Golden Eagle Express - 15 days
go guide
don’t leave home without it

The Trans-Siberian in fine style! A decadent way to travel, seeing breathtaking, everchanging landscapes, on the epic journey from Moscow across Russia, Mongolia & on to Vladivostock. Making several exciting stops en route at unique ports of call, such as Yekaterinburg, the mighty Lake Baikal & Ulan Ude - all meals included, luxurious cabins & a whole lot more!

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights
- The comforts of the beautiful Golden Eagle Express train
- Kazan - picturesque capital of Tatarstan on the Volga River
- Yekaterinburg - Europe/Asia Divide and execution site of the Romanovs
- Novosibirsk - modern ‘soviet’ city containing world’s largest Opera house and Lenin Square
- Irkutsk - known as the ‘Paris of Siberia’
- Beautiful Lake Baikal - the world’s largest freshwater lake
- Ulan Ude - capital of the Buryat Republic and historical and cultural area
- Ulaan Baatar - capital of Mongolia
- Local hospitality and entertainment in a Ger Restaurant
- Vladivostok - Russia’s largest port city on the Pacific Ocean

What’s Included
- 1 night 5 star hotel Moscow, 1 night 4 star hotel Vladivostock, 12 nights Golden Eagle cabin
- All meals starting with dinner on the first day, also a generous allowance of wine, beer, soft drinks and tea and coffee with all lunches and dinners both on and off the train.
- Moscow city tour
- Kazan city tour
- Yekaterinberg city tour
- Novosibirsk city tour
- Novosibirsk city tour
- Irkutsk city tour including an exploration of the classic wooden architecture, visit the Decembrist House museum and enjoy a private concert
- Lake Baikal - we wind our way through tunnels along cliff hugging tracks above the picturesque lake before visiting Listvyanka - a small Baikal settlement at the base of the surrounding hills
- Ulan Ude - capital of the Buryat Republic - take the Village of Old Believers tour and learn about the traditions and culture of the area. Enjoy a traditional meal and concert
- Ulaan Baatar - the capital of Mongolia - enjoy a traditional lunch in a ger tent and entertainment
- Arrival and departure transfers (day 1 and day 15)
- Experienced tour manager and the services of experienced tour leaders
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water 24 hours a day
- All gratuities included
- All entrance fees for included sightseeing
- Services of a doctor travelling with the group

What’s Not Included
- Flights and visas
- Laundry, drinks and items of a personal nature

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Moscow
Arrive at Moscow airport, where you are met and transferred to the luxurious five-star Marriott Royal Aurora hotel (or similar) located in the heart of this vibrant city for a one-night stay. We enjoy a welcome reception dinner at our hotel, whilst you meet your fellow travellers and anticipate the epic 15 day voyage that lies ahead.

Freedom Of Choice Touring -
Customise your journey and enjoy the opportunity to select from an array of Freedom of Choice Touring options that best suit your interests. Your off-train excursions will still take in all the major attractions of the places we are visiting but, in featured locations, you will be presented when you are onboard the train with a variety of activities from which to choose, and enjoy a tailor-made experience. In Moscow for example, you could choose to spend time in the Tretyakov Picture Gallery or visit the Museum of the KGB, which are not part of the standard touring programme; or you might choose to go shopping in the local markets and bazaars; or spend a day relaxing in a local spa (‘treatments extra). In short, it means that your holiday is just that, your very own, and it’s all included in the tour price, with no more for you to pay. It is the ultimate in flexibility. Freedom of Choice Touring options may be subject to variations dependent on finalised train timings and local charges. Touring options available will typically be advised in the evening prior to the day’s tour. Overnight - Moscow hotel (D)

Day 2 : Red Square
Our morning city tour of Moscow principally takes us to Red Square, an iconic symbol of Russia’s former military and political might. Here we see an eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, such as the ornate St Basil’s Cathedral with its magnificent onion-domed spires, the grandeur of The Kremlin and the sombre and evocative site of Lenin’s tomb. With our Freedom of Choice touring options you may instead wish to visit, for example, the Tretyakov Gallery or the Museum of the KGB. Early afternoon sees us boarding the luxurious Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express. After settling into our modern, stylish cabins, we enjoy dinner in one
Day 3 : Kazan

We arrive at the picturesque and historic city of Kazan by mid-morning. Situated on the River Volga, Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan. Here we have the opportunity to see for ourselves its rich tapestry of history and culture. One of the highlights of this city tour is our exploration of the Kremlin Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Within the walls of this ancient citadel we will explore its stunning mosque and onion-domed cathedral. After enjoying a relaxing dinner on the Golden Eagle, you may wish to retire to our welcoming bar car where you can enjoy drinks with new friends whilst listening to our resident pianist.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 4 : Yekaterinburg

