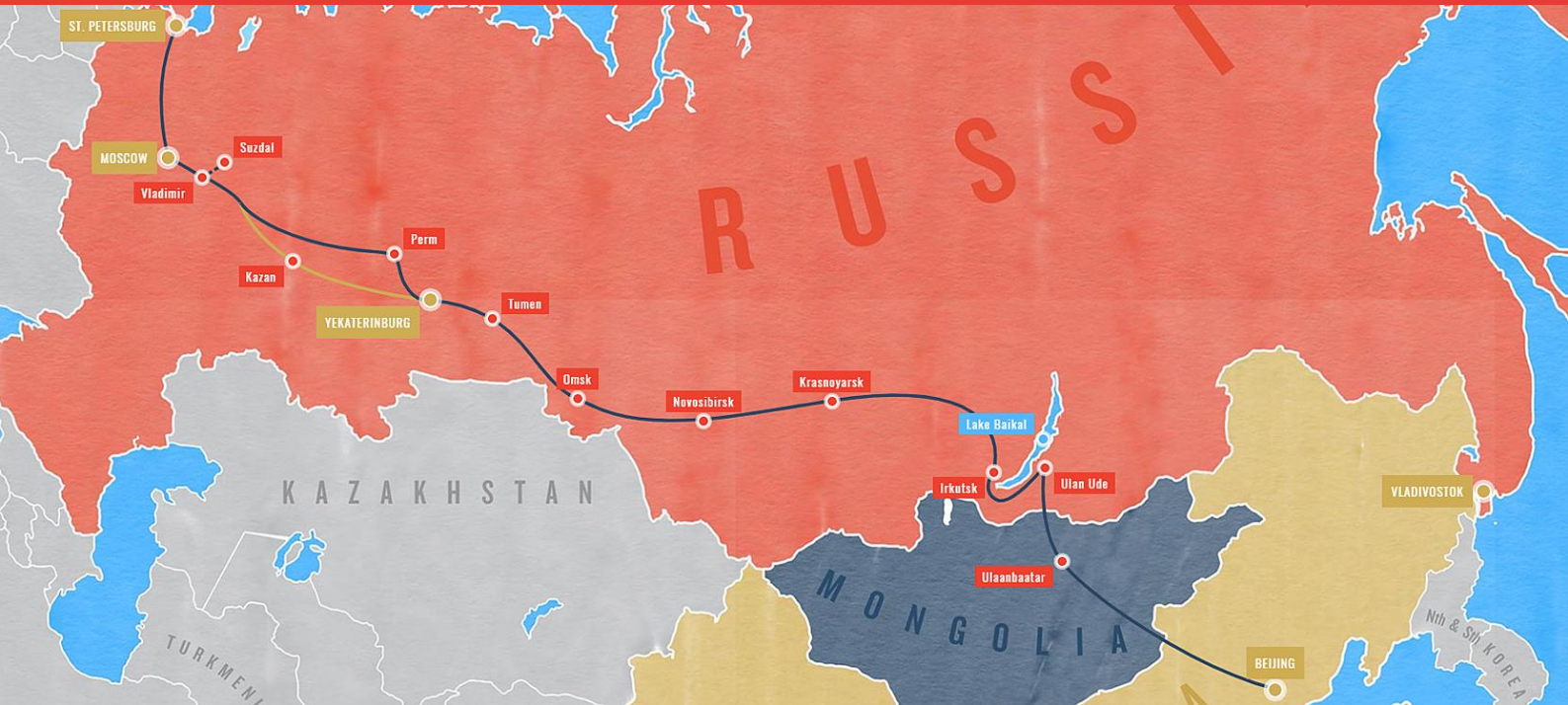




Golden Ring Trans Mongolian Journey



WEST TO EAST



Welcome to St Petersburg

NIGHTS: 3

Arrive at St Petersburg.

Transfer to accommodation for three nights. Choice of homestay, hostel or budget hotel.

A three-hour introductory walking tour is included. Remaining two days are free for optional sightseeing.

St Petersburg is where modern Russia was born under the guidance of the Czar known as Peter the Great, and remained capital of the Russian empire up to the Soviet era. The city was established upon a swamp and is now rightly considered one of the gems of Europe. This is where you can see such grandiose palaces such as the Peterhof (summer palace), The Hermitage (winter palace) and the country estate and parkland of Catherine the Great – Catherine Palace. For history buffs there are many sites associated with the 1917 Revolution.

Arrival and Sightseeing in Moscow

NIGHTS: 3

Day 5. Arrive at Moscow. You will be met and transferred to your selected accommodation for three nights. Choice of homestay, hostel or budget hotel.

Today, Russia's capital, once the heart of global Communism, is one of the world's richest and most dynamic cities.

Three-hour introductory walking tour at 0900hrs, which may include the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Lomonosov University, the New Virgin Monastery and Red Square with its colourful St. Basil's Cathedral. As well there are the notorious former KGB headquarters and the White House.

