

THE LEGENDARY TRANS-SIBERIAN: NAADAM FESTIVAL 2018

OVERVIEW

Tour Date: 2 July 2018 – 27 July 2018

Tour Duration: 26 days

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$17,250

Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$3,450

The Legendary Trans-Siberian Express is a spectacular adventure from Beijing to Moscow on one of the world's greatest railways. Our July departure is timed to coincide with Mongolia's annual Naadam Festival: a spectacular display of horsemanship, wrestling, archery and colourful traditional costumes.

The July Trans-Siberian is one of our most popular summer tours and it is not difficult to see why. In addition to all the normal highlights of this amazing adventure, the annual Naadam Festival is a dazzling display of colour, sportsmanship and pageantry beginning with the spectacular opening ceremony. The Trans-Siberian railway trip is without doubt the world's greatest train ride: an epic 9,000 km journey through the very heart of Asia and into Europe. The 'Legendary Trans-Siberian' was the first escorted adventure we organised 25 years ago, and it remains one of our most popular tours. The journey takes us from Beijing to Moscow with stopovers in Beijing; Mongolia; the capital of Eastern Siberia, Irkutsk; and St Petersburg. The entire tour is packed full of highlights as the journey unfolds across the face of the world. Many travellers use our very flexible Singapore Airlines ticket to explore other parts of Europe at the conclusion of the tour.

Tour Fitness Level: Moderate

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TOUR ITINERARY

02/07/2018 Australia – Singapore

Check-in at your chosen Australian airport for the flight to Singapore. On arrival we connect with our flight to Beijing.

03/07/2018 Singapore – Beijing (LD)

Depart Singapore on Singapore Airlines SQ 800, 01.10

Arrive Beijing 07.15

After completing customs and immigration formalities at Beijing airport we transfer to our hotel. After check-in, the rest of the morning is at leisure. After lunch we take a stroll in the world's biggest public plaza, Tiananmen Square. Covering 100 acres and dating back to 1420, the square has witnessed many of China's most historic events. At one end is the Gate of Heavenly Peace, the entrance to the Forbidden City. At the other is the mausoleum, which houses the embalmed body of Mao Tse-Dong. Dinner this evening is in a popular local restaurant.

Novotel Peace Hotel

Beijing

04/07/2018 Beijing (BLD)

After breakfast we tour the beautiful Summer Palace, the largest and best-preserved imperial garden in China. Located on the western edge of the city, it was used as a summer residence by China's emperors as a cool retreat from the main imperial palace. One of the highlights is the 'Long Corridor', a 720-metre covered walkway decorated with more than 8,000 individual paintings. The Summer Palace was World Heritage listed by UNESCO in 1998.

05/07/2018 Beijing (BLD)

The extraordinary Forbidden City, the world's largest ancient palace structure, covers 72 hectares and contains no fewer than 9,999 rooms. This incredible complex was built between 1407 and 1420 by an estimated one million labourers. Until 1924 it was the Imperial Palace for China's emperors and in 1987 was World Heritage listed by UNESCO. A visit here is never to be forgotten. In the afternoon we tour the fascinating old part of the city, known as the Hutong. Cycle rickshaws take us on a delightful trip through the ancient narrow streets. This evening we have dinner in the home of a Chinese family.

06/07/2018 Beijing (BLD)

After breakfast we drive out of Beijing and head for the incredible Great Wall of China. We visit the beautiful section at Mutianyu, which is far less touristy than many other parts. Built more than 2,000 years ago under the orders of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, it remains one of the largest construction projects of all time and stretches an incredible 6,400 km. We have plenty of time to stroll on the ramparts and fully take in this Wonder of the World. We also enjoy an exclusive picnic in one of the watchtowers lining the wall. Returning to Beijing, we attend a stunning traditional Chinese folk show while dining on Peking Roast Duck.