We cross the Europe/Asia divide before arriving in the historic city of Yekaterinburg. Founded in 1723 by Peter the Great, the third largest Russian city is also the capital of the Urals. The cultural and architectural influences of European and Asian civilisations come together in this fascinating and cosmopolitan landscape. Our city tour takes us to the poignant site where the Romanov, Nicholas II of Russia was executed with his family by the Bolsheviks in 1918. Now a church dedicated to their memory, this site provides us with a powerful insight into the turmoil of the Russian Revolution.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 5 : Novosibirsk

A modern Soviet city, we experience the life and character of Novosibirsk’s rich culture where the arts, science and literature predominate. Our city tour takes us to the Opera House. An architectural marvel, it houses two permanent ballet and opera companies and is the largest opera house in the world. In front of the Opera House, we visit an imposing statue of Lenin – a marvellous opportunity to have your photograph taken with this iconic political leader.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 6 : Life on board

A day to unwind and reflect on the many sights and sounds we have experienced on our journey so far. Chat to your fellow passengers, perhaps learn a few words of Russian or simply enjoy the ever changing landscape outside your window as it unfolds.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 7 : Irkutsk

We arrive in Irkutsk, the ‘Paris of Siberia’, and spend the morning exploring the city. In the afternoon, we visit Listvyanka, a small Baikal settlement nestling at the base of the surrounding hills.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 8 : Lake Baikal

Few natural sights can surpass the beauty and grandeur of Lake Baikal. For five hours we wind our way through tunnels along cliff hugging tracks above the lake with a vista of snow capped peaks along the far shore forming a picture-perfect backdrop. Lake Baikal is the deepest lake in the world and holds 20% of the world’s freshwater. Also known as the ‘Pearl of Siberia’ it is home to a unique breed of freshwater seal and over fifty species of fish including omul which we will be serving in the dining car for some of our meals. Weather permitting, we stop at one of Baikal’s picturesque and secluded bays to enjoy a delicious BBQ including freshly smoked fish prepared by our own chefs. For the brave hearted, there is even time for a refreshing swim in the crystal clear waters. In the afternoon, we visit Listvyanka, a small Baikal settlement nesting at the base of the surrounding hills.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 9 : Ulan Ude

This morning we arrive in Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Republic. The ethnic and cultural diversity of this area offers a unique insight into its heritage. As we tour the area you will notice the different faces and dress styles of these welcoming people. During our exploration of the Old Believers Village we have the opportunity to learn about the culture and history of these religious people as we are treated to a traditional meal and enjoy a concert featuring local dancers and musicians.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 10 : Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia

Our Trans-Siberian adventure takes us into Mongolia, home of Genghis Khan, undoubtedly the most feared and revered Mongol and we visit the capital city of Ulaan Baatar. Lunch is taken Mongol style in a traditional Ger (Yurt) where we experience an authentic meal, enjoying excellent local dishes and entertainment providing a unique opportunity to encounter this time-honoured nomadic way of life. We board the train in time for dinner as we head back into Russia.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)
Day 11 : Onboard

Enjoy a more leisurely pace today as we travel through the beautiful landscape of the Russian Far East. You may like to attend one of the interesting lectures or Russian language lessons.

Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 12 : Onboard

It is the perfect opportunity to practice your Russian or simply relax as our journey today follows the Shilka and Amur rivers, close to the Chinese border. Enjoy Russia at its most dramatic and remote, as the Golden Eagle eats up the miles on our way to Vladivostok Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 13 : Onboard

Passing directly north of Seoul, Darwin and Osaka, we spend our last full day on board the Golden Eagle today as the most easterly point of our mammoth journey is reached passing through Khabarovsk, where we cross the River Amur. Tonight, we enjoy our final dinner onboard our private train that has been our home for the last twelve days as we approach our final destination on this unforgettable journey Overnight - train (B, L, D)

Day 14 : Vladivostok

After travelling through 8 time zones and covering an amazing 6,600 miles (10,600km) along this epic route to the end of the Trans-Siberian line, the Golden Eagle pulls into Vladivostok, a military port located on the western shores of the Sea of Japan. Vladivostok (literally translated as ‘Ruler of the East’) offers visitors an exciting opportunity to explore its principal military attractions including a tour of a restored submarine before we transfer to Vladivostok airport to begin your journey home.(B)

Overnight - Vladivostok hotel (B, L, D)

Day 15 : Vladivostok

Following breakfast, you will be transferred to Vladivostok airport to begin your journey home.(B)

Farewell Dinner.

Style of Travel
Our Trans-Siberian Railway journeys run as an independent package, combining the train journey and stopovers, booked specifically and exclusively for you.