Moscow is now a city much changed from the Soviet era, but its many surviving examples of architecture complement its thriving theatre and arts and for those so disposed, Moscow has museums to satisfy any interest.

Your first stop should be the Kremlin with its glorious cathedrals. You can also inspect the interiors of some of the buildings. Stop at Red Square as well as a Metro (subway) ride with a visit at two of the ornately decorated old stations.

Day 6. The two following days are free for further sightseeing or optional excursions.

Don't miss our suggestions at www.russiantravelcentre.com for optional sightseeing in Moscow!

Sightseeing around the Golden Ring: Vladimir and Suzdal NIGHTS: 3

The area known as the 'Golden Ring' is one of the most scenic areas of Russia. There are a number of towns and cities that form the Golden Ring. This stop is designed to visit two of the easily accessible highlights.

Day 8: Arrive Vladimir. Arrival time can vary according to train and season. Sightseeing schedule may vary accordingly. Drive to Suzdal for overnight accommodation.

Day 9: Day available for guided sightseeing in Suzdal, one of the most picturesque towns of the Golden Ring. Some say that Suzdal is a 'museum city' in that 80% is original and the other 20% is museums and a reconstructed wooden village of old. There is a Kremlin and some exquisite monasteries.

Day 10: Transfer back back to Vladimir for related sightseeing, including the acclaimed Cathedral of the Assumption.

En route from Vladimir across Siberia to Irkutsk NIGHTS: 4

Day 11. Travel by car to Vladimir 0145hrs (am). Board the Trans Siberian railway bound for Irkutsk – depart 0250hrs (am). Cabins are four berth. Three nights en route.

The Trans Siberian route opens up great visual swathes of Siberia. You will see and thus feel, the immensity of this geographic region, passing sparsely populated village enclaves, interspersed with an occasional large city.

Break out that large novel – War and Peace, Dr Zhivago – or travel chess set! Expect to share a vodka with your Russian fellow travellers, too!

Two nights at Lake Baikal, followed by one in Irkutsk NIGHTS: 3

Day 14. Arrive Irkutsk and transfer to Lake Baikal for two nights, with a further night in Irkutsk. From Irkutsk it is a short drive to Lake Baikal, where you are based for the next two nights.

Lake Baikal, the largest freshwater lake in the world, will astound you with both its wilderness and immensity. You can enjoy the natural wonder of this gigantic lake and partake in some walking or simple relaxation.

In both Irkutsk and at the lake we often use homestay accommodation. This allows you the chance to experience contemporary Russian life, and by using homestays we gain access to a true village environment.

Day 16. Back to Irkutsk for a final night before boarding the train. Irkutsk offers a range of sightseeing options. Perhaps a suburb with its characteristically Siberian wooden houses, or the Decembrist Museum to see how exiled nobility fared in the 19th century! For those with a technical bent there is the museum featuring the old Lake Baikal Ice Breaker.

From Irkutsk by train to Ulaanbaatar NIGHTS: 4

Day 17. Transfer to rail station for departure of train to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Carriages are four-berth.

Train timetables between Irkutsk and Ulaanbaatar (both directions) have changed significantly from December 2017. There are now no daily departures.

From Irkutsk to Ulaanbaatar your options are:

#306 MON/WED/FRI dep at 03:08 Moscow time (08:08 local time. No two-berth available)

#Nr 6 SUN dep at 03:08 Moscow time.

#Nr 4 SAT dep at 03:08 Moscow time

Therefore, depending upon the start date (=day) of the complete programme we may need to adjust your stopover period for Irkutsk and Lake Baikal.

Discovering Mongolia

NIGHTS: 4

Day 18. Transfer to a *ger* (yurt) camp for two nights, approx. 70km out of Ulaanbaatar, to sample the traditionally nomadic Mongol way of life. Free time for 'Grassland Pursuits' including optional activities such as horse or camel riding, archery and hiking.

On Day 20, transfer back to the city homestay for one further night. Balance of the day free to explore more of the capital of the independent Republic of Mongolia (bordered by the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia, further south).

Originally a centre for Buddhist nomads and lamas, Ulaanbaatar became a permanent townsite in the eighteenth century. Since the 1990 overthrow of Soviet Russian-inspired communism, Mongolian Buddhism has experienced a resurgence.

A vibrant conjunction of traditional and twenty-first century lifestyles typifies modern Ulaanbaatar. The city now bears little resemblance to the windswept and provincial Soviet-style outpost encountered by travellers some thirty years ago.

We also offer a wider selection of stopover options to help you explore Ulaanbaatar or venture further afield. Please visit our Mongolia page at www.russiantravelcentre.com

By train across the Gobi Desert to Beijing

NIGHTS: 1

Day 21. Transfer to rail station for overnight train to Beijing.

Arrive Beijing next day. End of arrangements.

The Great Wall of China is said to be the Eighth Wonder of the World and this stopover is your chance to experience it up close. For more information about touring China, including extra services for Beijing, please visit our China pages at www.russiantravelcentre.com