



The Trans-Manchurian Route

Includes

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| Mǎnzhōulǐ | 288 |
| Hǎ'ěrbīn..... | 290 |
| Chángchūn..... | 296 |
| Shānhǎiguān..... | 298 |

Route Info

- Distance: 2790km
- Duration: Two days, eight hours
- Time zones: Moscow +7, Moscow +9

Best Places to Stay & Eat

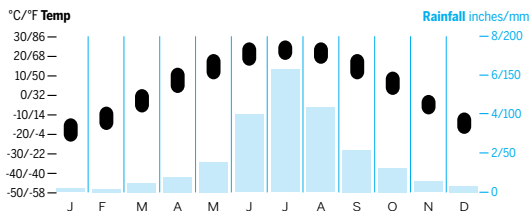
- Lungmen Grand Hotel (p293)
- Fēngzényuán Lùdiàn (p289)
- Sōngyuán Hotel (p297)
- Kazy International Youth Hostel (p293)
- Katusha (p294)
- Orient King of Eastern Dumplings (p294)

Why Go?

For connoisseurs of obscure rail routes, the Trans-Manchurian Railway ranks high on the wish list. It's not on the main line to Vladivostok, nor does it take the 'tourist route' via Mongolia; rather, the weekly Vostok (19/20) chugs through China's rust belt, where foreign faces are few and far between. From Chita the railway heads toward the Chinese border at Mǎnzhōulǐ, sweeps through the grasslands of Inner Mongolia and passes through Hǎ'ěrbīn (Harbin) before carrying on towards the megalopolis that is Běijīng. The highlight is fascinating Hǎ'ěrbīn, where elements of turn-of-the-century Russia still poke through the surface of a thoroughly modern Chinese city. Bullet trains speed south from Hǎ'ěrbīn to Běijīng, but there's plenty to see along the way. Jumping-off points include Chángchūn, one-time capital of Japanese-occupied Manchukuo; Shěnyáng, with well-preserved relics of the Manchu era; and Shānhǎiguān, where the Great Wall meets the sea.

When to Go

Hǎ'ěrbīn



Jan Hǎ'ěrbīn hosts the dazzling Ice & Snow Festival.

Apr & May Avoid the summer hordes and the hot weather by visiting in the shoulder season.

Sep & Oct Another good time to visit, after peak summer season and before the cold sets in.

i The Route

In Russia the kilometre markers show the distance from Moscow. Once in China they show the distance to Hā'ěrbīn (Harbin); south of Hā'ěrbīn, they show the distance to Běijīng.

CHITA TO ZABAİKALSĖ

6199km from Moscow

There's a 20-minute stop at Chita, where you can stagger off the train and forage for snacks at the small shops near the platform.

6293km

The next major stop is Karymskaya, from where it's 12km down the line to Tarskaya, the official start of the Trans-Manchurian route; here the train crosses the Ingoda River and heads south-east.

6444km

There's a short stop at Olovnyannaya, then the train crosses the Onon River, a tributary of the Ingoda. This area is said to be the birthplace of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan.

6543km

The train makes another 10-minute stop at Borzya. A little-known spur line heads south from here to Mongolia; it was built to move military equipment into eastern Mongolia during the Japanese invasion of 1939.

6666km

A few hours are taken for the bogies to be changed in the Russian border town of Zabaikalsk before the train can travel into China. Passably edible meals are available at a cafe across from the station (take the bridge over the tracks and turn left). An ATM inside the station dispenses roubles.

MǎNZHŌULĪ TO Hǎ'ĒRBĪN

935km (to Hǎ'Ērbīn)

Chinese border town Mǎnzhōulī, established in 1901 as a stop for the train, is booming thanks to cross-border trade.

749km

Next along the line is Hǎilǎ'ěr, the northernmost major town in Inner Mongolia, where the train stops for about 10 minutes. This is a great place to experience the Mongolian grasslands at Jīn-zhànghán Grasslands, Shì Wěi or Ēnhé.

650-560km

The train enters the Greater Hinggan Mountains. Some trains make stops at towns such as Mian-duhe (634km), Yilick Ede (574km) and Xinganling (564km). From here the train descends on the eastern side of the range.

539km

Shortly after the 15-minute halt at Boketu, the train leaves Inner Mongolia and enters the province of Hēilóngjiāng, meaning Black Dragon River. Known in Russian as the Amur River, it marks the border with Russia in northeastern China. At this point you can sense a changing climatic and topographic shift as you leave the steppes behind and enter the steamy Manchurian lowlands.

159km

The train makes a brief stop in Dàqīng at the centre of a large oilfield; look out for the 'nodding donkeys' pumping crude oil out of the ground.

1388km (to Běijīng)

The final stretch before Hǎ'ěrbīn, the capital of Hēilóngjiāng province, offers excellent views, especially as you cross the 1km-long bridge over the Sōnghuá River.

Hǎ'ĒRBĪN TO BĒIJĪNG

1146km (to Běijīng)

The train stops for 10 minutes in the industrial city of Chángchūn, capital of Jílín province.

841km

Heading south, the train plies China's blighted rust belt towards Shěnyáng, where the Vostok halts for 15 minutes. This industrial city of 3.5 million people was a Mongol trading centre from the 11th century, becoming the capital of the Manchu empire in the 17th century.

TRANS-MANCHURIAN ROUTE PLANNER

The following is a suggested itinerary for covering the main sights along the Trans-Manchurian route in the area:

Day 1 Leave Chita; overnight train to Zabaikalsk (10 hours); cross border, explore Mǎnzhōulī.

Day 2 From Mǎnzhōulī, take the overnight train to Hǎ'ěrbīn.

Day 3 Explore Hǎ'ěrbīn and overnight.

Day 4 See more of Hǎ'ěrbīn, then train to Chángchūn.

Day 5 Explore Chángchūn, then train to Shěnyáng.

Day 6 Tour Shěnyáng, then continue to Shānhǎiguān.

Day 7 Enjoy Shānhǎiguān, then travel to Běijīng.