



Lake Baikal: Krasnoyarsk to Ulan-Ude

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Route Info

- » Distance: 1544km
- » Duration: 24 to 26½ hours
- » Time zones: Moscow +4,
Moscow +5

Best Places to Stay & Eat

- » Baikaler Eco-Hostel (p199)
- » Hotel Sayen (p192)
- » Derevenka (p200)
- » Nikita's Homestead (p204)
- » Kochevnik restaurant
(p193)
- » Baatarai Urgöö restaurant
(p211)

Why Go?

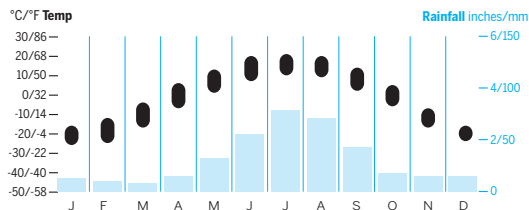
If you've made it this far from Moscow or Běijing, this 1500km ribbon of rail and sleeper is where things get interesting. Arguably the most varied stretch of the line, bid farewell to your *provodnitsa* (carriage attendant) along its length for some of the most memorable experiences Siberia has to offer.

Most making a single halt on their Trans-Sib odyssey do so in Irkutsk, surely Siberia's most engaging city. Only 350 years old in 2011, this grande dame packs in heaps of history, and when you tire of ornate facades, stuccoed palaces and streets of traditional timber dwellings, glorious Lake Baikal, the unrivalled highlight of any rail trip across Russia, is just a short bus ride away.

When the tracks finally peel away from Baikal's mind-boggling vistas, Trans-Sibbers find themselves in the Republic of Buryatiya, an exotically Asian retreat of Buddhist temples and shamanist traditions, increasingly coming under the gravitational pull of southern neighbour Mongolia.

When to Go

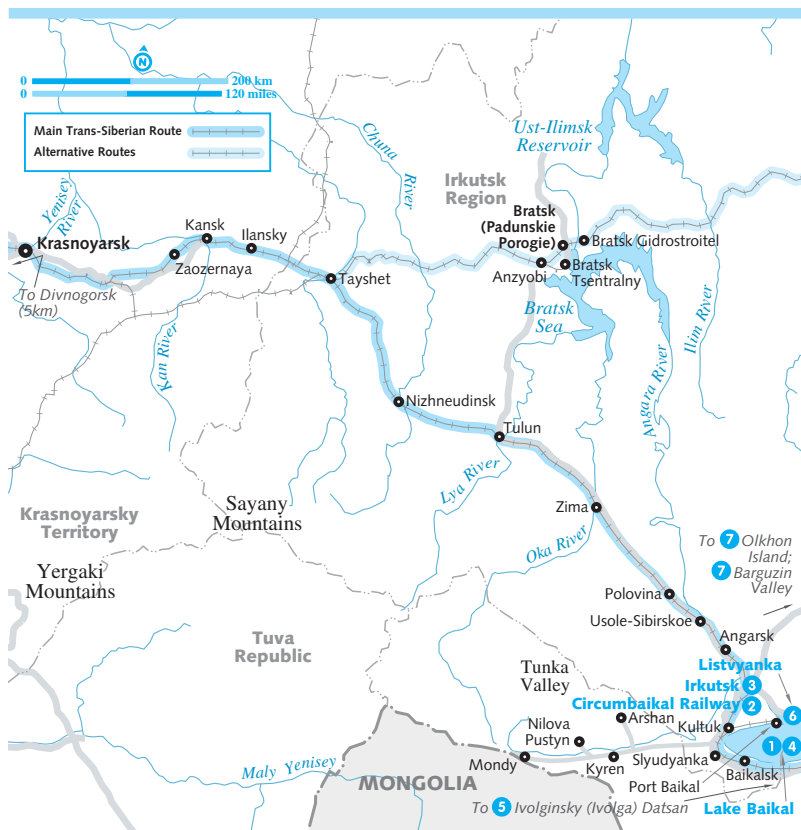
Irkutsk



Nov-Mar Snuggle into a Russian Railways blanket and watch the snowbound Siberian landscapes.

Mar Take a stroll on Lake Baikal when Siberia's harsh winter turns its surface hard as steel.

Jul & Aug Join holidaying Russians on the sandy beaches of Lake Baikal's eastern shore.



Krasnoyarsk to Ulan-Ude Highlights

- 1 Gazing out across the southern shores of **Lake Baikal** from a slow train between Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude (p179), possibly the most attractive section of the entire Trans-Sib line
- 2 Taking the ultimate Trans-Sib branch line trip on the **Circumbaikal Railway** (p203) for some stunning Baikal vistas
- 3 Admiring the ostentatious 19th-century architecture of **Irkutsk** (p187), once known as the 'Paris of Siberia'
- 4 Walking, cycling or hitching a lift across frozen **Lake Baikal** (p197)
- 5 Mooching with the monks at Buddhist temple **Ivolginsky (Ivolga) Datsan** (p213)
- 6 Navigating a section of the **Great Baikal Trail** between Listvyanka (p197) and Bolshe Koty (p202)
- 7 Enjoying a couple of meditative days on wonderful **Olkhon Island** (p202) or getting away from it all in the often overlooked **Barguzin Valley** (p214)

The Route

Krasnoyarsk to Tayshet

4098KM FROM MOSCOW Heading east out of Krasnoyarsk your fellow travellers will not have even fathomed there's a foreigner in their midst before the train crosses the 1km-long **Yenisey River bridge**, whose 1898 original won a gold

medal at the 1900 Paris Expo (along with the Eiffel Tower). The Yenisey traditionally marks the unofficial border between Eastern and Western Siberia. **4229KM** There's no stop for the *Rossiya*, but most other trains do shudder to a halt at **Uyar**, where you can admire the dinky cream and green art nouveau-style station. Understandably the