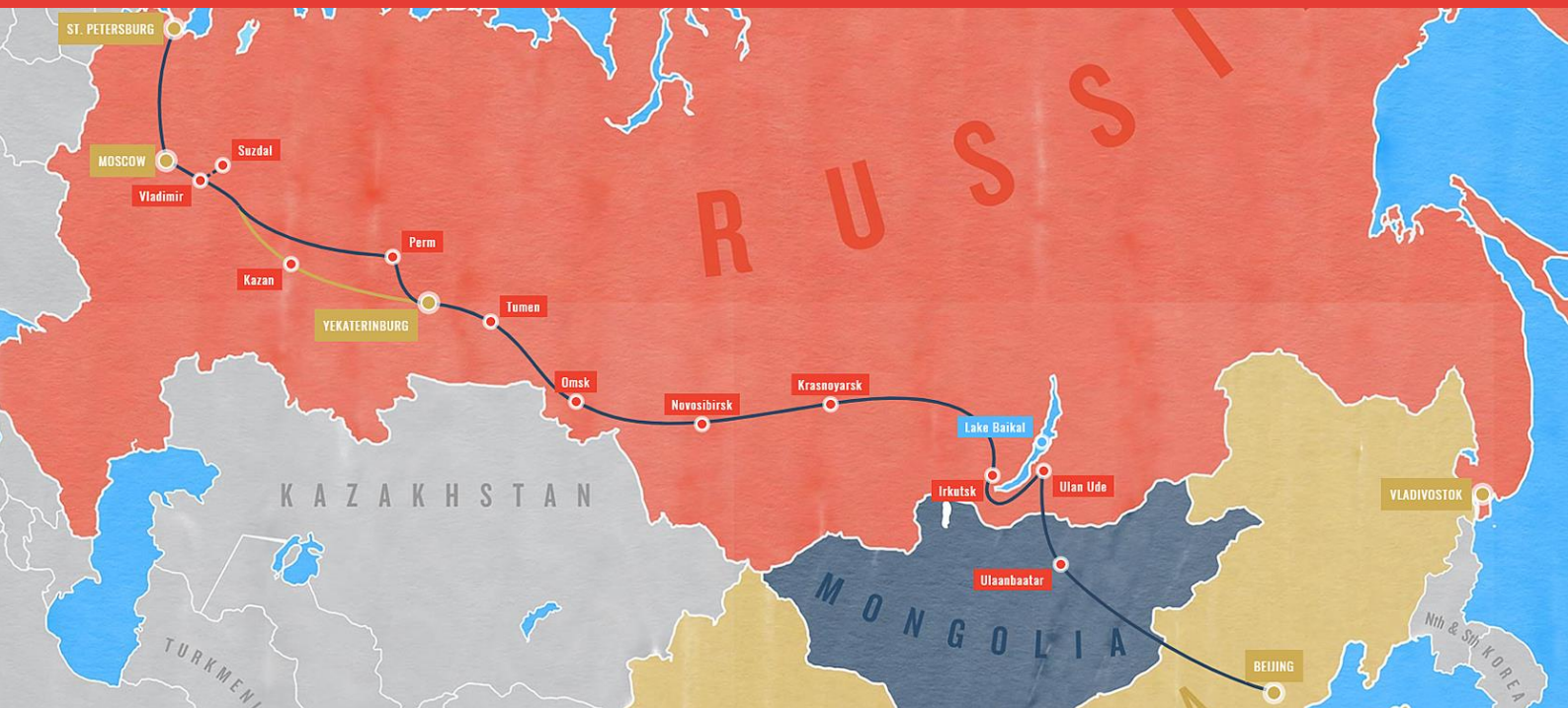




Grand Trans Mongolian Journey with Romanoffs and Tatarstan

WEST TO EAST



Welcome to St Petersburg

NIGHTS: 3

Arrive 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.

Depart St Petersburg for Moscow

NIGHTS: 4

Day 4. Depart St Petersburg (Moskovsky Station) to Moscow on fast train – afternoon departure.

Met next morning and transferred to accommodation. Choice of homestay, hostel or budget hotel.

