GOINGRUSSIA → GROUPS 2018

TRANS-SIBERIAN MOSCOW - BEIJING
«FROM THE KREMLIN TO THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA»
18 DAYS / 17 NIGHTS
ITINERARY
TRANS-SIBERIAN MOSCOW - BEIJING 18D/17N

DAY 1 / THURSDAY: MOSCOW (ARRIVAL)
- Arrival to Moscow
- Transfer to the hotel. Accommodation

DAY 2 / FRIDAY: MOSCOW
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Complete panoramic tour of Moscow
- Lunch
- Visit to the Tretyakov Gallery
- Dinner at the hotel

DAY 3 / SATURDAY: MOSCOW - TRANS-SIBERIAN
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Visit to the Kremlin and its cathedrals
- Lunch
- Visit to the Moscow metro
- Transfer to railway station
- Departure to Yekaterinburg
- Dinner and night on board the train

DAY 4 / SUNDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - YEKATERINBURG
- Breakfast and lunch on board the train
- Arrival to Yekaterinburg
- Transfer to hotel
- Accommodation and dinner at the hotel

DAY 5 / MONDAY: YEKATERINBURG
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Visit to Ganina Yama
- Visit to the monument on the border between Europe and Asia
- Lunch
- Complete panoramic tour of Yekaterinburg
- Visit to Nevsky Cathedral in Yekaterinburg
- Visit to the Church on the Blood in Yekaterinburg
- Dinner
- Transfer to railway station
- Departure to Novosibirsk
- Night on board the train

DAY 6 / TUESDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - NOVOSIBIRSK
- Breakfast and lunch on board the train
- Arrival to Novosibirsk
- Transfer to hotel
- Dinner and accommodation at the hotel

DAY 7 / WEDNESDAY: NOVOSIBIRSK
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Visit to Siberian Sea
- Visit of the Railway Museum
- Visit to Akademgorodok
- Lunch
- Complete panoramic tour of Novosibirsk
- Dinner
- Transfer to railway station
- Departure to Irkutsk
- Night on board the train

DAY 8 / THURSDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner on board the train
- Night on board the train

DAY 9 / FRIDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - IRKUTSK - BAIKAL LAKE (LISTVIANKA)
- Arrival to Irkutsk
- Departure towards Lake Baikal
- Breakfast
- Complete panoramic tour of Listvianka
- Visit to the Baikal Ecology Museum
- Barbecue lunch on the shores of Lake Baikal
- Cable car to Mount Chersky
- Boat trip on Lake Baikal and lakeside hike
- Dinner and accommodation at the hotel, next to the Baikal Lake
DAY 10 / SATURDAY: BAikal Lake (Listvianka) - Irkutsk
- Breakfast
- Transfer to Irkutsk
- Stop at Shaman’s Rock
- Visit to Taltsy Ethnographic Museum
- Lunch
- Complete panoramic tour of Irkutsk
- Visit to Znamensky Convent
- Visit to the Decembrists’ Museum
- Dinner and accommodation at the hotel

DAY 11 / SUNDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN
- Transfer to the railway station
- Departure to Ulan Bator
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner on board the train
- Night on board the train

DAY 12 / MONDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - Ulan Bator - Terelj
- Arrival to Ulan Bator
- Transfer to the hotel
- Breakfast
- Complete panoramic tour of Ulan Bator
- Visit to Gandan Monastery in Ulan Bator
- Visit to the National Historical Museum
- Lunch
- Departure to Terelj
- Arrival at the camp site
- Dinner and accommodation in yurts

DAY 13 / TUESDAY: TERELJ
- Breakfast
- Visit to the house of a nomadic family
- Typical Mongolian barbecue lunch
- Visit to Aryabal Temple
- Fire camp dinner
- Night in yurts

DAY 14 / WEDNESDAY: TERELJ - ULAnt Bator
- Breakfast at the camp
- Departure to Ulan-Bator
- Visit to the Choijin Lama Museum
- Lunch
- Visit to the Zaisan Memorial
- Visit to Bogdo Khan’s Palace
- Folkloric show
- Dinner and accommodation at the hotel

DAY 15 / THURSDAY: ULAN BATOR - TRANS-SIBERIAN
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Transfer to the railway station
- Departure to Beijing
- Lunch and dinner on board the train
- Night on board the train

DAY 16 / FRIDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - BEIJING
- Breakfast and lunch on board the train
- Arrival to Beijing
- Visit to the Temple of Heaven
- Typical Chinese dinner
- Transfer to the hotel and accommodation

DAY 17 / SATURDAY: BEIJING
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Visit to the Forbidden City
- Lunch
- Visit to the Great Wall of China
- Dinner at the hotel

DAY 18 / SUNDAY: BEIJING (DEPARTURE)
- Breakfast at the hotel
- Transfer to the airport
SELECTION OF HOTELS
TRANS-SIBERIAN MOSCOW - BEIJING 18D/17N

MOSCOW:
4*: Marriott, Radisson, Holiday Inn, Novotel, Borodino, or similar

YEKATERINBURG:
4*: Park Inn, Novotel, or similar

NOVOSIBIRSK:
4*: Doubletree, Marriott, River Park, Azimut, or similar

IRKUTSK:
4*: Marriott, or similar

LISTVIANKA:
3* Sup.: Krestovaya Pad’, Baikalskie Terema, or similar

TERELJ:
Yurta

ULAN-BATOR:
4*: Ramada, Blue Sky, Palace, or similar

BEIJING:
4*: Hotspring, King Wing, Radisson Blu, Jianguo, or similar

* Hotels names are given as an indication, subject to availability at the moment of the reservation
FROM THE KREMLIN TO THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA
TRANS-SIBERIAN MOSCOW - BEIJING 18D/17N

Haven’t we all dreamed at least once about taking a trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway? This adventure has always been associated with Michel Strogoff’s journey as the Courier of the Tsar in Jules Verne’s novel. Even today, in the high-tech era, the route continues to be considered an extraordinary adventure.

