



# Transsiberian Railway from Moscow to Vladivostok and by ferry to Japan

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## Group tour 2010 Moskva – Vladivostok – Tokyo 23/8 – 13/9 2010

This is the original Transsiberian route, crossing the world's largest country from west to east. For a 7-day train journey we leave behind 9.289 km and pass through 7 time zones. After Ekaterinburg, Irkutsk and Baikal Lake, the train continues further through Eastern Siberia, where one sees Russia in a way that very few travellers do. The railway goes through spectacular scenery of mountains and forests, of wild rivers and distant Siberian villages which seem forgotten by Moscow politicians 9000 km away. The tour finishes in Vladivostok, one of the most important Russian ports. From here we sail further to Japan where we travel by bus and train to reach the capital Tokyo.

### TOUR DAY BY DAY

**Day 1.** Arrival to Moscow. Transport to the hotel and accommodation. In the evening sightseeing in Moscow's famous subway with beautiful marble columns, crystal chandeliers and ornate ceilings. *(dinner)*

**Day 2.** City tour including the Red Square, Saint Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin, where we see the Armoury with one of the world's largest treasure chambers. *(breakfast)*

**Day 3.** Free morning. In the afternoon transport to Yaroslavskiy train station for departure to Ekaterinburg. *(breakfast)*

**Day 4.** Arrival in Ekaterinburg in the evening. Transfer to the hotel. *(dinner)*

**Day 5.** City tour. Free afternoon. *(breakfast)*

**Day 6.** Tour to Romanov Monastery and Eurasia Obelisk. *(breakfast)*

**Day 7.** Departure early in the morning (at 01:30 am) by train to Irkutsk. *(no meals)*

**Day 7 – 8.** In the train. We pass by old Siberian cities and towns such as Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk. The landscape in this part of the railway switches between coniferous and birch forests and small villages, where development is still far behind the big cities.

*(no meals)*

**Day 9.** Arrival in Irkutsk. Pick up at the station and transfer to the hotel. Time for short rest and shower followed by city tour which ends at the hotel.

On this tour, we include visit to the Decembrists' Museum. *(no meals)*

**Day 10.** In the morning transport to the village of Listvjanka at Lake Baikal. Here we see the old wooden church and sail north on Lake Baikal to the small village of Bolshie Koty, which is beautifully situated on the lake's western shore. Private accommodation in wooden houses. After dinner evening is on your own disposal. Possibility of genuine Russian Banya (sauna).

*(breakfast, lunch and dinner)*

**Day 11.** Departure in the morning by boat back to Listvjanka. Lunch and then transport back to Irkutsk, where we are on the road

visiting Taltsi Ethnographic Museum (open-air museum) with the unique architecture. Arrival in Irkutsk in the afternoon, overnight at hotel.

*(breakfast and lunch)*

**Day 12.** Free day. *(breakfast)*

**Day 13.** In the morning transfer from the hotel to the train station, from where we depart by train to Vladivostok. *(breakfast package)*

**Day 13 – 15.** Travel by train eastwards to the Pacific ocean. We pass across Eastern Siberia, through mountainous and forest areas and

### TRAINS IN RUSSIA

The trains we use are not specially arranged for tourists; they are just a means of public transportation. You will spend your days in the train meeting new people, chatting, eating, playing games, reading and enjoying the changing landscape through the window. You will be able to get off and stretch your legs at the train stations, where the train stops for 15-20 minutes. Stations are often transformed into bustling markets where you can find everything from homemade dishes, fruits and beverages to souvenirs and clothing.

