



# Ulan-Ude to Vladivostok

## Includes

Chita.....	213
Blagoveshchensk.....	218
Birobidzhan .....	220
Vladivostok .....	227

## Route Info

- Distance: 3648km
- Duration: Two days, 13½ hours
- Time zones: Moscow +8 to Moscow +10

## Best Places to Stay & Eat

- Boutique Hotel (p224)
- Optimum Hostel (p231)
- Gatsby (p225)
- Paulaner Bräuhaus (p233)
- Pyongyang restaurant (p233)

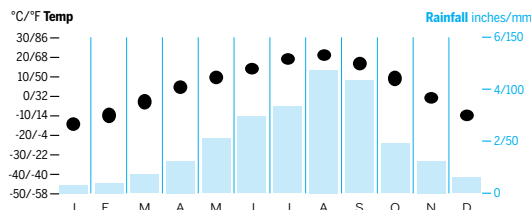
## Why Go?

The Trans-Siberian's last leg covers a staggering 3648km 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 such as Blagoveshchensk, a border town of tsar-era buildings on the Amur River; Birobidzhan, Stalin's failed 'Zion'; and the charming riverside city 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 midspring, with all the beauty and climatic uncertainty that entails.

**Sep–Oct** Better weather, more square hectares of autumn foliage than anywhere on earth.

## **i The Route**

### ULAN-UDE TO CHITA

#### 5655km from Moscow

Trans-Mongolian trains 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 Territory 20km beyond Novoilynsky. 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; it's worth getting off to take a snap if there's time (although the Rossiya 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 good 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.

#### 5800km to 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

Khilok is the next major stop, and the station has some art-deco features. Some trains pause here 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 you will reach the highest point (1040m) on the world's longest rail journey at Yablonovaya, where trains pass through a slender gap in the rock.

#### 6198km

Most trains loiter for 25 minutes at Chita, long enough to explore the cathedral in the station forecourt. At the station, fans 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

#### 6198km to 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 Rossiya (and the identically timed 7/8 train) trundles this way by night, so consider other options such as 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.

#### 6312km to 6412km

For the next 100km or so the train rumbles along the Ingoda past a series of quaint villages strewn with classic Siberian *izby* (wooden houses) adorned with colourful, intricately carved shutters. Just east of Tarskaya station, spot the weather-beaten Orthodox church on the far (south) side of the Ingoda. Come spring you'll see plenty of fishermen in the river.

#### 6417km

East of Onon the Ingoda merges with the Onon River to become the Shilka River.