



# Western Siberia

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Slavyansky Bazar (p428)
- ➔ Yermolaev (p413)
- ➔ Chaynaya Sinyukha (p441)
- ➔ La Maison (p423)

## Best Places to Stay

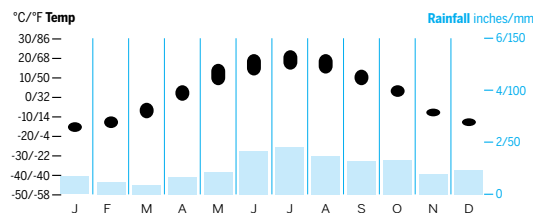
- ➔ Vsyo Prosto! (p413)
- ➔ Hotel Yamskaya (p417)
- ➔ Avenue Hotel (p422)
- ➔ Gogol Hotel (p427)

## Why Go?

Heading east from the Ural Mountains, the influence and reach of Moscow noticeably begins to wane as one enters Western Siberia (Западная Сибирь). Unforgiving winters and a history of gulags give the region a bad rap. The reality is much different. Western Siberia is surprisingly friendly, with plenty to offer the passing traveller. Expect contrasts and extremes, from mountain-ringed lakes to underground cafes, from urban chaos to remote areas where an encounter with a fellow traveller is a real event. It's not the easiest place in which to travel. Visitors need a willingness to rough it, and it helps to be able to speak at least rudimentary Russian. But those who make the effort will be rewarded with an insight into the Siberian way of life and – perhaps more importantly – receive a dose of the locals' legendary hospitality.

## When to Go

### Novosibirsk



**May** Grand WWII Victory Day celebrations in Novosibirsk, wild-flowers blooming in Altai.

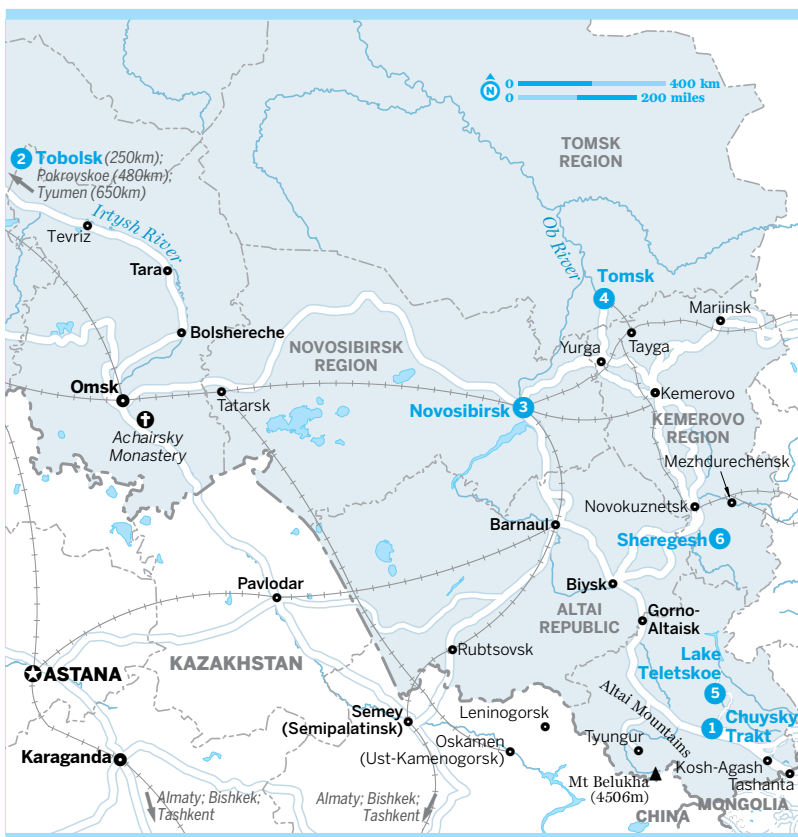
**Jul-Sep** Bustling street scene in cities, trekking season in Altai.

**Dec-Jan** Tramp through Tomsk's winter wonderland and greet the New Year, Russian style.

## History

Siberia's early Altai people were conceivably progenitors of the Inuit-Arctic cultures and of the Mongol-Turkic groups, which expanded in westbound waves with Attila, Chinggis (Genghis) Khaan and Timur (Tamerlane). The name Siberia comes from Sibir, a Turkic khanate and successor-state to the Golden Horde that ruled the region following Timur's 1395 invasion.

From 1563, Siber started raiding what were then Russia's easternmost flanks. A Volga brigand called Yermak Timofeevich was sent to counterattack. Though he had only 840 Cossack fighters, the prospect of battle seemed better than the tsar's death sentence that hung over him. With the unfair advantage of firearms, the tiny Cossack force managed to conquer Tyumen in 1580, turning Yermak into a Russian hero. Two years later Yermak occupied Siber's capital



## Western Siberia Highlights

- 1 Drive towards the Mongolian border along Altai's spectacular **Chuysky Trakt** (p444).
- 2 Explore Siberia's old capital, **Tobolsk** (p415), with its glorious kremlin and Old Town.
- 3 Take time out in Siberia's new capital, **Novosibirsk** (p419), with its bustling bars and varied museums.
- 4 Take a stroll through the student city of **Tomsk** (p425) and its picturesque wooden homes.
- 5 Chill out at placid **Lake Teletskoe** (p442), Western Siberia's answer to Lake Baikal.
- 6 Drop in at **Sheregesh** (p431), a snowboard mecca with a blistering party scene.