A trip across space and time that takes the traveller deep into the Asian continent, the Trans-Siberian has, for more than one century, been the symbol of the extreme: inaccessible territories, intense colds, tragic stories... It is also the picture of travel, a journey crossing half the earth where, day after day, the unique landscape rolls by the window, including the most beautiful cities of Russia, Siberia, Mongolia, and China. Time zones fly by, endless plains stretch past the horizon, mountains thrust towards pure, blue skies, the biggest rivers on earth wash past, and the beauty of Lake Baikal opens before our eyes.

Hell and paradise at the same time, Siberia is wild and mysterious, with its enormous marshes, impenetrable forests, and endless taiga; the eternal ice... This wild land has always fascinated Russians and foreigners alike, its immense expanses crisscrossed over the centuries by caravans laden with tea, silk, and furs.

Siberia was also a land of exile and tears: its own immensity made it an almost unassailable prison where tsars and the Soviets sent dissidents and the opposition.

Under the reign of Catherine the Great, Siberia rose in importance and the Russian empire mobilized to conquer this immense, still virgin territory. At the same time the first doubts arouse, preoccupied with the problem of ensuring the security of these precious but remote trade routes. How could imperial authority be projected to Siberia from St. Petersburg, situated thousands of miles away?

In 1857, Nikolai Muraviev-Amursky, general governor of Siberia, launched the idea of building a railroad between Moscow and Siberia, with the project finally becoming viable in 1891. Following Tsar Alexander III’s orders, the first milestone was set in Vladivostok on May 31st of the same year, and on August 12th, 1916, the railroad was officially inaugurated.

In those 25 years a passage through the Urals was constructed, Lake Baikal was conquered and overcome, and long bridges were erected across rivers such as the Ob, the Yenissei, and the Amur, all under extreme conditions.

All the work was done by hand, without modern machinery, at a rate of 1.6 to 4 kilometres per day... 9,289 kilometres in length, 100 million cubic meters of earth moved, 1 million tons of rails, and 12 million crossties constitute the greatest accomplishment in the history of the railroad and an absolute record at the time. More than 70,000 workers and forced prisoners suffered carrying out this impressive work that cost more than a billion rubles.

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The Trans-Siberian Railroad follows a single path until Irkutsk, where it divides into two historical branches: one that continues on until the coast of the Pacific Ocean in Vladivostok and one that crosses Mongolia into China, ending in Beijing.

Every station comes to life when the train arrives, as the platforms are full of babushkas selling all kinds of wares, from typical local cooking and handicraft products to clothes and a variety of tools. The Trans-Siberian still plays an important commercial role for many locals.

Between stops, incredibly beautiful scenery rolls past the traveller’s eyes, from thick taiga forests to the steppes of Mongolia; plains that spread beyond the horizon, high mountains, magical Lake Baikal... Meanwhile, inside the train shy conversations blossom into animated chats between travellers. Russian people love their social life: the train is full of cards and chess games laid out next to improvised bars. The restaurant car never empties, with each passenger living at his or her own rhythm, each contributing to an on-board microcosm of life that is different every time!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance in Kilometres from Moscow:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yaroslavl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perm</td>
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<td>Ural (European-Asian border)</td>
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<td>Yekaterinburg</td>
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<td>Omsk</td>
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<td>Ulaanbaatar</td>
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<td>Erlian (Mongolian-Chinese border)</td>
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<td>Beijing</td>
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FROM A TRAVELLER’S DIARY...
TRANS-SIBERIAN MOSCOW – BEIJING 18D/17N

Yaroslavl Station, Moscow: After a light thrill, as if reluctantly, the train starts moving and begins its impressive journey.

We are almost regretting that our cars are no longer the luxurious Pullmans from the Belle Époque... The 4-bed compartments are small and the comfort is Spartan, but who cares? The adventure of the trip is worth it!

In the restaurant car we look at each other, still shy... but soon the free-flowing vodka loosens tongues and kicks off conversation.

Now, like on a long traveling, the landscapes parade by, jostled by the metallic rhythm of the rails. The forests of firs and the colourful izbas scroll by until suddenly the Urals appear, announcing our arrival in Siberia and Asia.

Meanwhile, the social life on board is already well-organized. Everybody is starting to get to know each other and introduce themselves.

We arrive in the capital of Eastern Siberia, Irkutsk, whose name evokes the lash of the knut: Lake Baikal is almost here and the Mongolian border is approaching...

Based on the time zone that each has adopted, either local or Moscow time, some have breakfast while others are eating lunch!

Soon the landscapes of Mongolia impose on all of us a silence almost religious: the endless steppes with scattered nomadic yurts, herds of yaks, wild horses... Soon the majestic dunes of the Gobi Desert appear. Mongolia is a land of immensity.

In Erlian, at the Chinese border, the train is lifted with all its passengers inside in order to accommodate the gauge break.

Soon the first rice fields can be seen and immediately afterwards we cross the Great Wall of China. Finally, our train stops in Beijing.

We are already returning with a sad heart but a soul full of unforgettable images.
USEFUL INFORMATION
TRANS-SIBERIAN MOSCOW - BEIJING 18D/17N

TIME
The journey stretches across several time zones, five of which are inside Russia. On board the train, however, Moscow time is observed until the Mongolian border is reached.

WEATHER
The climate is continental throughout the entire trip, with cold winters and hot summers that may feature dropping night-time temperatures, especially in Mongolia and next to Lake Baikal.

MONEY
Each of the three countries to be crossed has its own currency: the Ruble in Russia, the Tugrik in Mongolia, and the Yuan in China.

PAYMENTS ON BOARD
Rubles are accepted in the restaurant car during the Russian part of the trip, while payments are made in US dollars or the local currency during the Mongolian and Chinese legs. It is better to have low denomination bills because change is not always available.

