

# Highway to Moscow

## 14 days | Beijing to Moscow



### TRANS-SIBERIAN JOURNEY

*BEIJING TO MOSCOW: Riding the Trans-Mongolian, from Beijing to Mongolia - a land of unique beauty, with the option to visit breathtaking Terej National Park before crossing the border into Russia. Stopping at Irkutsk en route, where you can opt spend two nights by beautiful Lake Baikal, before continuing your journey through Siberia and on to Moscow.*

### HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

#### Trip Highlights

- Independently explore China's capital or book a Beijing city tour including a visit the legendary Great Wall of China
- Travel from Beijing to Moscow, along the Trans-Mongolian and Trans-Siberian Railway line, taking in incredible views of Gobi Desert, Lake Baikal and the Ural Mountains
- Discover the unique beauty of Mongolia, with endless steppe, rugged mountains and nomadic tribes people.
- Explore Ulaan Baatar, set on the banks of the Tuul River or opt to spend two nights in a traditional Mongolian ger, camping in beautiful Terej National Park

- Visit Irkutsk, a former Cossack garrison & trading centre, with the option to spend two nights in Listvyanka on the shore of beautiful Lake Baikal
- End your adventure in Moscow and consider extending your stay to explore Russia's captivating capital

#### What's Included

- 7 breakfasts
- 2 nights 3 star hotel in Beijing
- 3 nights 3 star hotel in Irkutsk
- 2 nights 3 star hotel in Ulaan Baatar
- 6 nights on board train (2nd class, 4 berth sleeper cabin)
- Train journey: Beijing - Moscow
- Beijing airport arrival transfer on day 1
- Transfer to Beijing train station (not platform) on day 3
- Return rail station transfers in Irkutsk and Ulaan Baatar

#### What's Not Included

- Flights and visas
- No meals aboard the train
- This journey is semi-independent and is unescorted. It is not a group departure and you will not have a tour guide.

### DETAILED ITINERARY

#### Day 1 : Beijing

Beijing. Upon arrival at Beijing Airport you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to explore China's bustling capital. **Overnight - Beijing**

#### Day 2 : Opt to walk the Great Wall

Spend the day at leisure, independently exploring Beijing or book an optional Beijing sightseeing tour, escorted by a knowledgeable local guide. On the tour, walk a section of the legendary Great Wall at Badaling in the morning before heading back to Beijing for an included lunch and a visit to Tiananmen Square and the vast Forbidden City, which was the centre of power for five centuries. **Overnight - Beijing (B)**

#### Day 3 : Life onboard



Beijing - Ulaan Baatar. Transfer to the Beijing rail station this morning to board the train to Ulaan Baatar, the capital of Mongolia, one of the most elevated countries in the

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world. Leaving Beijing behind and crossing the border the train enters the flat, dry and sparsely populated landscape of the Gobi desert before travelling north through landscapes of uninterrupted steppe, with the occasional nomad, camel and ger dotting the landscape. **Overnight - Train (B)**

## Days 4-6 : Ulaan Baatar



Ulaan Baatar (Outer Mongolia) - Mid-afternoon arrival on day 4 (subject to border formalities & inevitable delays) into Ulaan Baatar. The pine-covered mountains, wide boulevards, vast public squares and parks give the capital a feeling of spaciousness, while the ger communities, Buddhist temples and bustling market places give it a rustic charm. Transfer to your hotel and spend two days at leisure exploring the city. Alternatively book our Terej National Park & ger camp add-on.

### Terej National Park & ger camp add-on:

Upon arrival into Ulaan Baatar on day 4, have lunch and transfer to nearby Terej National Park, stopping to visit a nomadic family en route. With scenic alpine surrounds this protected area is host to diverse flora and fauna and famous for its unique granite rock formations. Spend two nights camping out in a Mongolian ger on the steppe.