We travel in sleeping compartments which are shared by 4 people (hardclass compartment). It is possible to get a compartment shared by 2 people (softclass compartment) against an additional payment. This depends on availability. Compartments are equipped with blankets and pillows, bed linen are provided when the train starts. There is toilet with wash basin on each end of the wagon. In each wagon there are 2 train-stewardesses, who take care of the daily cleaning. There is a restaurant carriage in the trains.

past remote Siberian villages. **(no meals)**

**Day 16.** Arrival in Vladivostok in the morning. We have left behind us 9 289 km and passed through 7 time zones. Meeting at the train station by the local guide. City tour ending at the hotel. **(no meals)**

**Day 17.** Free time in the morning. Departure to Sakaiminato in Japan in the afternoon by ferry. **(breakfast)**

**Day 18.** Arrival in Dong Hae (SOUTH KOREA) at 10.00 h. Free time in Dong Hae. Departure to Sakaiminato at 18.00 h. **(no meals)**

**Day 19.** Arrival to Sakaiminato (Japan). Transfer to Yonago Airport (ca. 30 min drive). Flight to Tokyo. Arrival in Tokyo in the afternoon and transfer to the hotel. Free time. Overnight. **(no meals)**

**Day 20.** City tour of Tokyo and Kamakura including visit of Great Buddha, Tsurugaoka Hachiman shrine – the most important Shinto Shrine in Japan, Tokyo tower, Asakusa – famous for the oldest and biggest Buddhist temple in Tokyo. Drive by the Imperial Palace. Overnight. **(breakfast)**

**Day 21.** Free time in Tokyo. Optional 1-day guided tour to Kyoto. *Find below a description.* **(breakfast)**

**Day 22.** Transfer to the airport for the flight back. **(breakfast)**



**Price without flight ticket: 44790 SEK**

Minimum group size is 10 people.

**Included in the price:** Train ticket Moscow-Ekaterinburg-Irkutsk-Vladivostok at 2-nd class (4-persons in compartment), ferry ticket Vladivostok – Sakaiminato (Japan), cabin category Economy Standard A (shared by 8 people), all excursions and transport mentioned in the program. English-speaking tour-leader from arrival in Moscow till departure from Tokyo. Local English-speaking guides on all excursions Hotel (12 nights), hotels (12 nights), private accommodation (1 night), sleeping compartment in the trains (6 nights), 2 nights on the ferry. At the private accommodation we stay up to 4 persons together per room. Breakfast is included at all hotels and lunch/dinner on selected days.

**Not included in the price:** Russian visa (we provide invitation free of charge). Please, contact the Russian embassy at your country about the latest prices and conditions for issuing tourist visas; travel insurance; personal expenses.

**Additional payments:** Supplement for 2-persons compartment: 348 EUR per person. Subject to availability. Single supplement at hotels (12 nights): 578 EUR. Supplement for Family class cabin on the ferry (shared by 2 people): 215 EUR. Half-day optional tour of Kyoto: 210 EUR.

**Vaccinations:** There are no obligatory vaccines for the countries visited. Contact always either private physician or visit the website of WHO (World Health Organization) to know the latest recommendations.

<http://apps.who.int/tools/geoserver/www/ith/index.html>

**Accommodation and meals:** Hotel (12 nights), private accommodation (1 night), sleeping compartment in the train (6 nights), 2 nights on the ferry. At the private accommodation we stay up to 4 persons together per room. Breakfast is included at all hotels and lunch/dinner on selected days. On the ferry meals are not included but they are rather cheap – 5-7 USD per meal (breakfast/lunch/dinner).

**Guides and tour-leader:** There are local, English-speaking guides on all excursions. English-speaking tour-leader from Penguin Travel is coming along with the group.

#### **We recommend:**

Bring with you USD and EUR on the tour. ATM's can be used in both countries but it is always better to have cash available especially on the train and in the countryside.

#### **The highlights of the tour in brief**

##### **Moscow**

Undoubtedly more Russian than St Petersburg, Moscow is often called "Russia's soul". Moscow is breathtaking for the first-time visitor; the contrasts and impressions are overwhelming. The Kremlin dazzles with its colourful domes and glittering spires, while the suburbs are bleak with their grey concrete blocks of flats. Streets are jammed by the



heavy traffic, yet underground you find one of

the largest and most efficient metros in the whole world. In the city centre you'll find bright shops selling all the Western goods you can and can't think of, and at the numerous markets – Russian style fur hats and felt boots. "New Russians" drive BMWs, while pensioners sit on street corners and beg.