VISA
Citizens of the European Union need a visa for each of the three countries to be crossed.

LIFE ON BOARD
The Trans-Siberian is NOT a luxury train. The conditions are extremely simple, suiting those who appreciate the authenticity, adventure, and enchantment of this mythical trip above comfort and commodities.

Quadruple compartments have two upper and two lower bunks, the lower of which are transformed into seats during the day. Double compartments may only have two bunks or may be quadruple compartments booked for use by only two people.

IMPORTANT! Every car has two small, sparsely-equipped bathrooms (sink, toilet, and an electrical outlet) on either end where the water is sometimes scarce. Travellers should bring dry shampoo, water vaporizer, and boxes of sanitizing wipes for cleanliness and other needs. There is no shower on board, although our itinerary allows for numerous stops where accommodation in hotels provides rest and a place to clean up in normal conditions.

The luggage is transported inside the compartment of every traveller, or under the lower berths, or in a place dedicated to the luggage, situated in the upper part of every compartment.

There are two people in each car who are in charge of distributing sheets, blankets, and pillows to the travellers.

The Trans-Siberian has a restaurant car. Depending on its disposition and capacity, meals will be served in this car, on in every passenger's compartment. Exceptionally, if the restaurant car is closed, some meals could be served as lunchboxes. In the restaurant car, extra meals can be paid for in cash, and each car has a samovar that distributes warm water 24 hours a day, allowing passengers to prepare their own coffee, tea, and other hot drinks.

Be sure to take enough batteries and tapes for your cameras, computers, etc. There are only two electrical plugs located in the corridor of each car to charge batteries.
RUSSIA

ENDLESS SPACES, MILLENNARY TRADITIONS, A UNIQUE IDENTITY

Rugged, vast, and ever changing, Russia is steeped in old traditions and historical treasures. Its array of people and cultures define this country’s exceptional character: the Russian soul.
MOSCOW

A BUSTLING METROPOLIS, RUSSIA’S BEATING HEART

Vibrant, modern, and oh-so-fashionable, the Russian capital rivals the world’s best cultural destinations. This thriving city is home to famous Bolshoi Theatre and the impressive Kremlin.
THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY
THE LONGEST RAILWAY ON EARTH, A SYMBOL OF THE EXTREME

A gauntlet thrown down by Russia in the face of untamed nature, the Trans-Siberian Railway links Europe and Asia, traversing all of Russia: it runs from Moscow through the immensity of Siberia to Beijing and the Pacific Ocean.
LAKE BAIKAL
A TREASURE OF THE NATURE, HIDDEN IN THE REMOTENESS OF SIBERIA

A true jewel of nature, Baikal is the deepest, cleanest and oldest lake in the world. It is a magical place with gorgeous landscapes, nature of incomparable beauty, and numerous legends.
MONGOLIA

NATURE AT ITS PUREST IN GENGHIS KHAN'S EMPIRE

A land of contrasts with endless steppes, the snow peaks of Altai, and the hot expanses of the Gobi Desert, Mongolia is a nation proud of its history and Buddhist heritage.
CHINA

THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION, A WAKING GIANT

Proud of its millenary culture and history, China is taking its place among the world's superpowers. It is an empire that has lasted 4000 years with an extraordinary and carefully preserved cultural heritage that amazes the western visitor.
DAY 1 / THURSDAY: MOSCOW (ARRIVAL)
Arrival to Moscow.
Transfer to hotel.

DAY 2 / FRIDAY: MOSCOW
Breakfast.

Complete panoramic tour of Moscow. Vibrant, modern, and oh-so-fashionable, the Russian capital rivals the world’s best cultural destinations. The thriving metropolis is home to famous Bolshoi Theatre and the impressive Kremlin. Theatres, concert halls, chic stores, hip restaurants, and trendy clubs abound along the Moskva River.

Moscow is the biggest Russian and European city, with more than 12 million inhabitants. It has been the capital of Russia since the 15th century, except from 1712 to 1918, when the capital was transferred to St. Petersburg. The city was founded in the 12th century and the Kremlin, its main fortress, was erected in 1156. Moscow rapidly gained importance and the Duchy of Moscow became the main political centre among the principalities of central Russia before Ivan III, Grand Prince of Moscow, united most of these states under his control. He liberated central Russia from the Mongol and Tatar invaders, expanded the Russian state, and was named Grand Prince of Rus, with Moscow as its capital. The city has been destroyed by invaders several times throughout its history: the Mongols, Crimean Tatars, Poles, and Swedes have all occupied the city, and even Napoleon remained here for six weeks before beginning his catastrophic retreat during the Russian winter. During World War II, the German armies were stopped only 20 kilometres from Moscow. These events have shaped the city’s landscape and architecture, making it extremely eclectic: medieval fortresses neighbour Stalinist skyscrapers and beautiful baroque and neoclassic churches are located next to Art Nouveau buildings. Moscow is therefore a great centre of cultural life and arts, with several monuments on the UNESCO World Heritage List, many first-class museums, and some theatres ranked among the best in the world. It is a dynamic, always-on-the-move city which in the past few years has reinvented itself as a tourist attraction.

