

TRAIN : Golden Eagle Trans Siberian Express

JOURNEY : Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express- Winter Wonderland (Westbound)

Journey Duration : More than 10 days

INTRODUCTION

Get aboard the Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express in winter for an exceptional and unique experience. Indisputably the world's greatest railway journey, the Trans-Siberian Railway runs like a steel ribbon connecting east and west from Moscow over the Urals, across the splendid Russian steppe and alongside the shore of the world's largest freshwater lake.

Day to Day Itinerary

Day 1 : VLADIVOSTOK

Arrive at Vladivostok Airport where you are met and transferred to the four-star Hotel Hyundai for a one night stay. We will enjoy a welcome reception dinner at our hotel, whilst you meet your fellow travellers and anticipate the epic 15 day voyage that lies ahead.

Why not extend your stay in Vladivostok with additional nights to explore more of the city at your leisure?

Day 2 : VLADIVOSTOK

RUSSIA

Vladivostok is a military port, located on the western shores of the Sea of Japan and is home to the Russian Navy's Pacific Fleet. Due to its military importance, the city was closed to foreigners between 1930 and 1992. Vladivostok (literally translated as 'Ruler of the East') offers visitors an interesting opportunity to explore its principal military attractions including a visit to a preserved World War Two submarine. Our city tour will also take us to the iconic suspension bridge over Golden Horn Bay, one of the largest of its kind worldwide, which opened in 2012 for the APEC conference.

Following a champagne reception at Vladivostok Railway Station, and with a military band playing on the platform, we will board the *Golden Eagle* Trans-Siberian Express. After settling into our modern, stylish cabins we enjoy dinner in the restaurant car as our rail adventure westwards begins.

Day 3 : KHABAROVSK

RUSSIA

Located 15 miles (25 kilometres) from the border with China, Khabarovsk stretches along the banks of the Amur River. Khabarovsk was founded as a military post in 1858, but the region had been populated by several indigenous peoples of the Far East for many centuries. It is now a busy city with tree-lined streets.

We'll visit the memorial to Yerofey Pavlovich Khabarov, the Far East explorer the city is named after, and the impressive World War Two memorial to the fallen soldiers. We will also have time at the Regional Museum where the local history has been well-preserved with a rich collection of artefacts describing the cultural and natural history of the region.

Day 4 : ONBOARD

RUSSIA

Our journey follows the Shilka and Amur rivers, close to the Chinese border. Enjoy Russia at its most beautiful and remote, as the landscape unfolds outside your window. Or you may like to attend one of the absorbing lectures or Russian language lessons.

Day 5 : ONBOARD

RUSSIA

Today offers you the perfect opportunity to practice your improving Russian or watch a DVD as you watch the world pass by. For those who like to socialise, the Bar Lounge Car is the perfect place to enjoy a chat with your fellow passengers as you listen to our resident musician.

Day 6 : ULAAN BAATAR

MONGOLIA

Our Trans-Siberian adventure takes us into Mongolia and a visit to its capital, Ulaan Baatar. Mongolia, once the very centre of an enormous empire led by Genghis Khan, is a country of beautiful landscapes, nomadic people and rich in culture and history. Mongolia is famous for its endless green Steppes, grazing livestock and white, nomadic Gers (Yurts) dotted all across the countryside.

We start the tour at Gandan Monastery, one of Mongolia's most important Buddhist Monasteries housing a community of over 500 monks. The full name, Gandantegchinlen, translates as 'the great place of complete joy'. At Sukhbaatar Square we can see the central monument to Genghis Khan, undoubtedly the most feared and revered Mongol and visit the National Museum where we learn about the country's intriguing history. We also have the opportunity to visit a traditional Ger and meet a nomadic family.

Day 7 : ULAN UDE

RUSSIA

The ethnic and cultural diversity of Ulan Ude offers a unique insight into its heritage. As we tour the area you will notice the different faces of these welcoming people. We will meet the people of the Old Believers' Village and have the opportunity to learn about the culture and history of these religious people. We are treated to a concert featuring local folk singers.

Day 8 : LAKE BAIKAL

RUSSIA

Our day by Lake Baikal offers a real highlight of travelling through Siberia in winter. Few natural sights can surpass the beauty and grandeur of Lake Baikal and today will be an unforgettable part of our Trans-Siberian journey.

For five hours we wind our way through tunnels along cliff hugging tracks above the frozen lake with a vista of snow-capped peaks along the far shore forming a picture-perfect backdrop. Completely frozen in winter, Lake Baikal is the deepest lake in the world and at this time of the year we will visit the shoreside Ice Festival to look at the many intricate works of ice art.

We are taken in a hovercraft on the frozen lake to the place where the ice fishing, dog sledges and snowmobiles are situated and you will enjoy the perfect vantage point to appreciate the magnificence of this unspoilt location.