On the afternoon of day 6 board the train for your onward journey to Irkutsk. In the evening the train will reach the Mongolia border point at Sukhe-Batorcross and after inevitable customs and immigration formalities and delays, you will cross the border into Russia after midnight (day 7). **Overnight - Ulaan Baatar (days 4 & 5), Train (day 6) (B:2)**

## Days 7-9 : Irkutsk & optional Lake Baikal



Irkutsk. Mid afternoon arrival into Irkutsk on day 7. Irkutsk is a town with the Asiatic influences of nearby Mongolia and China and curious architecture - which a legacy of Siberia's exiled aristocrats. Spend the next three days at leisure exploring the town. Or book one of the following optional excursions:

**Listvyanka & Lake Baikal:** Spend two relaxing days in the village of Listvyanka by beautiful Lake Baikal, where you can independently explore or opt to also add-on our Lake Baikal Discovery package to include guided sightseeing.

**Irkutsk Summer Trek & Camp:** Enjoy an overnight trekking excursion through the scenic taiga of the Primorsky Mountain to Lake Baikal, camping overnight in a picturesque bay. **Overnight - Irkutsk (B:2)**

## Days 10-13 : On the train



Late afternoon transfer to the rail station for the onward journey to Moscow across tracts of Siberia and the Ural Mountains. **Overnight - Train (B:1)**

## Day 14 : Moscow

Moscow. A very early arrival into Russia's capital, at approximately 4am, when your journey of a lifetime ends.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Although schedules dictate a morning arrival in Moscow on day 14, we recommend that you to stay for at least one night in Moscow to avoid the risk of missing your onward international flight in case of delays and also to see the sights. Why not stay a few days in Moscow? Please contact us for Moscow stopover rates.

## Optional Excursion: Listvyanka & Lake Baikal

### Starts/ends: Irkutsk. 2 night excursion

Discover the beauty of Lake Baikal on this 2 night excursion to lakeside Listvyanka. Listvyanka is a charming village dotted with traditional Siberian wooden houses, with a main road that runs right along the shore of Lake Baikal, making it the perfect base to explore this picturesque region. The deepest lake in the world (1620m) on merit of magnitude alone, Lake Baikal is renowned as one of earth's most impressive natural wonders and known as 'the pearl of Siberia'.

Upon arrival into Irkutsk, transfer to Listvyanka village stopping for lunch en route. Spend 2 nights in Listvyanka with free time to explore the town and visit the Lake Baikal Museum, soak up the scenery around the lake or choose from the exciting optional activities offered below. The next day transfer back to Irkutsk where you will spend a night, stopping for lunch en route.

Please note: This add-on is only available on Trans-Siberian journeys which have a stopover in Irkutsk. The 2 night stay in Listvyanka is in place of 2 of the nights spent in Irkutsk, not in addition to.

**Listvyanka & Lake Baikal Bolt-on includes:** 2 nights 3 star hotel star in Listvyanka, private return transfer from Irkutsk to Listvyanka. 2 breakfasts and 2 lunches.

For prices please visit [www.onthegotours.com](http://www.onthegotours.com) or contact us for further details. This optional excursion must be booked prior to departure.

## Lake Baikal Optional Activities

If you are booking the Listvyanka & Lake Baikal excursion above, then enhance your 2

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night stay in Listvyanka by including guided sightseeing...

## Lake Baikal Discovery

Take a guided tour of Listvyanka and the Lake Baikal Museum, before a scenic guided walk the following day. Summer - From Listvyanka take a ferry to Port Baikal the next day, for a guided walk along the Circum Baikal route with picnic lunch. Winter - Guided walk on the shore of the frozen lake and lunch. Fitness level - standard. Offered all year round.

For prices please visit [www.onthegotours.com](http://www.onthegotours.com) or contact us for further details. This optional activity must be booked prior to departure.

## Optional Excursion: Irkutsk Summer Trek & Camp

### Starts/ends: Irkutsk. 1 night excursion

Transfer from Irkutsk and trek through the stunning taiga of the Primorsky Mountain to a nearby bay on the shores of Lake Baikal. Camp overnight beside the lake. The following day trek to Listvyanka, a village on the shores of Lake Baikal, before returning to Irkutsk.

Please note: This add-on is only available on Trans-Siberian journeys which have a stopover in Irkutsk and cannot be booked in conjunction with the Listvyanka & Lake Baikal add-on above. The trek is only offered during the summer months (May - September). Fitness level - high.