07/07/2018 Beijing – Ulaan Baatar (B)

Depart Beijing Train 3, 11.22

Today we board the Trans-Mongolian Express for the thrilling journey to Ulaan Baatar. As the train heads north towards the Mongolian border, we pass through mountainous countryside and enjoy several glimpses of the Great Wall. Now is the

chance to read books, play games or retire to the dining car for drinks or a meal. Arriving at Erlian, the Chinese/Mongolian border town, giant hydraulic lifts raise the train and the wheel bogies are changed to fit the wider gauge tracks in Mongolia. With Chinese and Mongolian border formalities completed, the train makes its way into the vast Gobi desert.

08/07/2018 Arrive Ulaan Baatar – Dugana (LD)

This morning we travel through the rolling grassy steppes, which stretch 1,000 km north to south and 2,500 km east to west. Yaks, camels and Mongolian horses dot the austere landscape. The few towns and gers to be seen are testimony to man's ability to survive in, and adapt to, almost any environment.

Arrive Ulaan Baatar 15.00

On our arrival in Ulaan Baatar we transfer to our delightful ger camp in the beautiful Dugana National Park

Dugana Ger Camp

Mongolia

09/07/2018 Dugana Ger Camp (BLD)

This glorious area of the Gobi is a paradise for nature lovers. Today is completely at leisure, although we have the opportunity to ride Mongolian horses, practise a little archery, enjoy a walk, or just relax on the steps of our gers and soak up the atmosphere.

10/07/2018 Dugana – Ulaan Baatar (BLD)

We drive back to Ulaan Baatar today and explore the Mongolian capital. This afternoon we will drive up into the hills for a spectacular view of the city in the valley below. In the evening we enjoy a beautiful folk show.

Khuvsgul Lake Hotel

Ulaan Baatar

11/07/2018 Ulaan Baatar – Irkutsk (BLD)

Every year on 11 July Mongolians celebrate 'Naadam'. Meaning 'recreation', the Naadam Festival is a spectacular event that attracts the country's top wrestlers, archers and horsemen and women for five days of fierce competition. One of the features is the grand Opening Ceremony, which we attend. After the festivities we transfer to the railway station for our journey north to Russia.

Depart Ulaan Baatar Train 361, 19.35

The train heads north towards the Mongolian border town of Sukhe Bator, arriving early the next morning.

12/07/2018 Onboard the train

This morning there are thorough customs and passport inspections before we proceed to the Russian border town of Naushki, 5,900 km from Moscow. Entering Russia we pass through beautiful mountain scenery laced with conifer forest. Following the Selenga River along the valley floor we reach Ulan Ude, capital of Buryatia.

13/07/2018 Arrive Irkutsk (BLD)

Arrive Irkutsk 07.35

Early this morning we join the main Trans-Siberian railway line and head west towards mighty Lake Baikal. The train often skirts the shore of this vast lake, which contains 20% of the world's fresh water supply. The mountains and small decorative Russian houses provide a beautiful backdrop before the train rolls into Irkutsk, the capital of Eastern Siberia. On arrival we transfer to our hotel and after breakfast take

a city tour. Once known as the 'Paris of Siberia', Irkutsk dates back to 1661. This afternoon we enjoy a classical music concert in a Siberian mansion.

Hotel Intourist

Irkutsk

14/07/2018 Irkutsk (BLD)

This morning we drive out of Irkutsk to the pretty village of Listvyanka on the shores of Lake Baikal. Formed some 25 million years ago, Baikal is the world's deepest lake and almost every statistic about it is astonishing. We enjoy an informative briefing about the lake on a visit to the excellent Limnological Museum.

15/07/2018 Depart Irkutsk

Early this morning we transfer to the railway station and board the Trans-Siberian Express.

Depart Irkutsk Train 1, 06.45

Now is the time to sit back, relax and watch the world go by as the train begins its epic journey across Siberia to Moscow.

16/07/2018 Onboard the Trans-Siberian Express

The train pushes inexorably towards Moscow, passing through famous cities such as Novosibirsk and Yekaterinburg, where Tsar Nicholas and his family were executed.