You will not be travelling in a group and will not have a group ‘tour’ leader with you. You could be sharing your train carriage with Russians, Mongolians or Chinese and may find you are the only Westerner. Half the fun of the train journey is trying to communicate with your fellow travellers, learning new card games, taking time out to read or just sit back and watch the world go by.

If stopping at intermediate points en route, you will be met by one of our local drivers (who sometimes can speak English) and transferred to your accommodation. We offer a range of optional excursions that you can book before you travel or you can choose to independently explore each port of call.

Are You A Trans-Siberian Traveller?
If you like everything to happen like clockwork, for everyone you encounter to speak English on command and cannot cope without 24 hour assistance from a travel representative, then a Trans-Siberian adventure is probably not the type of holiday for you!

Our Trans-Siberian railway journeys are suitable for adventurous, independent travellers, in search of new and sometimes intrepid experiences.

Please be aware that hotels and homestays en route are simple. Though the cabins are cosy, the trains themselves are basic and whilst on-board you'll need to be happy to go without standard creature comforts such as a shower. On arrival, though friendly our transfer drivers are hired for their driving skills and do not always speak English.

Finally, do as much preliminary reading as possible. Both Russian and Mongolian cities and people are quite different to anything you will have encountered before. You may find that some of the locals in Russia can be quite abrupt and curt at times and that the customer service offered at hotels en route, is not up to the high standard that we’ve come to expect in the West. You need to take this with a pinch of salt, it’s just the Russian way, expect your service without a smile!

As long as you're aware of all these facts, you’ll be mentally prepared for this epic journey!

Hotels
We provide simple 3 star hotel accommodation on all of our Trans-Siberian journeys, with en suite rooms and breakfast included. However please note that in Siberia and Mongolia officially rated 3 star accommodation cannot be compared to hotels of a similar standard in Western Europe or, in particular, the United States.

Train Schedules
Trans-Siberian Railways do change their schedules from time to time, which could alter the itinerary. Please check with us at time of booking.

Upgrades
If you wish to upgrade to a 2 berth cabin or a party of 3 wishing to exclusively occupy a 4 berth cabin, please contact us for rates and availability. Please note availability is limited with some trains only configured with one 2 berth cabin wagon (containing 18 seats) and on services between Irkutsk and Ulan Ude, 2 berth cabins are not available. From May - October, all routes are particularly busy, and an upgrade may prove difficult to obtain. On The Go Tours will advise on an individual basis, whether an upgrade will be possible.

Despite the myth, Cabins with shower or en-suite facilities do not exist. However there is a WC/wash basin is located at the end of every wagon, with a 220v AC 2-pin razor socket.

Visas
Visas are required by all visitors to China, Mongolia & Russia. If booking at On the Go we will supply your Russian Invitation, required for a Russia visa. If a UK resident, we can supply visa forms & arrange visa procurement. If you are a resident overseas, please contact a specialist visa company. It is your responsibility to procure your visa in a timely fashion and visa fees are at your own expense. We recommend you apply for visas at least 6 weeks prior to departure. Further visa info is available online at onthegotours.com.

Time & voltage
One of the most disorienting aspects of the Trans-Siberian is working out what time it really is! On Chinese trains, everything works to Beijing Time so

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train and station clocks are set to this. The time will change again to Ulaan Baatar time in Mongolia & Moscow Time in Russia. Pack a travel alarm clock!

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. Pack a worldwide travel adaptor.

Vaccinations
It is suggested that you are vaccinated against Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Typhoid and Hepatitis A. If visiting Yekaterinburg between May-August, immunisations against Tick-borne Encephalitis is recommended. Requirements change so please check this information with your GP or Travel Doctor.

What to pack

- A Frameless rucksack/backpack.
- Small daypack or bag for your valuables.
- Summer - Russia, Mongolia and China can be surprisingly warm during July & August, so it’s suggested you pack accordingly with lightweight cottons (warmer clothes for evening).
- Winter – Russia, Mongolia and China get very cold and can experience frigid conditions October - March. Pack a scarf, top quality gloves, hat, thermal leggings and a heavy longer length coat. Wear water and slip-proof shoes or boots.
- Personal first aid kit (see ‘Health precautions’), mosquito repellent & sunscreen (summer).
- Sunglasses, umbrella, torch, pocket knife, money belt & universal adaptor plug.
- Bathers/swimmers/trunks & towel for Russian banyas/sauna, lake swimming etc.
- Headscarf (ladies only) for entry into churches.
- Abroad the train - mug, spoon, instant coffee, tea bags, drinking chocolate, cuppa soups and pot noodles, chocolate bars, fruit such as oranges, snacks, slippers, plenty of reading material, pack of cards, puzzles, MP3 player, radio, Trans-Sib guide book, phrase books, small gifts from your country, flat-pack WC paper, wipes, pack-lock (for your pack).
- Two spare passport photos/packet photocopie in case of loss/theft.
- Your luggage should not exceed 20kg (44pounds). Pack light and leave room for souvenirs!