### Irkutsk Summer Trek & Camp includes:

1 night camping, all camping equipment including sleeping bag, services of a local guide, return transfers from Irkutsk, 1 breakfast, 2 lunches and 1 dinner. You will be picked up from your accommodation at 9am

For prices please visit [www.onthegotours.com](http://www.onthegotours.com) or contact us for further details. This optional excursion must be booked prior to departure.

## Optional Excursion: Terej NP & Ger Camp

### Starts/ends Ulaan Baatar. 2 night excursion

Just a short distance from Ulaan Baatar is the beautiful Terej National Park, a wonderful

landscape of pine covered cliffs, grassy steppe and giant granite rocks which have been eroded by the elements into bizarre shapes, such as Turtle Rock. In this scenic setting, where opportunities for outdoor pursuits abound, camp out in a traditional Mongolian ger (a sturdy wood and felt tent) and explore the beautiful surrounds.

Upon arrival into Ulaan Baatar, transfer to nearby Terej National Park visiting Turtle Rock en route. Spend 2 nights in a traditional ger camp within the national park, visit a local nomadic family to gain a fascinating insight into traditional Mongolian life and enjoy free time, allowing you to simply relax, trek or perhaps explore this beautiful wild region of Mongolia on horseback. The next day transfer back to Ulaan Baatar.

**Please note:** This add-on is only available on Trans-Siberian journeys which have a stopover in Ulaan Baatar. Your 2 night stay at the ger camp is in place of the 2 nights spent in Ulaan Baatar, not in addition to.

Due to extreme weather, clients undertaking this add-on during the winter can decide upon arrival whether to stay in permanent accommodation or a Mongolian ger.

**Terej NP & Ger Camp includes:** 2 nights ger camping in Terej National Park, a visit to a nomadic family and Turtle Rock, return transfer from Ulaan Baatar to Terej National Park. Services of a local guide. 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches and 2 dinners. Note: 3 lunches included on westbound journeys from Moscow.

For prices please visit [www.onthegotours.com](http://www.onthegotours.com) or contact us for further details. These optional activities must be booked prior to departure.

## City Tours

Enhance your stay by booking a guided sightseeing tour in the following cities.

All tours are escorted by a local guide and include relevant transfers and transportation.

**Beijing Sightseeing Tour** - An excursion to Badaling to walk a section of The Great Wall and a guided tour of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. Full day tour, including

lunch. Meet your guide in the hotel lobby at 08:30am.

**Ulan Ude City Tour** - A half day guided tour of Ulan Ude including Ivolginsky Datsan Buddhist temple and a visit to the Ethnographic Museum.

**Yekaterinburg City Tour** - A half day guided tour of Yekaterinburg that visits the monastery that marks the site of the Romanov's execution, Ganina Yama - a monastic complex built on the site where their bodies were discarded and the Europe/Asia border. Pick up time 9am from your accommodation.

**Moscow Walking Tour** - A 3 hour guided walking tour through Moscow's city centre, taking in the sights of Red Square - the brightly coloured St Basil's Cathedral, the ritzy GUM department store and, if open, Lenin's Mausoleum. Meet your guide in the hotel lobby at 9am.

For prices please visit [www.onthegotours.com](http://www.onthegotours.com) or contact us for further details. These optional activities must be booked prior to departure.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### 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 on arrival 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.

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## 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 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, and in particular, the United States. 4 star accommodation available upon request.

## 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 you're a resident of the UK and would like someone to handle your visa application for you then we recommend CIBTvisas. Please visit <http://www.cibtvisas.co.uk/onthego> for details.

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](http://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 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.
- Aboard 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).

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- Two spare passport photos/passport photocopy 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 areas of the wagon clean. 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 Mongolia 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 rickshaw back to the station proper.

## China Country Guide

## Welcome to China - Arrival transfer

**For tours starting in Beijing** A complimentary airport arrival transfer is included when arriving into Beijing Capital Airport. After attending to immigration and customs formalities, please proceed to the arrival hall. If arriving to Beijing into Terminal 2, when exiting immigration to the arrivals hall, please turn right where our representative will be waiting. If arriving into Terminal 3 you

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will be met just outside the restricted area. The prominent sign depicting our company logo easily identifies our representative. Please have your Tour Voucher handy and make it available to our representative. Our representative will assist you with your luggage and escort you to our vehicle, for your transfer to your hotel.

