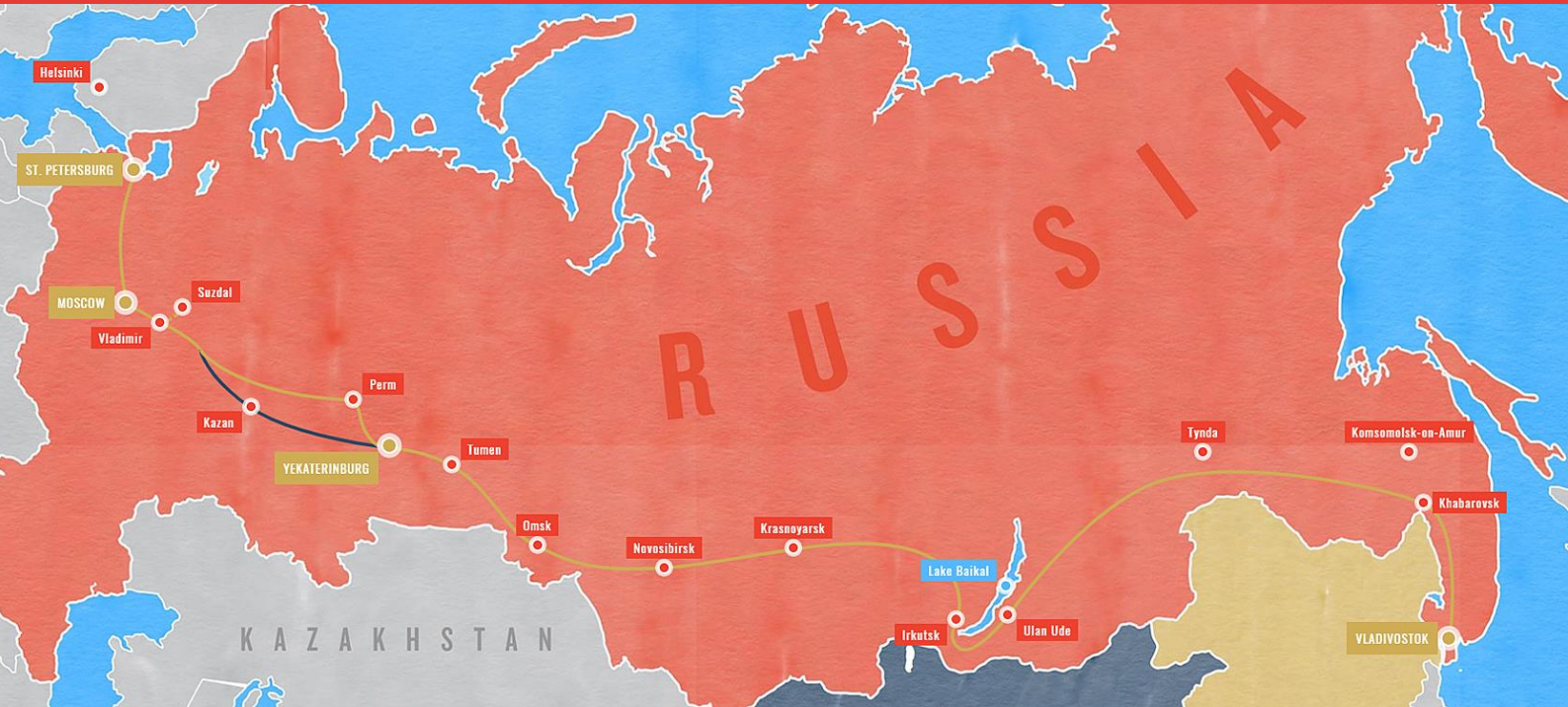




Grand Trans Siberian with Romanoffs and Tatarstan



EAST TO WEST



Arrival in Vladivostok

NIGHTS: 1

Arrive in Vladivostok. Met at airport and transfer to your accommodation.

Vladivostok is one of the great harbour cities of the world and during Soviet times was closed to all foreigners.

Westbound across Siberia, from Vladivostok to Irkutsk

NIGHTS: 3

Train #7 to Irkutsk departing Vladivostok. Surcharge applies for Train #1 (#1 operates on even days and #7 is odd days).

See Timetables at www.russiantravelcentre.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.

Day 2. The epic journey begins... the next three nights are spent aboard the train. Expect to share a vodka with your Russian fellow travellers, too!

Irkutsk and Lake Baikal

NIGHTS: 3

Day 5. 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 7. 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.

Westbound across Siberia, from Irkutsk to Yekaterinburg

NIGHTS: 2

Day 8. Transfer to railway station for train (Odd-numbered dates, four berth) to Yekaterinburg. Next two nights are spent aboard train. See timetables.

Day 9. On board the train. 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.

Day 10. Arrive Yekaterinburg on the third day. Meet and transfer to homestay or central hostel – you choose. Optional excursions or free time.

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 historical 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 involved the shooting down of a U.S. spy plane and the subsequent 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!

Sightseeing in Yekaterinburg, then departure for Kazan

NIGHTS 1

Day 11. Guided vehicle tour of Romanoff history points of interest and the Asia/Europe monument, both outside the city proper.

Day 12. Free time until check out from accommodation for train departure to Kazan. See Timetables. You can extend this stopover.

You now wind your way west through the Ural Mountains, crossing the geographic demarcation between Asia and Europe.

Sightseeing in Kazan until departure for Moscow

NIGHTS 2

Day 13. Arrive in Kazan. You will be met and transferred to hotel accommodation.

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.

Day 14. Day to explore central Kazan. Late checkout from hotel. Evening departure by overnight train to Moscow.

Sightseeing in Kazan until departure for Moscow

NIGHTS 3

Day 15. Arrive Moscow at 1517. Met and transfer to homestay for three nights.

Three hour introductory walking tour of central Moscow, next two days free for optional sightseeing in or around Moscow. The walking tour could be undertaken next day if time/daylight does not permit on arrival.

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 for optional sightseeing in Moscow at www.russiantravelcentre.com!

Overnight Train from Moscow to St Petersburg

NIGHTS 1

Day 18. Depart Moscow Leningradsky Station between 2300 and 2359 for St Petersburg. Departures are frequent throughout the day.

Arrival and Sightseeing in St Petersburg

NIGHTS 3

Day 19. Arrive St Petersburg (Moskowsky Station) around 0800. Transfer from station to homestay, hostel or budget hotel for three nights. Three-hour introductory walking tour.

Don't miss our Optional sightseeing suggestions at www.russiantravelcentre.com!

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.

Departure from St Petersburg

NIGHTS 1

Day 22. End of arrangements. Well, we can extend your stay, or perhaps a train to Helsinki or the Baltic States?