The ideal way to get in touch with the city, including its historical centre and major monuments. We will stroll along the broad avenues, making our way through the famous Tverskaya Street to the top of Sparrow Hills, under the imposing stare of Lomonosov University, one of the Stalin-era skyscrapers scattered throughout the city. From there we will admire an impressive panorama of the city, followed by a stop at Victory Park and another in front of Novodevichy Convent and its lake, the inspiration for Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake. We will approach the historical centre from the banks of the Moskva River, coming out near the White House, location of the siege of the Russian Government. We will also stop at Arbat Street, a busy pedestrian thoroughfare nicknamed the “Moscow Montmartre” because of the artist that used to live in the area and the painters that nowadays populate the street. We will pass in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the Parliament Building (Duma), Bolshoi Theatre, and the imposing facade of Lubyanka, headquarters of the KGB. We will continue through the alleyways of the ancient merchant district Kitai-Gorod, which contains numerous small churches, finally arriving at Red Square, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful in the world and designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It was named Red, or “Krasnaya” in Russian, which in Old Russian was a synonym of “beautiful.” Now the square is surrounded by the famous buildings of the Russian Historical Museum, the Kremlin, and Saint Basil’s Cathedral with its gorgeous onion domes, built by order of Ivan the Terrible. Red Square is also home to Lenin’s Mausoleum and features Russian Army parades on various holidays throughout the year.
Lunch.

**Visit to the Tretyakov Gallery.** This unrivalled gallery was named after its founder, the famous trader Pavel Tretyakov (1832-1898), a major sponsor of 19th century Russian art. Tretyakov’s dream was to build a large museum open to everyone regardless of class or wealth, with a significant collection of exhibits designed to help people understand and admire the history of Russian art. The project materialized in 1881 with the inauguration of the gallery as Tretyakov donated more than 2000 exhibits to the gallery from his own collection in Moscow, beginning the history of what today is an impressive museum featuring more than 130000 works of art created by Russian artists, an overall historical narrative of Russian painting from the 11th century until the present. Its treasure is its collection of icons, while among its best-known pieces are the Byzantine “Virgin of Vladimir”, attributed to St. Luke according to the legend, and the masterpiece of Andrei Rublev called the “Trinity”.

Dinner.

**DAY 3 / SATURDAY: MOSCOW - TRANS-SIBERIAN**

**Breakfast.**

**Visit to the Kremlin and its cathedrals.** The word “Kremlin” in Russian means fortress, and in early Rus every important town had a fortress encircled by a wall where the main buildings, churches, and cathedrals were located and protected. The Moscow fortress, the cradle of the city, is the main fortress in the country and has been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Built in the 12th century, it took the form we know today in the 15th century. It is an excellent reflection of the different stages of Russian art; a single monumental centre of architecture, painting, and decorative and applied arts. The best craftsmen and artists worked on its churches, cathedrals, and palaces, bequeathing to us their priceless work framing the power and fame of Russia that is concentrated in its unforgettable alleyways and different sections. The Kremlin is even today the seat of some of the main political and religious government bodies: The President’s Palace, different administrative and military buildings such as the Senate and Armoury, and also numerous churches and cathedrals. Its walls, 19 meters high and 2235 meters long, tower above the Moskva River and Red Square and are made from eight kilogram bricks. We will visit the fortress, enjoying the view of the world’s biggest “tsar bell”, forged in 1733, and the “tsar cannon”, one of the biggest guns ever made in the entire world. Forged in 1586 by Andrew Chokhov, its purpose was to defend the gate of the Spasskaya tower, though it has never been used. The Cathedral Square is an architectural jewel, flanked by the Dormition Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Annunciation, and the Cathedral of the Archangel.

Lunch.

**Visit to the Moscow metro.** Opened on May 15, 1935, by the Soviet government as a symbol of the technological and industrial prowess of the political system, the Moscow metro was considered to be the “People’s Palace.” The most important artists of the period took part in its decoration, and materials were brought from all corners of the country, representing the union of the Soviet people. The metro is still the city’s main transportation artery and even one of the most important in the world, with its 200 kilometres of railway lines and 145 stations. We will visit the most important stations decorated with luxurious materials: more than 20 types of marble, granite, and onyx, as well as paintings, majolica, glass, mural paintings, mosaics, etc.

Transfer to railway station and departure to Yekaterinburg (2nd class compartments).

**Dinner on board.**

**Night on board.**

**DAY 4 / SUNDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - YEKATERINBURG**

**Breakfast and lunch on board.**
Arrival to Yekaterinburg. Yekaterinburg is the fourth largest city in Russia and is situated slightly east of the Ural Mountains at the edge of Siberia and on the border between Europe and Asia. The city was founded in 1723, just 20 years after St. Petersburg, by order of Tsar Peter the Great, and was named after the Tsar’s wife and future tsarina Catherine I. The city rapidly grew as the centre of the Urals mining region and a major pillar of the metallurgy industry. When the Siberian Route was built beginning in 1761 to deliver Chinese goods to Europe through Russia, Yekaterinburg became a major hub in the transit of minerals from Siberia to European Russia, taking on its nickname of the “Window to Asia.” After the Russian revolution, the last tsar and his family were arrested and transferred to several locations, ending up at the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg. When the White troops, who were loyal to the Tsar, approached the city and were about to free the prisoners, the Bolsheviks assassinated the tsar and his family on Lenin’s orders. The scene of the murder was razed in 1977 by Boris Yeltsin, who was at the time the governor of the city and would become the president of Russia. Nowadays, Yekaterinburg is the major cultural and industrial centre of the Ural Region, a prosperous and dynamic city.

Transfer to hotel.

Accommodation.

Dinner.

DAY 5 / MONDAY: YEKATERINBURG

Breakfast.

Visit to Ganina Yama. Situated 15 km north of Yekaterinburg, this place is a memorial of the Romanov’s assassination at the hands of the Bolsheviks. After the killings at the Ipatiev House, the bodies were sprayed with acid in order to disfigure them and then transported to Ganina Yama, where they were burned and buried by the killers. When the White troops, loyal to the Tsar, liberated the city only one week later, they quickly discovered the burial place, but the bodies were no longer there: the Bolsheviks had secretly transferred them to a second burial place very close to Ganina Yama. This place was kept totally secret by the communist authorities until clandestine researchers discovered it much later, during the ‘70s, and only revealed the location in 1989, when the fall of the communist regime was imminent. DNA tests proved the remains belonged to Nicholas II and his family. They were transferred to the Peter and Paul cathedral in St. Petersburg, where they rest next to the other members of the Romanov dynasty. A memorial has been built at Ganina Yama, at the place of the burial, which consists of seven chapels, one for each member of the imperial family.