**If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative** after waiting 20 minutes (remember Beijing is a busy International Airport) or your flight to China is delayed, please call or send a text message (standard text message, not Messenger or WhatsApp) to the emergency contact number as stated on your Tour Voucher.

If you require a transfers from Daxing International Airport, this can be arranged at an additional fee, please speak with your reservations consultant for further details.

## Visas & passports

Visa requirements are subject to change and visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from China.

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book all services. Please be advised visa requirements are subject to change, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel. For information about visas, head to [www.onthegotours.com/China/Visas](http://www.onthegotours.com/China/Visas)

Please note: If you plan to renew your passport between now and your departure date, please let us know as soon as possible (not your soon to be old passport details). When booking accommodation, trains or flights, we must have the details of the passport that you will be carrying with you on your trip.

## Health requirements & water

You should seek medical advice for vaccinations and about medications before travelling.

As tap water is not safe to drink in China, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available from hotels, shops and restaurants. Make sure bottled water is sealed.

## Essential packing

Please check local temperatures so you can pack accordingly. Visit [www.worldclimate.com](http://www.worldclimate.com)

- Food in China is very different and arguably better than your local takeaway! If you prefer western snack food, consider bringing a supply
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume, basic torch/flash light and umbrella for sun or rain
- Comfortable closed in walking shoes for climbing the Great Wall etc
- DEET based mosquito repellent and antihistamine cream
- Universal travel adaptor
- Tour Voucher and a copy of your travel insurance policy, spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Plastic poncho to go over your jacket. Whilst site-seeing, you can be in the rain for an extended period and even a rain jacket can get soaked. You can purchase a cheap one locally, but we suggest taking one from home of a better quality that doesn't rip easily
- If your tour includes an internal flight, most airlines have a 20kg baggage limit
- Note: The government has introduced a policy for the purpose of environmental protection, whereby hotels no longer supply disposable items such as slippers, shower caps, tooth brush/paste, etc

## Porterage

Pack as light as possible! In China, most often porterage is not available at railway stations and you will need to carry your own luggage. Bags with wheels can be a hindrance when climbing several flights of stairs, though are a blessing when walking lengthy distances to reach our awaiting transportation.

## Media restrictions

There are restrictions on all media, including social media and free press throughout China. Whilst on holiday, you will have limited or

no access to social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus - so no Google Maps and no Play Store. To bypass the firewall, you could look at downloading a VPN, which is much easier to do before you go to China.

## WeChat:

Communication between the group and Tour Guide or Leader is best via the app: WeChat. Please install this App prior to your holiday as it is very hard to download the app once you have arrived in China. If you opt to open the WeChat account prior to arrival and it requests that you have to be contacted by someone already on WeChat before opening your account, don't worry, this can be done locally with your guide (just have the app downloaded ready to finalise opening your account locally).

There is also limited international calling options, so please check with your local provider before leaving home, to source the best roaming or online options to keep in regular contact with family and friends during your travels.

## Travelling by train

Fast and efficient, China's first rail lines were laid in the 19th century, and today the government continues to invest heavily in this crucial mode of transport which connects many parts of the country. When travelling during the day, 'soft' seats, that is to say 'upholstered' seats are provided.

For overnight travel on some of our "Signature Range" tours, clients are accommodated in 'soft class' sleeper cabins. Aboard each wagon are 9 compartments that comprise of 4 bunks per compartment. Four people of mixed gender share one compartment. On occasion, dependent upon group size, you may be sharing with local people on the overnight journey, though sometimes dependent upon how the Chinese Railways Booking Office configure the bookings, the cabin may be filled with four of our passengers.

A dining wagon serves reasonably priced Chinese food of the noodles and rice variety, along with snacks and drinks. A very simple

## Highway to Moscow - 14 days

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# Highway to Moscow

menu is published in English. Each wagon offers a WC and hand basin facility. At one end, is a Chinese squat-style WC, whilst at the other end is a modern Western-style WC. Cabins are lockable from the inside and luggage is stowed in overhead compartments and under the bottom bunk. Bed linen and slippers are supplied, and often there is a TV mounted on the wall at the end of each bed that may even work. Most channels are broadcast in Mandarin, excluding one English Channel, which has little of interest on it!

