY2-5
- Meal for 2 RUB1000-1500/TUG14000-17500/CNY120
- Beer (local brew) RUB50-80/TUG450-950/CNY4-10
- Chocolate candy bar RUB40-50/TUG250/CNY7

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, magazines, cards, & padlock.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport data pages.
- You must pack a good guide book, you'll need it!

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 imperial exploration in Beijing.
- Take a stroll on 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 comprising 5 to many pieces!
- Chairman Mao's famous quotation-filled little red book. A classic People's Republic souvenir.
- Buy a bowl of steaming hot mutton soup - UB's delicacy.
- 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

HIGHWAY TO CHINA: 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. 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 Lenin'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 - Irkutsk - breakfast. Free day to do as you like. Why not ride the efficient Metro, with its ornate stations and socialist art, to Red Square, where you can visit the Kremlin if you missed it yesterday or perhaps pay your respects to the founder of Russian communism at Lenin's mausoleum. If art is your thing, the Tretyakov Galleries, both old and new, provide pre-Revolutionary paintings in the former and Soviet and contemporary artwork in the latter. Works of Monet, Cezanne and Picasso can all be found in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. If you feel the need to get back to nature, why not find one of the 96 parks and 18 gardens dotted about the city. Once evening comes, get yourself to the train station for the beginning of your rail adventure. Overnight - train.

DAYS 4-6 - TRAIN - SIBERIA

Aboard train - Settle into life aboard the train as it plies it's way across the Urals and large tracts of Siberia.

DAY 7-9 - IRKUTSK

Irkutsk - breakfast (2). Morning arrival in Irkutsk - a town with Asiatic influences of nearby Mongolia and China and curious architecture - a legacy of Siberia's aristocratic exiles. Morning arrival in Irkutsk - a town with Asiatic influences of nearby Mongolia and China and curious architecture - a legacy of Siberia's aristocratic exiles. Sitting on the east bank of the Angara River, Irkutsk is a city that possesses a unique historical heritage in the form of dozens of beautifully carved and decorated wooden cabins. Transfer to homestay in Irkutsk. Spend the next 3 days at leisure in Irkutsk exploring the city and the surrounding area. We recommend you come armed with a good guide book to help you make the most of your time off the train. Overnight (3) - Homestay, Irkutsk.

DAY 10 - TRAIN - MONGOLIA

Irkutsk - Ulaan Baatar - breakfast. Transfer to rail station for travel to Ulaan Baatar. Overnight - train.

DAYS 11-13 - ULAAN BAATAR

Breakfast (2) Ulaan Baatar (Outer Mongolia) - Morning arrival and transfer to hotel on day 11 (subject to border formalities & inevitable delays) in Outer Mongolia. One of the most elevated countries in the world, Mongolia was also once one of the world's most powerful. At it's height in the 13th century, Genghis Khan had by the time of his death in 1227, unified the Mongol people, organized a nearly invincible army of fearless nomadic warriors, and set into motion the first stage in the conquest of an enormous territory that would be completed by his sons and grandsons. With extraordinary speed and devastating ruthlessness the Mongols created the world's largest empire, stretching at it's greatest extent from Korea to Hungary. After decades of suppression under the Soviets, Mongolia is emerging as a cutting-edge destination. There's something here to suit even the most blasé of travellers. Endless steppe, nomadic tribes people, stunning Tereji National Park, double-humped (Bactrian) camels that are a cinch to ride in comparison to their single-humped cousins and the vast expanse of the Gobi Desert.

Despite the prominence of grim, utilitarian Soviet architecture, Ulaan Baatar (otherwise known as UB to ex-pats) is a laid-back provincial capital set in the rolling foothills of the Bogd mountain range, on the banks of the Tuul River. The city hubbub is Sükhbaatar Square. Off the square is the Museum of Natural History. If dinosaurs are your passion, opt for a visit. The Gobi Desert is famous for it's archeological finds from the Mesozoic Era. Most of Mongolia's Buddhist temples and monasteries, were destroyed during the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s. However, Gandantegchinlen Khid survived as the communists kept it as a showcase to impress foreigners. It's worth a look, as is the Winter Palace of Bogd Khaan. It's where Mongolia's 8th Bogd Khaan (Living Buddha) and last king lived for 20 years. Upon his demise in 1924, the Soviet-led Communist government of Mongolia prohibited any future incarnations. Spend 3 nights at your leisure exploring this fascinating city and the surrounding area. Overnight - hotel. (3)

DAY 14 - TRAIN - CHINA

Ulaan Baatar - Beijing - breakfast. Transfer to rail station for onward train to Beijing. Beyond Ulaan Baatar, the landscape becomes a 180° panorama of uninterrupted steppe. The occasional camel, nomad and ger dot the landscape. Continuing south, the train enters original Gobi

country: flat, dry and sparsely populated by nomadic herders and sheep looking for grass. Onwards to the border, where after formalities and the usual delays, the train crosses over into Chinese territory. Overnight aboard train.

DAY 15 - BEIJING

Beijing - We pass through Shaanxi province, and are scheduled to arrive in Beijing at mid-afternoon. We recommend you spend at least one night in Beijing in case the train is delayed, you really don't want the stress of missing your onward flight!

THE BEST LAID PLANS OF MICE & MEN

Chinese & Mongolian Railways operate the service from Ulaan Baatar to Beijing in turn. Please understand that different departure dates could alter the advertised journey slightly. Usually, this would entail an additional night or two in Mongolia or in the case of alternate trips, perhaps an additional night somewhere up the line. Please check current departure dates, prices & full inclusions on our website!

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.

Mongolia - Located in the northern hemisphere, temperatures are not unlike those in Russia and northern China. Summer in Mongolia (June to August) is short but bright. Expect temperatures in the mid 20 celsius. Winter (November to February) is especially cold, expect temperatures as low as -18 celsius, so it is important to wear suitably warm clothing and shoes capable of coping with snowy conditions.

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.

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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F R E E S T Y L E A D V E N T U R E

68 north end road, west kensington, london, W14 9EP • 020 7471 6400 • info@thegobus.com • www.thegobus.com
690 brunswick street, new farm, brisbane, QLD, australia 4005 • 1300 855 684 • aus-info@thegobus.com

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