Visit to the monument on the border between Europe and Asia. We will cross the border between Europe and Asia in Yekaterinburg, where a monument has been erected a bit west of the city. We will celebrate the continent crossing with a glass of Russian sparkling wine.

Lunch.

Complete panoramic tour of Yekaterinburg. The panoramic tour will introduce the historical city centre, which features several buildings typical of 19th century Russian architecture. We will see the Monument to the City Founders, Tatishchev and De Genin, and among the many cathedrals and monasteries that we will see, the Chapel of St. Catherine, the patron of the city, in particular bears mentioning. We will also see the former Mining Office, the first stone building in Yekaterinburg and today the State Conservatory; the oldest Opera House in Russia, which has been in operation since 1912; and many merchant houses, palaces, and manor houses from the 19th century situated next to the city pond. We will discover the main Square of 1905 and October Square where the buildings of the City Parliament and Regional Government are located.

Visit to Nevsky Cathedral in Yekaterinburg. This bright and majestic cathedral was founded in 1838 on the grounds of Novo-Tikhvinsky Monastery and built in the style of late Classicism, turning into one of the largest and most beautiful cathedrals in pre-revolutionary Russia. When the Soviet regime came to power it was decided to close the cathedral, though it remained active longer than any other city churches, closing only in 1930. During World War II it was used as a military
Visit to the Church on the Blood in Yekaterinburg. The Church on the Blood was built between 2000 and 2003 in order to commemorate the location of the murder of the last tsar, Nicholas II, along with his family and closest servants. After his abdication, the tsar and his family were arrested and, after being held captive in Alexander’s Palace in Pushkin, near St. Petersburg, and later in the Siberian city of Tobolsk, the whole group of prisoners was moved by the Bolsheviks to the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg, where they stayed for several months under close surveillance. During the Russian Civil War, as troops loyal to the tsar were approaching, Lenin ordered the murder of the tsar and his family, along with their doctor, maid, valet, and butler. Eleven people in total were killed at midnight in a room in the house’s basement. Loyal troops liberated the city just one week later, but it was too late. The house was demolished in 1977 by order of the governor of the city, Boris Yeltsin, future president of Russia, and once the Soviet Union fell, this orthodox cathedral was built at the scene of the crime.

Dinner.

Transfer to railway station and departure to Novosibirsk (2nd class compartments).

Night on board.

DAY 6 / TUESDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - NOVOSIBIRSK

Breakfast and lunch on board.

Arrival to Novosibirsk. Russia's third largest city and the most important in Siberia, Novosibirsk sprawls out on the banks of the Ob River, the seventh largest in the world. The city was founded in 1893 as a small settlement to lodge the workers building the Trans-Siberian Railway Bridge across the Ob River and was first named Novonikolayevsk, in honour of then Tsar Nicolas II. The city developed quickly in the beginning of the 20th century as a junction between the Trans-Siberian and Turkestan-Siberian railways, the latter connecting Russia with Central Asia and the Caspian Sea. After the Russian revolution in 1926, the city changed its name to the present one and now boasts almost a million and a half inhabitants and one of the best universities in Russia.

Transfer to hotel.

Accommodation.

Dinner.

DAY 7 / WEDNESDAY: NOVOSIBIRSK

Breakfast.

We will discover two imposing engineering works: The Metro Bridge over the Ob River and the Novosibirsk Dam in the Ob River, very near the city, which forms the so-called “Siberian Sea.” Close by is located the Railway Museum, in which we will appreciate several locomotives and carriages from different periods, and discover the historical evolution of transportation on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Our visit will end in Akademgorodok, the University City and research centre of Siberia.

Visit to Akademgorodok. Situated 20 km south of Novosibirsk, among fir and birch forests and very near the “Siberian Sea,” Akademgorodok is translated as “Academy Town.” It was founded in 1950 as a centre of excellence in education and research and it hosts the University of Novosibirsk, almost 40 research centres, a medical institute, and many facilities for its inhabitants, from residential complexes to recreational and leisure venues, hotels, restaurants, cafes, shops,
cinemas, sport facilities, etc. The most remarkable building is the House of Scientists, whose surprising architecture hosts a library with more than 100,000 volumes. Today Akademgorodok is the main scientific and educational centre of Siberia and one of the most important in Russia, making up part of the Russian Academy of Science.

Lunch.

**Complete panoramic tour of Novosibirsk.** During our panoramic tour we will visit Oktyabrskaya port, the square where the city was founded; Lenin Square and Krasny Prospect, the main avenue. The House of 100 Apartments, which was constructed by the famous architect Kryachkov, won the Grand Prix award and the Golden Medal at the International Exhibition of Art and Technology in Paris in 1937, while the Monument to the Glory, dedicated to the soldiers fallen in the Second World War, is also a significant example of Soviet-inspired architecture. We will also admire the exterior views of the Ascension Cathedral and Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, the first stone building in Novosibirsk. On the Lenin Square we will see the small chapel of St. Nicholas the Miracle Maker, considered the geographical centre of Russia. In front of it is the Opera and Ballet Theatre.

Dinner.

**Transfer** to railway station and departure to Irkutsk (2nd class compartments).

**Night** on board.

**DAY 8 / THURSDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN**

Breakfast and lunch on board.

The train continues its route to Siberia towards the East, in the direction of Irkutsk, following Michel Strogoff’s adventure in Jules Verne’s famous novel. In the city of Krasnoyarsk, we will cross the majestic Yenisei, the second major river in Russia.

Dinner on board.

Night on board.