For overnight travel on budget "Essentials Range" tours, clients are accommodated in "open" 6 berth bunks. We try to get all of our travellers in the same compartment/seating area so that you can have fun getting to know each other better, playing games etc. It is possible to upgrade to a four-berth soft sleeper on your trip, please contact us at time of booking for rates (upgrades are only possible if the open class ticket has not already been purchased and please note that you will be sleeping in another carriage to that of those in the 6 berth carriages).

## Shopping in China

China is a virtual Aladdin's Cave. Government-run Friendship Stores in almost all cities stock a range of fixed-price souvenirs and handicrafts and can offer a reasonable idea of what is acceptable in terms of quality and price. After a visit to the Friendship Store, visit private stores, craft shops and local department stores. However, the best shopping is often at public markets. If you see something you want, buy it when you see it - prices don't vary greatly, but selection can vary from location to location.

In the tourism industry it's common practice for commission to be offered in exchange for recommending particular shops or suppliers. This can become an issue when clients feel obliged to purchase. We do our best to avoid this by monitoring all shopping experiences offered.

All shopping experiences on your tour have been noted in the itinerary and they have been carefully selected based upon positive feedback from On The Go travellers. You are under no obligation to partake in a

listed shopping experience and you are most welcome to wait inside or outside the premises.

Although we only visit reputable retailers, please note that we cannot explicitly guarantee the quality of their products. All purchases made whilst on holiday with us are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with your purchase. On The Go cannot be held responsible for any items that you buy if they fail to meet expectation, or any shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution.

## Holidays & events

China has many important National Holidays and events that are celebrated throughout the country. During these times (the lead up to them and afterwards) there can be delays to public transport, the roads can be much busier and many sites are a lot more crowded as the locals take this time to visit family, celebrate the holiday and experience the wonders and amazing places within their own country.

During this time you'll likely to encounter a celebratory atmosphere, but an additional level of patience, flexibility and understanding goes a long way so that you may enjoy your holiday.

As tourists, you will be generally be unaffected and your tour guide will do their best to plan around these events. Though when initially planning your holiday, if you prefer not to travel when sites are crowded or are concerned about delays, then travelling during these holidays is possibly not for you. For more information: [www.timeanddate.com/holidays/china/2021](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/china/2021)

## It's not like home!

Travel to far - flung corners of the earth involves lifestyles and conditions that are sometimes very different from what you are used to back home. You must come prepared to cope with unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned. With the greatest respect and in the

interest of your ultimate enjoyment you must understand this. Things can and do change in foreign countries.

Please visit [www.onthegotours.com/China/Travel-tips-and-useful-info](http://www.onthegotours.com/China/Travel-tips-and-useful-info) for what to wear, local customs, currency, WiFi and other helpful information to prepare for your holiday.

- Be prepared as the locals smoke everywhere in China
- The Chinese don't have an awareness of personal space, be ready to have people standing very close to you, nudge you or even walk into you, they are not being rude, it's just a very different culture
- Many tourists report scams in Shanghai, so be friendly but careful. Never ever follow a stranger anywhere
- Spitting and snorting is common in China as they see the use of tissues as unhygienic
- Some locals won't queue and will often walk straight to the front of a line with no awareness or care of what they have done wrong
- Chinese people are delighted if you make any attempt to speak Mandarin, even if it's only a couple of words

## Toilets/washrooms

Public toilets, when found, are usually 'squats' - holes in the ground with footrests at either side and often don't possess a door! They can be a novelty and are easy to use. The custom is to wash with water from a jug or little pipe attached to the toilet using your left hand. Doesn't appeal? Here are some hints!

- Time yourself with the accommodations you are staying at
- If you are out and about, find the nearest hotel, restaurant, fast food outlet, or toilets at tourist attractions, which all tend to have Western style facilities
- Ask your tour guide to make a stop
- Always take some antiseptic hand gel or antibacterial hand wipes with you and BYO toilet paper as its rare in public toilets

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