



# The Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)

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## Route Info

- ➔ Distance: 4287km
- ➔ Duration: Four days, one hour
- ➔ Time zones: Moscow +5 to Moscow +7

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Baikal Trail Hostel (p243)
- ➔ Biznestsentr (p249)
- ➔ Zolotaya Rybka (p243)
- ➔ Hotel Taiga (p242)
- ➔ Hotel Olymp (p243)

## Why Go?

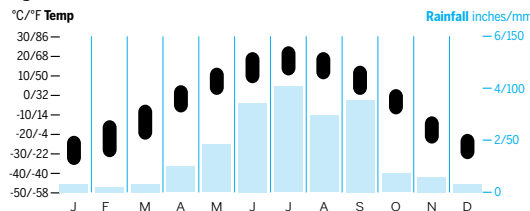
Most people know the Trans-Siberian Railway, but how many can say they've heard of the 'other' Trans-Sib, its poor country cousin, the BAM (Baikal-Amur Mainline or Baikalo-Amurskaya Magistral)? The branch line to end all branch lines, the BAM begins as a set of points at Tayshet and ends more than 4200 lonely kilometres further east at Sovetskaya Gavan, passing through some jaw-slackeningly off-the-map places en route. As great railway journeys go, this is a Soviet epic, a rail-clanging odyssey you'll never forget.

But it's a miracle the BAM was ever built at all. Costing billions of dollars and declared a 'Hero Project of the Century', construction was fraught with seemingly insurmountable difficulties. The line opened fully in 1991, just as the USSR collapsed. Today, only a handful of trains ply the route.

Riding the BAM's snail-paced trains takes you to some very out-of-the-way places. Only Severobaikalsk on Lake Baikal is geared for visitors.

## When to Go

### Tynda



**Mar** Ponder the weird shapes into which Lake Baikal freezes from the shore at Severobaikalsk.

**Sep–Nov** Avoid summer crowds and ticket shortages with an autumn trip along the BAM.

**Sep & Oct** Larch trees around Lake Baikal's north fill the landscape with autumnal gold.

## BAM Highlights

- Getting into hot water at **northern Baikal's minispas** (p247) for a spot of R&R Siberian-style
- Bagging up your boots for the **Frolikha Adventure**

**Coastline Trail** (p244), one of Siberia's most exhilarating long-distance hiking routes

- Touring the BAM's nicest town, St Petersburg-styled **Komsomolsk-na-Amure**

(p247), with Soviet monuments and nearby Nanai villages

- Soaking up all things BAM at the varied and welcoming

**BAM Museum** (p246) in the BAM capital, Tynda

- Looking out across the Bratsk Sea from a BAM train window as you trundle across

the top of the **Bratsk Dam** (p242)

- Trekking a rugged section of the **Great Baikal Trail** (p245) between Baikal's Echo and the Echo