**DAY 9 / FRIDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - IRKUTSK - BAikal LAKE (LISTVIANKA)**

**Arrival to Irkutsk.** Irkutsk is the main city in eastern Siberia. It was founded in 1651 as a point for gold mining and trade, as well as a centre for collecting fur taxes from the local Buryats. The city is located on the banks of the Angara River, which originates 60 km east from one of the wonders of the world: the great Lake Baikal. Irkutsk was a destination for political exiles from the tsarist times, including the famous Decembrists. These exiles, generally from the intelligentsia and with a high cultural acumen, contributed greatly to the public life of Irkutsk and the improvement of the city. The origin of the city population is a rich mix, such as those found throughout Siberia, of Cossacks, pioneers, soldiers, hunters, rich merchants, missionaries, prisoners, functionaries, deportees, and scientists. Nowadays Irkutsk is the region’s commercial, cultural, and scientific centre, a modern and charming city with brick embankments, theatres, museums, and typical Russian architecture.

**Departure towards Lake Baikal,** greater fresh water reserve of the world. It is just a magical place with gorgeous landscapes, nature of incomparable beauty and numerous legends.

Breakfast.
Complete panoramic tour of Listvianka. Listvianka is a small town with no more than 2000 people situated on the south-western shore of Lake Baikal, 65 km from Irkutsk at the source of the Angara River. Its name comes from the larch trees (“listvennitsa” in Russian) that grow close to the town. Listvianka is one of the oldest settlements on Lake Baikal, as it was founded at the very beginning of the 18th century. The town lived off trade, fishing, and shipbuilding, and was a base for scientific research and expeditions. Today Listvianka is mostly a tourist location: during the summer months Listvianka is the starting point for most boat tours and tourist trips and expeditions on Lake Baikal. During our short tour we will visit the orthodox wooden church of Saint-Nicolas and the small market, where the local babushkas sell smoked fish from the lake and some locally produced handicrafts. On the other side of the Angara River, which flows from Lake Baikal at Listvianka to the Yenisei River, we can see Tolsty Cape and the Lighthouse.

Visit to the Baikal Ecology Museum. Here we can discover many facts about the stunning fauna and flora that populate the unique Baikal ecosystem. In the museum’s aquariums we will see many of its endemic fishes and we will even admire a Nerpa, the Baikal Seal, one of the few in the world living in fresh water. A virtual submarine will show us the depths of the lake and the life inhabiting it.

Barbecue lunch on the shores of Lake Baikal. We will have the opportunity to taste some of the local fish and eat lunch surrounded by the beauty of this unique landscape.

Chairlift to Mount Chersky. We will take a chairlift up Mount Chersky (755 m) where a beautiful view looks out over the peaks of the Khamar-Daban Mountains. From there we can discover the village of Port Baikal and landmarks such as Shaman Rock, the source of the Angara River, the Astrophysical Observatory, and the endless Siberian taiga.

Boat trip on Lake Baikal and lakeside hike. If weather permits, we will cross the lake by boat, allowing us to appreciate its beauty and the surrounding landscapes. We will be able to stop near one of the beautiful sandy beaches and brave the cold, crystal Baikal waters for a swim. We will also take a short hike on its shores and discover some typical objects of the local culture.

Dinner.

Accommodation in a typical wooden house on a lakeshore.

**DAY 10 / SATURDAY: BAIKAL LAKE (LISTVIANKA) - IRKUTSK**

Breakfast.

Transfer back to Irkutsk.

Stop at Shaman’s Rock. Rising out of the Angara River and very near Lake Baikal, where the river originates, Shaman Rock holds intense spiritual meaning for locals. Here the Angara River Master, Ama Sagaan Noyon, is believed to have lived, and this was a place where many shamanistic ceremonies, such as rituals, oath, prayers, and punishments, took place.

Visit to Taltsy Ethnographic Museum. Situated between Irkutsk and Lake Baikal, Taltsy is a village 47 km southeast of Irkutsk. The open-air museum of wooden architecture has collected 17th-20th century landmarks of defensive, civil, and religious wooden architecture from the Irkutsk Region, the most notable of which are the Spasskaya Tower of the Ilimsk Ostrog (Fort) (1667) and the Chapel of Our Lady of Kazan (1679), which is still an active church. Here we will also find numerous ethnographic collections, unique examples of Russian, Buryat, Evenk and Tofalar culture.

Lunch.
**Complete panoramic tour of Irkutsk.** Irkutsk is rightly considered to be a city-museum, with more than a hundred significant monuments. In its most important streets, Karl Marx Street and Lenin Street, the original wooden architecture, burned down by a great fire in 1879, was replaced by majestic stone buildings, the inspiration for which was drawn directly from the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow. Many theatres are situated nearby, such as the Musical Theatre and the Drama Theatre. The Church of Our Saviour is the oldest building brick in the city, having been erected in the 17th century, while the Polish Cathedral is the only gothic construction in Siberia. This Roman Catholic temple was built for the Polish minority that was made up of political exiles and their descendants. Other religious buildings of interest are the Epiphany Cathedral and Holy Cross Cathedral. We will pass through Kirov Square, where the Cossack Pokhavov built the first fortress in 1661, and then stroll along the beautiful embankment along the Angara River: green Gagarinsky Boulevard is the best place for a promenade, featuring many cafes and terraces. We will then visit Uritskogo Street for some shopping as well as the neighbouring market place, also called a bazaar, and its fish stalls loaded with catches from Lake Baikal. Behind the busy market begins the calmest part of the city: Irkutsk is particularly known for its typical Russian architecture, including traditional Russian wooden houses with carvings on the shutters and windows that are spread all over the city. We will spend some time in Irkutskaya Sloboda, a recently restored area that includes dozens of historical architectural gems.

