



Ulan-Ude to Vladivostok

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Route Info

- » Distance: 3648km
- » Duration: Two days, 13½ hours
- » Time zones: Moscow +5 to Moscow +7

Best Places to Stay & Eat

- » Boutique Hotel (p235)
- » See You Hostel (p244)
- » Hotel Vizit (p225)
- » Zima bar (p246)
- » Pyongyang restaurant (p245)

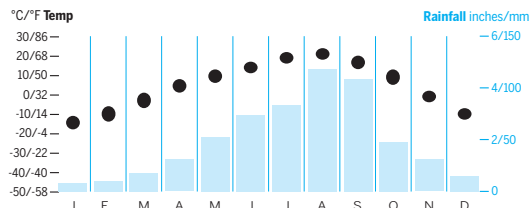
Why Go?

The Trans-Siberian's last leg covers 3648km – that's more than the Moscow–Ulan-Ude journey alone – as it rolls into Russia's 'wild east'. This region has always lived by its own rules. 'Moscow is far' runs the local mantra. The people, like the countryside, are a bit wilder and more rugged than their Western brethren. Travelling this way before the Trans-Siberian was built, Anton Chekhov wrote that it 'seethes with life in a way that you can have no conception of in Europe'. And that's still apt.

Out the window, the taiga and Stalin-era housing blocks may seem similar to back west, but off the tracks lurk surprises like Blagoveshchensk, a border town of tsar-era buildings on the Amur River; Birobidzhan, Stalin's failed 'Zion'; and the bustling riverside metropolis of Khabarovsk. The railway ends at the stunning mountains-meet-ocean setting of Vladivostok, a once-closed navy port that today is Asia's uniquely Russian rising powerhouse.

When to Go

Vladivostok



Feb & Mar Still the season for snowy delights, yet not too dark or too slushy.

Jun Essentially mid-spring, with all the beauty and climatic uncertainty that entails.

Sep & Oct Better weather, more square hectares of autumn foliage than anywhere on Earth.

The Route

Ulan-Ude to Chita

5655KM FROM MOSCOW Trans-Mongolian trains (p265) bid farewell to the main Trans-Sib route at **Zaudinsky**, virtually a suburb of Ulan-Ude. The main line then follows the wide Uda Valley with bare rolling hills visible across the plains. At an unmarked station about half an hour out of Ulan-Ude (before Onokhoi), a marshalling yard serves as a steam-loco graveyard. The scenery here is pretty, as the wide, flood-prone valleys continue, their rolling meadows backed distantly by trees on the north-facing slopes.

5771KM Quaint log-cabin settlements are scattered with patches of attractive woodland. You enter **Zabaikalsky Region** 20km beyond Novoiyskiy. Local time becomes Moscow time plus six hours.

5784KM Petrovsky-Zavod is the station for the mildly historic town of Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky. The station name (and the old name of the town) means 'Peter's Factory', so called for the huge ironworks you may spot from the train. Decembrists jailed here from 1830 to 1839 are commemorated in a large mural on the station building, worth getting off to take a snap of if there's time (although the *Rossiia* makes only a two-minute stop here). There's also a good Decembrist Museum not far from the station, and if you're on the Decembrist trail through Siberia the town could make a very off-the-beaten-track day trip from Ulan-Ude. A few minutes out of Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky look out for a cemetery to the right of the tracks where some Decembrists are buried.

5800-6300KM The tracks now head northeast following the Khilok Valley, with the **Yablonovy Mountains** forming blue shadows in the distance.

5884KM At the small airbase town of **Bada**, look up from your instant noodles to admire a MiG-fighter monument.

5925KM The train slows as it leaves the valley and climbs into the mountains, affording inspiring views of the winding river and fields filled with wildflowers.

5932KM The ever-so-slightly art deco station at **Khilok** is the next major stop, with some trains pausing for up to 20 minutes. There is a machine shop for repairing train engines here but little else, as the town is a product of the railway and even has a yellow Trans-Sib train hurtling across its coat of arms.

6130KM Soon after Mogzon the highest point (1040m) on the world's longest rail journey is reached at **Yablonovaya**, where trains pass through a slender gap in the rock.

6198KM Most trains loiter for 25 minutes at **Chita** (p223), long enough to explore the cathedral in the station forecourt. At the station, fans

ULAN-UDE TO VLADIVOSTOK ROUTE PLANNER

Here's a suggested itinerary for finishing up the Trans-Siberian from Ulan-Ude to Vladivostok:

Day 1: Take overnight train to Chita (10 hours); take share taxi to Aginskoe for night

Day 2: Share taxi back to Chita; night train to Blagoveshchensk (36 hours)

Day 3: On train to Blagoveshchensk

Day 4: Tour Blagoveshchensk and spend the night

Day 5: Take a morning *marshrutka* to Bureya, and pick up an eastbound train to Birobidzhan. Spend night in Birobidzhan. Alternatively, spend day in Blagoveshchensk and take night train 386 to Birobidzhan.

Day 6: In Birobidzhan; tour synagogue. Take a *marshrutka* or afternoon commuter train (three hours) to Khabarovsk.

Day 7: Tour Khabarovsk; overnight train to Vladivostok (13 hours)

Day 8: Arrive in Vladivostok

of the *Long Way Round* TV show will recognise the freight platform where Ewan McGregor et al struggled to heave their bikes aboard a Tynda-bound goods wagon.

Chita to Mogocha

6198-6450KM For the next 250km or so east the Trans-Siberian route follows the Ingoda and Shilka Rivers. Stay awake, as it's the most scenic part of this entire route. The best views are to the south, so if heading east grab an aisle seat in *platskart* for this part of the journey. But don't ignore the north side of the train with its rolling, colourful hills. Unfortunately, the 1/2 *Rossiia* (and the identically timed 7/8 train) trundles this way by night, so consider other options, like train 133/134, or (when the days are long) 392 from Chita to Blagoveshchensk.

6264KM River views open up around **Darasun**.

6295KM You'll have 18 minutes at the platform in the industrial city of **Karymskaya** – enough time to quickly check out the brand-new Orthodox church on the north side of the tracks.

6312KM The picturesque village of **Tarskaya** is where the Trans-Manchurian peels off and heads south to the Chinese border; for details of this route, see p290.