There is the opportunity to watch the under-ice fishing and try the freshly caught fish which will be smoked in a mobile smokehouse and served warm with ice-cold vodka. Delicious!

Day 9 : IRKUTSK

RUSSIA

Our visit to Irkutsk, the 'Paris of Siberia', takes in the most significant sites and museums in this fascinating city, including an exploration of the classic wooden architecture with its intricately carved lace-like decorations that has given many of this region's buildings such a distinctive and unique appearance. We also visit the Decembrist House museum which is dedicated to the memory of the aristocrats who were exiled to this remote outpost after the failed uprising of 1825, and we recreate the atmosphere of that time with a champagne reception and private concert.

Alternatively you may wish to visit a traditional Russian Banya (sauna) on our Freedom of Choice tour.

Day 10 : ONBOARD

RUSSIA

A day to unwind and reflect on the main sights and sounds we have experienced on our journey so far. Chat to your fellow passengers, perhaps learn a few more words of Russian or simply enjoy the ever changing landscape outside your window.

Day 11 : NOVOSIBIRSK

RUSSIA

A modern 'Soviet' city, we experience the life and character of Novosibirsk's rich culture where the arts and sciences predominate. The city is located in the heart of Russia and is situated on both banks of the River Ob. Our city tour takes us to Lenin Square where the imposing Opera House is located.

An architectural marvel, it houses two permanent ballet and opera companies and is one of the largest opera houses in the world. In front of the Opera House, we visit an impressive statue of Lenin – a marvellous opportunity to have your photograph taken with this iconic political leader. Alternatively, our Freedom of Choice tour goes south of the city to visit Novosibirsk's excellent Railway Museum, which displays locomotives and rolling stock from the late 1800s, including carriages of the Tsars, through to the Soviet era.

Day 12 : YEKATERINBURG

RUSSIA

Founded in 1723 by Peter the Great, Yekaterinburg is the capital of the Urals. Known as the Great Divide, the Ural Mountains create the natural border between Europe and Asia so that the cultural and architectural influences of European and Asian civilisations come together in this fascinating and cosmopolitan landscape.

Our city tour takes us to the poignant site where the Romanov, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, was executed with his family by the Bolsheviks in 1918 following 78 days of imprisonment. Now a church dedicated to their memory, this site provides us with a powerful insight into the turmoil of the Russian Revolution.

Day 13 : SUZDAL

RUSSIA

The pastoral town of Suzdal is one of Russia's most perfectly preserved walled cities dating back to 1024 and is located 22 miles (35 kilometres) from Vladimir. Here we visit the atmospheric St. Euthymius Monastery to witness an enchanting choral performance by the resident monks.

Day 13 : VLADIMIR

RUSSIA

The historic city of Vladimir was founded in 990 and is one of Russia's oldest communities with an architectural wealth. The whole city was decreed a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our tour takes in Uspensky Cathedral, built between the 12th and 15th Centuries and is considered one of the most important and beautiful of Russian cathedrals, where many of the prominent Russian Tsars were crowned.

Day 14 : MOSCOW

RUSSIA

This evening we reach Moscow, the final destination on our Winter Wonderland voyage across Siberia.

Included in our time spent in Moscow is one night at the five-star Ritz-Carlton. Superbly located in Moscow city centre, and within easy walking distance of Red Square, the Kremlin and the Bolshoi Theatre, this historic hotel offers spacious and luxurious accommodation. The O2 Lounge, a stylish rooftop terrace, features panoramic views over the Red Square and the Kremlin.

The spacious ESPA spa centre includes a hot tub, indoor pool, and 14 treatment rooms. Crystal lighting, candles and beautiful facilities create the perfect atmosphere, and a wide variety of spa treatments, as well as the sauna, are available. There is also a fitness centre, and a beauty salon.

Day 15 : MOSCOW

RUSSIA

On the Westbound departure, due to an evening arrival on Day 14 the Moscow city tour will take place on Day 15.

We recommend therefore you book your departure flight for after 4pm this day or extend your stay in Moscow with an additional night, and have time to take in a performance at the world-renowned Bolshoi Theatre. *Tickets need to be pre-booked and are subject to schedule and availability.*

Our touring programme of Moscow principally takes us to the grandeur of the Kremlin – the spiritual, historical and political heart of Moscow – and to see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber. We also visit Red Square, an iconic symbol of Russia’s former military and political might with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, such as the ornate St Basil’s Cathedral’s magnificent onion-domed spires, the beautiful facade of the world famous GUM department store, constructed in Tsarist times, and the sombre and evocative site of Lenin’s tomb.

With our *Freedom of Choice* touring options you may instead wish to visit the famous State Tretyakov Gallery (National Museum of Fine Art).