**Visit to Znamensky Convent.** Founded in 1693, it is one of the oldest monasteries in Siberia. The convent’s architecture was inspired by medieval Russian constructions and also integrates some elements of “Siberian Baroque.” Its interior is richly decorated, especially the famous baroque carved iconostasis, featuring icons built into the old silver framework. A necropolis is located within the monastery grounds, which is the final resting place of Grigori Shelekhov, the founder of the Russian-American Company and the first permanent Russian settlement in Alaska. Next to the monastery we will see the monument to Alexander Kolchak, a Russian admiral and one of the White leaders during the Russian Civil War, who was shot within the monastery walls by the Bolsheviks in 1920.

**Visit to the Decembrists’ Museum.** On December 1st, 1825, Tsar Alexander I died. During his reign, Napoleon and the liberal ideas of the French Revolution were militarily defeated, but liberal feelings entered Russia, where many people of different social classes started asking for political reforms. A group of dissidents organized an armed revolt in St. Petersburg, Russia’s capital, protesting the crowning of Nicholas I, Alexander’s heir. They criticized Nicholas’ conservatism, refused the oath to the new tsar, and demanded the abolition of serfdom. The revolt was violently suppressed and many participants were sentenced to exile in Siberia, where they went along with their wives. Given that they were cultured and enlightened, they greatly contributed to the development of Irkutsk, spreading reformist and progressive ideas throughout Siberia. The museum consists of the ancient estates of two of the Decembrists, princes Trubetskoy and Volkonsky, and the collection includes their personal belongings, documents, and home furnishings.

Accommodation.

Dinner.

**DAY 11 / SUNDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN**

Transfer to railway station and departure to Ulan Bator (2nd class compartment).

Breakfast on board (boxed breakfast).

Leaving behind Lake Baikal, the train crosses the border between Russia and Mongolia.

Lunch and dinner on board.

Night on board.

* Depending on tickets availability, the selected train could leave Irkutsk on Day 10 in the evening.*
DAY 12 / MONDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - ULAN BATOR - TERELJ

Arrival to Ulan Bator. The Mongolian capital, founded in 1639, is the largest city: 40% of the country’s citizens live here. The name “Ulan Bator,” which is Ulaanbaatar in Mongolian, has quite the militant meaning: “Red Hero.” The city was conceived and built as a Buddhist monastery, and the architecture of Ulan Bator presents a bizarre mix of yurts, Buddhist monasteries, and fortresses alongside modern buildings and remnants of the Stalinist period. The city features several interesting museums and a lively street scene, complete with many restaurants, cafes, and shops that alternate with the traditional and bazaar market stalls. Right next to the city there is a beautiful nature reserve.

Transfer to hotel.

Breakfast.

Complete panoramic tour of Ulan Bator. This is a visit around the city, taking in its spectacular contrast between modern and traditional architecture, typified by steel buildings on the one hand and typical yurts on the other, still home to many of the city’s inhabitants. We will walk along the famous central square of Ulan Bator, Sukhbaatar Square, named after the revolutionary hero who declared independence from China on this very spot in July 1921. On this square you will find the most famous Mongolian monument, the Bell of the World, and next to it the Sukhbaatar Mausoleum. One of the most beautiful buildings in Ulan Bator is the Winter Palace, which was built in the early 20th century by order of the last emperor of the country. You will see the main religious monuments of the city: Gandan Monastery, Choijin-Lamyn-Sum Monastery, Zhanray Sing Temple, and others. Many of them are made of wood, something that makes these sanctuaries even more attractive and valuable.

Visit to Gandan Monastery in Ulan Bator. Gandan Monastery is in the centre of Ulan Bator’s old town, standing out along with its Tibetan Buddhist temples, lavishly decorated with gold and precious stones. Now in the middle of a maze of narrow streets and typical buildings, retail stores, and yurts, the monastery was founded in 1835. At the end of the 19th century its 14,000 monks occupied a wide swath of territory, though in 1938 it was closed by the communist government of Mongolia, reopening only in 1949. You will be amazed by its brightly painted walls, coloured roofs, and gods guarding the entrance. The main gate is turned to the South, in keeping with local tradition, while in the courtyard you will find a statue of Buddha and a stone vase.

Visit to the National Historical Museum. In this fascinating museum we will admire the history of Mongolia from the Palaeolithic period to the present day, illustrated by numerous archaeological materials, photographs, and diagrams of paleontological sites and archaeological digs, including coins, weapons, costumes, household items, religious objects, and bronze statuettes. You will learn a ton about Mongolia’s ancient history and the life of the nomadic tribes in Central Asia in addition to going through Mongolian history from the Mongol Empire in the 13th and 14th centuries to the socialist period between 1921 and 1990 and the arrival of the democracy. You will discover traditional Mongolian culture and life, clothing and jewellery, and the local decorative arts.

Lunch.

Departure to Terelj. Terelj is one of the finest national parks of Mongolia, located 60 km from Ulan Bator. It features a very specific landscape, one of the most beautiful in the country, made of vast steppes speckled with big, harshly beautiful rocks. In this quiet and peaceful park you will enjoy wild, untouched nature, enormous and bizarrely-shaped rocks, thick forests, and crystal-clear mountain rivers.

Arrival at the camp site, located inside the national park. Here we will have the opportunity to discover the authentic life of the Mongolian nomads by spending a night in their traditional yurts.

Dinner and accommodation in yurts.
DAY 13 / TUESDAY: TERELJ

Breakfast.

Visit to the house of a nomadic family. This is a wonderful opportunity to delve into the daily life of the nomadic Mongolians: how the family prepares the dairy products that constitute an important part of the nomad’s diet, the construction and assembly of a yurt, and how to raise domestic animals such as the famous yaks. We can also enjoy the steppes during a horseback ride, the area’s main means of transportation since the ancestors of the Mongols thundered across the Central Asian steppes, conquering the Asian expanses until they were knocking on the very gates of Western Europe.

Typical Mongolian barbecue lunch.

Visit to Aryabal Temple. This Buddhist meditation temple was built in the 17th century inside Terelj National Park. From here you will enjoy the best views of the park.

Fire camp dinner.