In the centre is the Red Square and at the end of it the beautiful St. Basil's Cathedral with its colourful onion-like domes. Inside the Kremlin's red walls beautiful cathedrals stand side by side with Ivan the Terrible Bell Tower, the Tsar's Bell and the Congress Palace, where the seat of the old Soviet government used to be. A very Russian experience is a visit to the Bolshoy Theatre (we can book tickets for you). Moscow has also many world-class museums. And art lovers shouldn't miss the Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts with their treasures of Russian and Impressionist art. The city boasts numerous Russian and ethno restaurants of all price levels. Yaroslavskiy train station is the starting point of the trains on the Transsiberian Railway.

##### **Ekaterinburg**

Only few towns east of Moscow have remained in history and one of them is Ekaterinburg – mostly known as the place, where in 1918 Bolsheviks brutally murdered the last Tsar family. The city is surrounded by large forests at the foothills of the Ural's mountains some 2000 km east from Moscow. The foundation of the city dates back to 1723, when Peter the Great built a metallurgical plant in the Urals, and named the city after the tsar's wife, Katarina.

Today Ekaterinburg is a thriving city with more than 1 million inhabitants: in this city Boris Eltsin have begun his political carrier, before becoming a president of Russia.



##### **Irkutsk**

The city is beautifully situated on both banks of Angara River. Have a walk in the old part of the town and see the wooden houses built during tsar times. Just 64 km away from Irkutsk is Lake Baikal; one of the most impressive nature wonders of the world. It is the deepest lake in the world (1.637 m) and contains approximately one fifth of the freshwater on earth. If the rest of the world's drinking water disappeared tomorrow, only Lake Baikal could supply the earth's population with water for the next 40 years! The water is incredibly clean and can be drunk

directly. Baikal is also the world's most ancient lake, with unique flora and fauna: two thirds of the 500 plant and 1200 animal species are found nowhere else, as for example, Baikal's freshwater seal and the omul – a salmon-like fish. There are several walking paths in the surrounding mountains passing along the coastline.

### Vladivostok

One of Russia's most attractive cities and a major Russian Pacific Ocean port lies in the Golden Horn Bay. It is the home of the Russian Pacific Fleet and, due to its proximity to China, Korea and Japan, it has an important strategic, commercial and economic role. The city is relatively young (founded in 1860) and the attractions are mostly modern: a military fort, a submarine turned into a museum, a big aquarium – the Oceanarium, botanical gardens and a very interesting regional ethnographic museum.

Vladivostok is connected with Japan by ferry boat departing once a week. It passes via South Korea (Dong Hae port) where it stops for 8 hours and then continues to the Japanese port Sakaiminato which is approx. 1 hour and a half by plane from the closest airport to the capital of Japan Tokyo.

### Tokyo

The city whose name means "eastern capital" was originally a small fishing village named Edo. It was first established on 1457. From 1603 it began to grow up with its establishment as a seat of government of the country. Tokyo has been generally accepted as the sole capital of Japan since 1869, when the Emperor took up permanent residence there. At that time Tokyo, bearing already its present name, grew into one of the largest cities in the world with a population of over one million people.



Tokyo is rich in places of interest, ancient and modern, including religious shrines, gardens, shopping areas. Among the most important attractions are: Tsurugaoka Hachiman shrine in Kamakura - a shrine of the original faith Shinto of Japan and Japanese people; Asakusa – a famous entertainment district in Tokyo, known mostly the Sensoji, a Buddhist temple considered to be the oldest, and one of the most significant ones in Tokyo, and the Nakamise shopping street - stretching along the alley leading to the temple, it is part of the oldest shopping districts of Tokyo dating back to late 17<sup>th</sup> century; Tokyo Tower - world's

tallest self-supporting steel tower; Imperial Palace – situated in a large park area surrounded by moats and massive stone walls in the center of Tokyo, it is the residence of Japan's Imperial Family.

