

Welcome to the Trans-Siberian Railway

Snow-dusted or sun-kissed steppe and taiga, the Gobi Desert and the Great Wall – the Trans-Siberian routes unite landscapes and experiences into the journey of a lifetime.

Jewel in the Crown of the Tsars

No other rail journey can compare to the Trans-Siberian Railway, once hailed as 'the fairest jewel in the crown of the Tsars'. Today the name is shorthand for a web of tracks, fanning out from Moscow and European Russia, across seven time zones to the Pacific edge of Asia. Survivor of revolution, wars, natural calamities and extreme weather, this historic iron way provides access to both contemporary metropolises and stuck-in-time villages as well as beautiful landscapes.

Choice of Routes

Trans-Siberian journeys are packed with wow moments. We defy you not to get a kick out of marching across the cobbles of Moscow's Red Square, wandering around Běijīng's Forbidden City or taking in the glorious panorama of Vladivostok's Golden Horn Bay. The more adventurous will certainly want to explore, and possibly plunge into, icy Lake Baikal or ride with nomads across Mongolia's magnificent steppes. There's also the Baikal-Amur Mainline (Baikal-Amurskaya Magistral; BAM) passing through remote and stunning parts of Siberia.

Slow, Rewarding Travel

The opportunities to alight and explore what was once one of the world's most forbidding and feared destinations are now only limited by your time, budget and imagination. With an average speed of 60kph Trans-Siberian services are not for travellers in a hurry. But there's probably never been a better, more comfortable time to travel with improved train facilities, online ticketing and a proliferation of affordable Western-style hostels and other accommodation along the way.

Cultural Contrast

While aboard the train, embrace the chance to interact with your fellow passengers and learn a little about their respective cultures as you share with them something of your own. Contrary to common conceptions, you'll discover that Russians in particular are among the kindest people you could meet, ever ready to share their provisions and engage in conversation. So whether you're on the Trans-Siberian Railway simply for the sake of the journey or for the access it provides to Russia, China and Mongolia, prepare yourself for a magnificently rewarding experience of changing landscapes and cultures, people, and of life on the rails.



Why I Love the Trans-Siberian Railway

By Simon Richmond, Author

Etched on my memory is the research trip I made for the first edition of this guide, when I was arrested on a platform and separated from my luggage (including computer, notes and nearly all my money) which continued on the train into Siberia. The day was saved by a wonderful collection of Russians who pulled together to reunite me with all my belongings. Awesome engineering feat it may be, but it's this chance to make friends and connect with Russians and other nationalities on the Trans-Siberian Railway that really makes the journey so special.

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Above: Trans-Siberian train skirts Lake Baikal (p168)