17/07/2018 Onboard the Trans-Siberian Express

The train now cuts through the foothills of the Ural Mountains and we pass the famous obelisk, marking the border of Asia and Europe. We are now 1,777 kilometres from Moscow.

18/07/2018 Arrive Moscow (BLD)

Arrive Moscow 05.52

Finally the train rolls into Yaroslavsky Station, Moscow, at the end of its momentous journey. On arrival we transfer to our hotel and the rest of the morning is at leisure. After lunch we stroll into Red Square. Dating back to 1493, the magnificent square is flanked on one side by the red walls of the Kremlin and on the other by the majestic GUM department store. At one end is the imposing history museum and at the other is one of the world's most famous buildings, the unique St Basil's Cathedral. The square also houses Lenin's mausoleum.

Budapest Hotel

Moscow

19/07/2018 Moscow (BLD)

This morning we take a city tour including a visit to the Cathedral of Christ Our Saviour, which was re-built between 1994 and 2000 after Stalin had the original blown up in 1931 to make way for a massive monument to Lenin that was never built. The views of the Kremlin and the Moskva River from the top ramparts of the cathedral are quite extraordinary. The afternoon is at leisure.

20/07/2018 Moscow (BLD)

This morning we continue to explore Russia's magnificent capital, visiting the famous Kremlin and the great Armoury Museum, which houses Russia's crown jewels. After lunch we see some of the palatial stations of Moscow's stunning underground system, and visit Arbat Street – the famous pedestrian mall with its busy market stalls and fine shops. We also take a boat cruise on the Moskva River.

21/07/2018 Moscow (BLD)

Today we head out of Moscow to the beautiful estate of Kolomenskoye. Situated on the banks of the Moskva River, this was the summer residence of Alexei Romanov. This estate dates back to the 14th century and is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Here we witness a traditional Russian wedding.

22/07/2018 Moscow – St Petersburg (BLD)

This morning we have a last opportunity to take a stroll in Red Square or buy some last-minute souvenirs. In the afternoon we transfer to the railway station for our journey to St Petersburg.

Depart Moscow Train 158, 13.30

Arrive St Petersburg 17.40

On arrival we transfer to our hotel.

The Angleterre Hotel

St Petersburg

23/07/2018 St Petersburg (BLD)

After breakfast we take a city tour of beautiful St Petersburg. Formerly known as Petrograd and Leningrad, this most European of Russian cities is the country's intellectual and cultural heart. Perched on the banks of the Neva River, it is often referred to as the 'Venice of the North' because of its glorious canal system. We enjoy sights such as St Isaac's Cathedral, the Winter Palace and Peter and Paul's Fortress, where the bodies of Tsar Nicholas and his family are interred.

24/07/2018 St Petersburg (BLD)

Today we board a hydrofoil for a trip down the Neva River to Peterhof. This is the site of the magnificent Summer Palace, playground of the tsars and tsarinas. The beautiful gardens are comparable with those at the palace of Versailles and the amazing fountains provide a great spectacle.

25/07/2018 St Petersburg (BLD)

This morning we visit the Winter Palace. Completed in 1762, the palace was home to the tsars until the Russian Revolution in 1917. It now houses the Hermitage Museum, arguably the world's greatest art collection. The afternoon is at leisure, providing the option of spending more time in the Hermitage. Others may prefer to stroll down the city's great boulevard, Nevsky Prospekt. In the evening there is the opportunity to attend a traditional Cossack folk show.

26/07/2018 St Petersburg – Moscow – Singapore (B)

This morning we fly from St Petersburg to Moscow. If returning immediately to Australia, we connect with our flight to Singapore in the afternoon.

Depart St Petersburg Siberia Airlines S7 48, 10.05

Arrive Moscow 11.50

Depart Moscow Singapore Airlines SQ 61, 15.20

27/07/2018 Singapore – Australia

Arrive Singapore 05.45

On arrival in Singapore we connect with the flight to our chosen Australian capital.