

Welcome to the Trans- Siberian Railway



The 'Track of the Camel'

We often talk about the Trans-Siberian as a single railway or even as the 'express'. Perhaps it was closest to being *the* Trans-Siberian at the turn of the 20th century, when this engineering feat was celebrated in a grand opening. In reality, it is several different routes and experiences. And as for 'express' – well, it was never that, not this magnificently slow 'track of the camel'.

Russia, Mongolia, China. Three countries, and plenty of opportunities to alight and explore any or all of them during stopovers. Regardless of which route or routes you choose, it's a magnificently rewarding experience of changing landscapes and cultures, people, and of life on the rails.

Russia's Soul

Today, the track from Russia's capital to Vladivostok is the classic Trans-Siberian route. It offers the chance to explore Russia's regions, and after completing its length, you'll have a lasting insight into its people. Involving a six-day nonstop journey, this route is a rite of passage through the taiga-bristled soul of Russia.

Cultural Contrast

The Trans-Mongolian, taking you through Russia, China and Mongolia, is a different experience altogether. Complete this trip nonstop, as is frequently done, and the experience of travelling on the Chinese trains K3 from Běijīng or K4 from

*Endless taiga, crackling
or snow-dusted steppe,
mountains, the Gobi Desert
and the Great Wall – the
Trans-Siberian routes across
Asia unite landscapes and
experiences into the journey
of a lifetime.*

(left) Trans-Siberian journey through autumnal Russian landscapes
(below) House facade in historic Tobolsk (p160)



Moscow might strike you as a cross between a high-rolling party and a geographical expedition conducted from inside a train carriage. Make stopovers and catch short-hop trains, however, and the route offers the chance to explore deeply three very different countries and cultures.

Mongolia & Manchuria

The Trans-Manchurian is an eclectic and unusual route, traversing much of Siberia and veering south into the grasslands of Inner Mongolia and into Manchuria on the flagship *Vostok*. This is a Russian train staffed by Russians who, incidentally, are among the most personable staff you will find anywhere on the world's rails. A high-

light of this route is the Manchurian town of Hā'ěrbin (Harbin).

Taiga & Tunnels

And then there's the Baikal-Amur Mainline (Baikalo-Amurskaya Magistral; BAM). The most recent of the great Russian rail projects so far completed, it was hailed as the 'Hero Project of the Century' and may one day form part of a rail link across the Bering Strait. If you like railways, you'll love the BAM: tunnels, mountains, limitless taiga, and the beauty of train travel itself, made simply for the sake of a journey.