### Kyoto (optional on day 21)

Kyoto was Japan's capital and the emperor's residence from 794 until 1868. It is now the country's seventh largest city with a population of 1.4 million people and a modern face. Over the centuries, Kyoto was destroyed by many wars and fires, but due to its historic value, the city was dropped from the list of target cities for the atomic bomb and spared from air raids during World War II. Countless temples, shrines and other historically priceless structures have survived in the city till today. Some of the highlights of Kyoto are Nijo Castle – the Kyoto residence for emperors since 1603 with typical architecture; Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – built as a home of a retired shogun, now it is converted into a Zen Temple housing sacred Buddha relics and covered in gold leaf; Kyoto Imperial Palace – located in a spacious park, it used to be the residence of Japan's Imperial Family until 1868, when the emperor and capital were moved from Kyoto to Tokyo; Ryoanji Temple – a Zen temple whose main attraction is its rock garden, consisting of nothing but rocks, moss and neatly raked gravel.

#### Kyoto Sunrise Shinkansen tour (optional):

- \* Public transport to from your hotel to Tokyo Station or Shinagawa Station
- \* 06:00 am – Nozomi Bullet train to Kyoto Station (140 min).
- \* Meeting with the guide is at New Miyako Hotel, walking distance from Kyoto Station
- \* Half-day tour including visit of Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), Imperial Palace. The tour finishes at Kyoto Handicraft center.
- \* Free time till the evening.
- \* 08:00-09:00 pm - Nozomi Bullet train from Kyoto Station (140 min)
- \* 10:50-11:20 pm arrival at Tokyo Station or Shinagawa Station.
- \* Public transport to your hotel.

**Price:** 210 EUR

**Included:** English-speaking guide service from New Miyako Hotel to Kyoto Handicraft Center; entrance fees at visited sites; tickets for bullet trains.

**Not included:** Tickets for public transport; transport of luggage (larger than a middle-size rucksack).

Tickets and itinerary will be delivered to your hotel.

### Means of transport in Japan

#### \* Shinkansen (Bullet train)

Shinkansen is a high-speed rail system that serves as the core of Japan's rail transportation network. Each line has its own name (Tokaido, Tohoku etc.), and each type of train is identified by a name (Nozomi, Hikari etc.). In the almost 40 years since it was opened, the Shinkansen network has carried over 6 billion passengers without a single major accident. The Shinkansen network boasts not only high speed - up to 300 km/h, but also high frequency. For example, at least six trains per hour operate between Tokyo and Shin-Osaka Stations during daytime hours. Although the phrase 'bullet train' is popular overseas, in Japan you will only see Shinkansen on English signs.

The oldest and probably the most famous Shinkansen line among tourists is the Tokaido Artery linking Tokyo, Japan's capital located on the eastern edge, to Osaka, a commercial city located on the western edge. Between these two destinations lie the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara, modern seats of traditional Japanese culture, and Nagoya, a city known for its industrial activities. There are 3 types of trains which differ in speed and cost, and run on separate tracks. Nozomi Shinkansen is the fastest train raising a maximum speed of 270 km and passing the whole distance between Tokyo and Osaka (550 km) for 2.5 hrs.



#### \* Public transport in Tokyo

Tokyo's public transport system is one of the most efficient in the world and is clean and safe, combining an extensive train network, 13 underground subway lines and a bus system. Visitors usually find the trains (JR) and subways the best way to get around although the complexity of the underground network can be intimidating; rush hour from 7.30am to 9am and 5pm to 7pm should be avoided. Most stations have English signs. Because lines are owned by different companies, transfers between trains or subways usually require a transfer between different train systems, with different ticketing systems that can be confusing. The Tokyo Combination Ticket (Tokyo Free Kippu) is a day travel pass that allows unlimited use of the trains, subway and bus lines within the city. Subway tickets are bought at vending machines; buy the cheapest ticket if unsure how much to pay and the difference, if any, can be paid at the end of the journey. The bus system is more complicated for visitors as most destinations are written in Japanese only and bus drivers don't speak English. Taxis are convenient but never cheap, particularly in rush hour. Taxis can be hailed on the street, except in some central areas, where they only pick up from taxi ranks. Drivers speak little English or none at all.