Night in yurts.

DAY 14 / WEDNESDAY: TERELJ - ULAN BATOR

Breakfast.

Departure to Ulan-Bator.

Visit to the Choijin Lama Museum. This museum is a monastery complex that was built between 1904 and 1908 in honour of the VIII Bogdo Khan’s brother, Luvsanhaydava, who was also the state oracle. It is one of the best monuments of early 20th century Mongolian architecture, consisting of five churches that display unique 17th-19th century items produced by Central Asian craftsmen. The museum is home to the priceless heritage of the history, culture, religion, and architecture of Mongolia.

Lunch.

Visit to the Zaisan Memorial. This memorial is situated on the Zaisan-Tolgoi y hill, from which you will enjoy a splendid view of Ulan Bator and the Tola River valley. The memorial complex was built in 1979 on the 40th anniversary of the Khalkin-Gol battles between Japanese invaders and the Mongolians, supported by Soviet troops. At the top of the hill there is a spire where traditional and communist symbols meet and harmonize in a curious mix. In the centre a figure of a Soviet soldier stands erect, complete with words of thanks to the USSR for its assistance in the Mongolian fight for its independence.

Visit to Bogdo Khan’s Palace. Bogdo Khan’s Palace is a museum complex that includes summer and winter palaces where the last Khan of Mongolia, VIII Bogdo Khan, used to live. The Summer Palace was built in the Chinese style between 1893 and 1903, while the Winter Residence was built in 1912 according to a plan put together by Russian architects. Today Bogdo Khan's Palace provides visitors with many interesting exhibits: portraits of all the Mongolian Khans of the 17th to 20th centuries, sculptures and paintings made by VIII Bogdo Khan himself, and Buddhist paintings on cloth, as well as statues, musical instruments, and other religious items used by the Khan.

Mongolian folk show. In the late afternoon, we will attend a folkloric show that will allow us to get in touch with the music, dances, and traditions of this wonderful nation.

Dinner in hotel.
DAY 15 / THURSDAY: ULAN BATOR - TRANS-SIBERIAN

Breakfast.
Transfer to railway station and departure to Beijing via crossing Mongolian steppes and Gobi Desert.
Lunch and dinner on board.
Night on board.

DAY 16 / FRIDAY: TRANS-SIBERIAN - BEIJING

Breakfast and lunch on board.
Arrival to Beijing, final stop after having crossed three continents. Vibrant, never-sleeping, and both loved and hated in equal measure by its inhabitants, this metropolis has recently emerged as one of the world’s main cities. Beijing, home to 20 million people, making it the world’s second most populous city, is the capital and the political, cultural, educational, and economic centre of China. Its long history spans more than 3000 years, during which Beijing has been repeatedly plundered, destroyed, and enthusiastically rebuilt, its name changing throughout the process a dozen times! The name “Beijing” is literally translated as “the northern capital,” and the city is presently changing at lightning speed, fuelled by the success of the Chinese economy and boosted by the fame of the 2008 Olympic Games: In the past few years millions of bicycles have given way to modern cars, while traditional houses have been replaced by high-tech skyscrapers...
Among all these changes, Beijing fights for its soul, fiercely preserving its old traditions and rich monuments.

Visit to the Temple of Heaven. Built in 1420, originally named the Temple of the Heaven and Earth, and situated in the southern part of Beijing, this temple is the largest complex of religious buildings in China. In 1530, a new Temple of the Earth was built in the northern part of Beijing, at which point the Temple of Heaven became a special place where the emperors prayed to Heaven, storms, and the clouds to ask for a rich harvest. The southern part of the temple is square, representing the forces of the Earth, while its northern part is rounded, the circle symbolizing the celestial powers, according to Chinese tradition. The temple ensemble's main buildings are the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the Imperial Vault of Heaven, and the Circular Mound Altar. The complex is one of the symbols of Beijing and is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Typical Chinese dinner, including famous duck dishes.
Accommodation.

DAY 17 / SATURDAY: BEIJING

Breakfast.
Visit to the Forbidden City, the most ancient architectural set in China. For five centuries, from the 15th to the beginning of the 20th century, it was the residence of the Chinese emperors. Situated in the centre of Beijing and decorated according to the caprices and fantasies of 24 Ming and Qing emperors, it is considered to be the largest palace complex in the world, consisting of 800 buildings and 9999 rooms spread over 72 hectares and surrounded by a ten-meter wall and a moat. The construction of the complex began in 1406 and lasted for 15 years, a process in which, according to the legend, more than a million workers were involved. One hundred million bricks, 200 million tiles, and an unimaginable amount of marble were used. The name “Forbidden City” refers to the fact that only the emperor and his family could live here; courtiers, officials, and others could only live outside its walls, and no one could enter or leave the palace without the emperor’s permission. The complex is divided into the Inner Court (or Back Palace) and the Outer Court (or Front Palace). The emperor performed his political duties in...
the rooms of the Outer Court, while the Inner Court was a living space featuring the Imperial Gardens. The Forbidden City is the largest and best-preserved ancient structure of its kind in the world, included by UNESCO in its World Heritage List.

Lunch.

Visit to the Great Wall of China. One of the Seven Wonders of the World, this impressive construction was built by the Chinese emperors to protect their northern borders and defend themselves against Mongolian attacks. The Great Wall, 8,851.8 km long, is a symbol of the ancient Chinese civilization and the world’s most famous fortification. The construction of the wall lasted from the 7th century BC until the 17th century AD, though most of the Great Wall as we see it today was built during the reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The Great Wall of China is a national pride and a symbol of Chinese greatness, with the government spending an enormous amount of money every year to preserve this architectural treasure for future generations. The Great Wall boasts 40 million visitors per year, making it one of the most visited sites in the world. It has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Dinner.

DAY 18 / SUNDAY: BEIJING (DEPARTURE)

Breakfast.

Transfer to the airport.