



Eastern Siberia

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Best Places to Eat

- Rassolnik (p486)
- Kochevnik (p486)
- Figaro (p486)
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- Gastropub Tolsty Kray (p470)

Best Places to Stay

- Aldyn Bulak Yurt Hotel (p461)
- Belka Hostel (p489)
- Iris (p467)
- Mergen Bator (p502)
- Nikita's Homestead (p492)

Why Go?

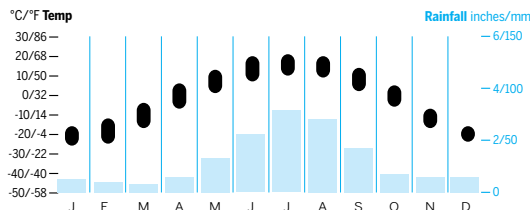
Endless ice-bound winters, kiln-hot summers, a history of imperial exile and Stalinist savagery – Eastern Siberia (Восточная Сибирь) may not sound like everyone's first choice of holiday destination, but there's much more to this vast region than blood-craving mosquitoes and blizzard-lost Gulag camps.

Focus is given to the map by glorious Baikal, the world's deepest lake. Only Siberia could possess such a phenomenon with its crystal waters, mind-boggling stats and a long list of outlandish endemic species. The lake presents a major obstacle to the Trans-Siberian Railway, which cradles Siberia in a string of intriguing cities such as architecturally grand Irkutsk, exotically Asian Ulan-Ude and youthful, oil-rich Krasnoyarsk.

But the trick to enjoying Eastern Siberia is in escaping the cities – hit the Great Baikal Trail, go hunting for Tuvan standing stones or seek out far-flung Buddhist temples in Buryatiya – the possibilities are endless, almost as endless as the immense sweep of geography they occupy.

When to Go

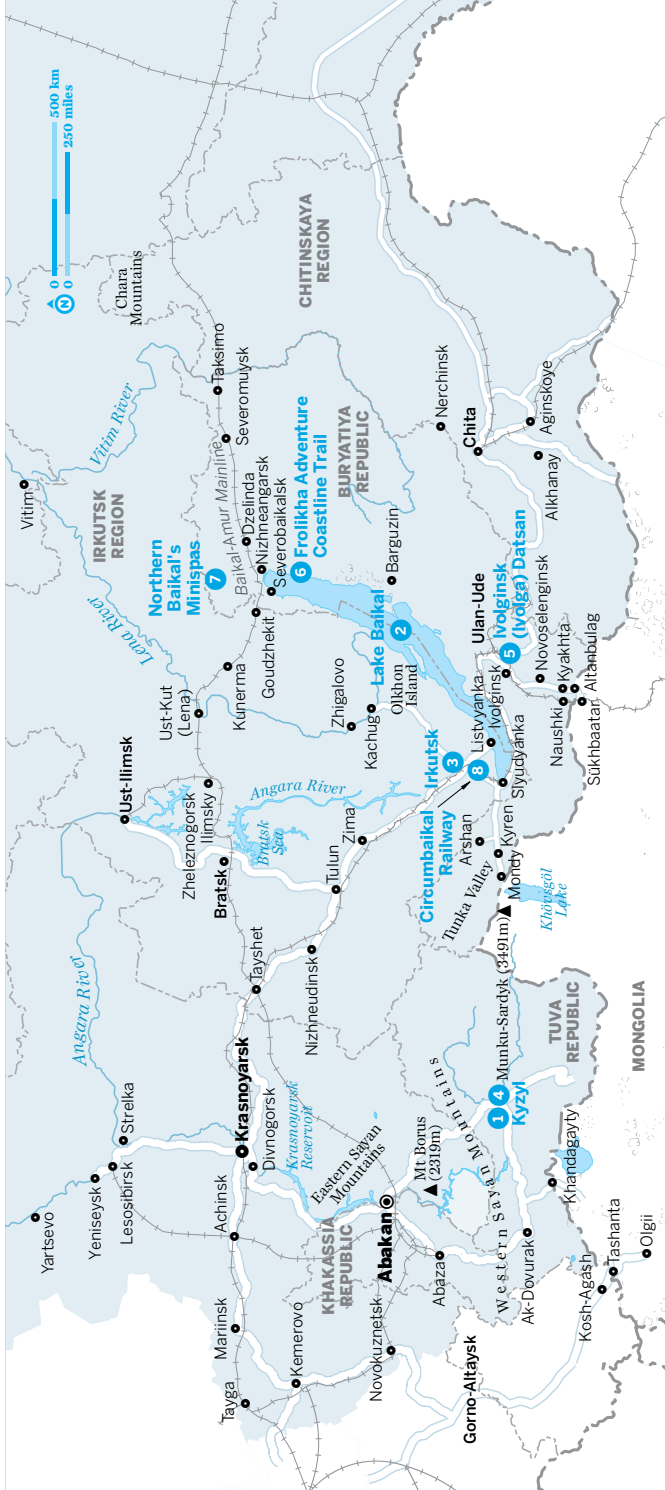
Irkutsk



Mar Do a spot of ice fishing on Lake Baikal when the Siberian winter turns its surface hard as steel.

Jul Get on down at Shushenskoe's Mir Sibiri International Music Festival.

Sep Watch larch trees around Lake Baikal turn a fiery yellow during the brief autumn.



Eastern Siberia Highlights

- 1 Wonder at the ancient Scythian gold displayed at Kyzyl's **National Museum** (p460).
- 2 Trek, cycle or hitch a lift across frozen **Lake Baikal** (p478).
- 3 Wander boulevards of haughty 19th-century architecture in **Irkutsk** (p479).
- 4 Be amazed at the uncanny sounds a human voice can

- 5 Mooch with the monks at **Ivoginsk (Ivolga) Datsan** (p505) and many other revived Buddhist monasteries.
- 6 Bag up your boots for the **Frolikha Adventure Coastline Trail** (p476), one of Siberia's most exhilarating long-distance hiking routes.
- 7 Get into hot water at

- 8 northern **Baikals' minispas** (p475) for a spot of R'n'R Siberian-style.
- 9 Take a turn around Baikal's rocky southern shore on the **Circumbaikal Railway** (p494).