Three hour introductory walking tour of central Moscow, next two days free for optional sightseeing in or around Moscow.

Time to experience the famed centre of Soviet-era Russia. This is where central control was wielded. Moscow is now a changed city, 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.

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

Train from Moscow to Kazan

NIGHTS: 1

Days 5-6. Moscow sightseeing.

Day 7. Evening departure by overnight train to Kazan. See Timetables at www.transsiberian.com.au

Sightseeing in Kazan

NIGHTS: 1

Day 8. Arrive Kazan early morning. Met and transferred to accommodation. Day for sightseeing.

Kazan is the capital of the state known as Tatarstan. After the break up of the Soviet Union it seemed possible that Tatarstan might become one of the independent 'Stans' of Central Asia, but it has remained within today's Russia.

Here you will experience a different side of Russian culture, but in a city that flaunts many eras of architecture; from the giant mosque within the Kremlin walls through nineteenth-century European-style building. Then you encounter the ubiquitous Soviet-era apartment complexes topped off with a prime real estate-positioned gated community of ostentatious 'nouveau riche' mansions.

Russia's self-proclaimed 'third capital' hosted the 2018 FIFA World Cup in the state-of-the-art Kazan Arena.

Of note to foodies is the change in cuisine as Central Asian influences become apparent.

Welcome to Yekaterinburg

NIGHTS: 2

Day 9. Part of this day sees you winding your way East through the Ural Mountains to cross the geographic demarcation between Europe and Asia. On arrival, you are met and transferred to your accommodation.

Yekaterinburg is a city where one might choose to stay longer and explore the famed natural beauty of the Urals region. The city has undergone some admirable redevelopment and has many modern areas complementing its historic interest. Famed as the location of the brutal July 1918 murder of the last Czar and his family, and the 1960 Soviet propaganda event which followed the shooting down of a U.S. spy plane and the show trial of the hapless pilot, Gary Powers. These two disparate events are immortalised in stunning roof mosaics at the railway station! For motorbike enthusiasts this is the home of the famed Ural motorbike and, yes, you can get to ride one!

Day 10. Guided vehicle tour of Romanoff history points of interest and the Asia/Europe monument, both of which are outside the city proper.

From Yekaterinburg across Siberia to Irkutsk

NIGHTS: 4

Day 11. Train from Yekaterinburg to Irkutsk, arriving on the fourth day. See Timetables at www.transsiberian.com.au.

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 copy of *Dr Zhivago* or *War and Peace*, or set up a travel chess set! Expect to share a vodka with your Russian fellow travellers, too.

Lake Baikal and Irkutsk

NIGHTS: 3

Day 14. Early arrival at Irkutsk and transfer to Lake Baikal for one night's accommodation. Balance of day free for own activities or additional organised programmes. Lakeside activities. Alternative packages to add if you desire.

Day 15. Lake Baikal village. Afternoon transfer back to Irkutsk accommodation.

Irkutsk offers a range of sightseeing options. Perhaps a suburb with its characterically 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!

Day 16. Irkutsk sightseeing day. Optional programmes.

By train from Irkutsk to Ulaanbaatar

NIGHTS: 4

Day 17. Transfer to railway station for early departure to Ulaanbaatar on Day 18. (See Timetables at www.transsiberian.com.au)

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: 3

Days 18-19. Arrive early at Ulaanbaatar where you are met and transferred to a ger (yurt) camp for two nights, within the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park which is about 70km out of the city. Sample the traditionally nomadic Mongol way of life with Grassland Pursuits' including optional activities such as horse or camel riding, archery and hiking, to be paid for locally. There are many hiking trails around the ger camp and quite stunning scenery.

Day 20. 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.

From Ulaanbaatar across the Gobi Desert to Beijing

NIGHTS: 2

Day 21. Transfer to rail station for train to Beijing. Departure times can change each year, or seasonally. We can confirm the time when booking. See Timetables.

Day 22. Arrive Beijing. We can arrange extra days in Beijing should you wish to arrive earlier. 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

End of arrangements.