What is it like aboard?
Plan to dress casually in T-shirts, jeans or jogging pants and comfortable shoes. Temperatures are regulated regardless of the season, so short-sleeves may be all that is needed.

Generally, each train is around 15 wagons long. At the end of each wagon, is a WC/wash basin. Each wagon is manned by a provodnitsa (wagon attendant).

All routes longer than 24 hours have a buffet/dining car service (operated by the railway company of the country you are in). Available to all passengers, you can sit down to café style food, paid for in local currency. Occasionally there is a shower available in the ‘special services’ wagon for an additional cost of approx: USD $5 and you will need to provide your own toiletries, towel and shower shoes.

Luggage - suitcase or backpack?
Most people find that a frameless backpack/rucksack is easier to manoeuvre and preferable to a suitcase. They are easier to carry and stow on-board, and do not have wheels which can get mired in snow and dirt.

Luggage Stowage
Train cabins offer a surprising amount of luggage space - beneath the bottom bunks and near the ceiling. It’s a good idea to keep your valuables on you, and luggage should be locked at all times. Trains are used by Chinese, Mongolian and Russian traders, who try to use all available space for their goods and may try to store goods in your cabin - some sharp words may be needed - You are entitled enough space to store your luggage, which they may forget!

The cabin
There are usually 4 berths (2 up, 2 down) to a compartment, with plenty of luggage space. The cabin door can be locked by turning the door catch, and pulling a metal catch out to the left of the door. Each cabin has a small table (with bottle opener underneath), a small fold-out ladder to help people to the upper berths and coat hangers and hooks for hanging.

The provodnitsa
An attendant, known in Russia as a provodnitsa, staffs each train wagon. Their duties include checking your tickets, distributing pre-packaged linen (at additional and nominal cost) and keeping the public area tidy. They also keep their eye on the WC, samovar and the cabins. Flashing your biggest grin upon boarding may keep you in favour with them during the journey!

The routes
The term 'Trans-Siberian Railway' is used to describe the 3 main train routes which traverse the Eurasian continent. Starting in Moscow, all routes run parallel through Yaroslavl on the Volga, Yekaterinburg in the Urals and traverse Siberia. Soon after Irkutsk near Baikal’s southern extremity, they diverge with the Trans-Siberian route continuing to Vladivostok and the other two continuing on to Beijing: The Trans-Mongolian route: Moscow - Ulaan Baatar - Beijing: Just beyond Ulan Ude on Baikal’s east shore, it heads south across the Mongolian steppe to Ulaan Baatar and Beijing.

The Trans-Manchurian route: Moscow - Beijing. Just after Tarskaya, this route heads around the eastern border of Mongolia to Beijing.

Boarding the train
All trains to Irkutsk, Ulaan Baatar and Beijing depart from Moscow Yaroslavl Station. Trains to Yekaterinburg depart from Moscow Kazanskaya Station. The nearest Metro stop is KOMSOMOLSKAYA. Both stations offer kiosks for the purchase of snacks and drinks. There are toilet facilities and seated waiting areas.

Border crossings
Be prepared for long and tedious border delays, primarily due to passenger numbers and the volume of contraband the traders are carrying. Most of the time, you’ll be on-board, though if you’re asked or decide to disembark, take your coat and valuables. If you’re not allowed off, remember the toilets will be out of action whilst you’re halted. Overall, expect delays of some 5-6 hours.

Russia-Mongolia border
Both Russia and Mongolia use the same railway gauge so a ‘bogie-change’ is not required at this border. Officials, however, take their time searching the compartments of Russian and Mongolian traders looking for goods that attract duty. You’ll usually be subject to customs and immigration checks at both Naushki on the Russian side and Sukhbaatar in Mongolia and be required to complete the appropriate forms.

Mongolia-China border
Most trains cross this border at night, so expect little sleep. You’ll be subjected to customs and immigration checks at Zamyn-Uud in Mongolia and Erlian in China and customs forms will need to be completed. Once your passport is returned, you’re usually free to disembark and look around.

The train’s bogies are changed at Erlian. If wanting to watch, stay on the train until it reaches the bogie changing sheds. Here, the carriages are raised and the bogies are replaced with those used in China. You may be able to take photos. You can then walk or take a rick-shaw back to the station proper.

The Trans-Manchurian route: Moscow - Beijing. Just beyond Ulan Ude on Baikal’s east shore, it heads south across the Mongolian steppe to Ulaan Baatar and Beijing.

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