



# Trans-Mongolian Railway

## Group tour 2019

- **Moscow – Yekaterinburg – Irkutsk – Ulan Bator – Beijing with Naadam Festival**  
27 June – 17 July 2019  
(21 days / 20 nights)

This is the most popular Trans-Siberian route, crossing the world's largest country from west to east. For a 6-day train journey we leave behind 7.622 km and pass through 5 time zones. After Yekaterinburg, Irkutsk and Baikal Lake, the train continues further through Gobi desert and China. The railway goes through spectacular scenery of desert and forests, small towns and farmlands. The tour finishes in Beijing, where you will explore the main highlights of the city and the Great Chinese Wall.

### TOUR DAY BY DAY

#### Day 1, 27/6. Moscow

Meeting at the airport and transfer to the hotel. Accommodation and overnight at People Loft Tverskaya Hotel 2\*\*

Meals included: -

#### Day 2, 28/6. Moscow – departure

Free morning for some glances of Moscow or for some shopping before the train journey. Transportation to Kazansky train station, where we get on the train to Yekaterinburg. Overnight on the train.

Meals included: -

#### Day 3, 29/6. Yekaterinburg

Arrival to Yekaterinburg in the evening. We will walk to the hotel, which is conveniently

located 3 minutes on foot from the train station. Overnight at Marins Park hotel 3\*.

Meals included: -

#### Day 4, 30/6. Yekaterinburg

Tour to Romanov Monastery and Eurasia Obelisk marking the border between Europe and Asia. After lunch there will be a city tour. Overnight in Yekaterinburg.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch

#### Day 5, 1/7. Yekaterinburg – departure

Departure before noon by train to Irkutsk.

Meals included: breakfast

#### Day 6, 2/7. On 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. Overnight on the train.

Meals included: -

#### Day 7, 3/7. Irkutsk

Arrival to Irkutsk in the evening. Pick up at the train station and transfer to the hotel. Overnight at hotel Angara 3\*.

Meals included: -

#### Day 8, 4/7. Irkutsk – Olkhon (Baikal Lake)

In the morning transport by bus and ferry to the island of Olkhon at Lake Baikal. The trip will take about 6-8 hours. Overnight at a local private home.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### Day 9, 5/7. Olkhon

1-day excursion to Khoboy cape – the most northern point of Olkhon, considered to be a sacred place. Picnic lunch. Overnight on Olkhon.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### Day 10, 6/7. Olkhon

Whole day to admire the splendid nature on the shores of Baikal and Olkhon Island –

possibility for hiking along the shores, sun-bathing, swimming, Russian banya, etc.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### Day 11, 7/7. Olkhon – Irkutsk

Transport by bus and ferry back to Irkutsk. Overnight in the city.

Meals included: breakfast

#### Day 12, 8/7. Irkutsk – Ulan Bator

Early in the morning transfer from the hotel to the train station, from where we depart by train to Ulan Bator. Overnight on the train.

Meals included: breakfast (packed)

#### Day 13, 9/7. Ulan Bator – Terelj

Arrival in Ulan Bator in the morning. Pick-up at

### TRAINS

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 major 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 (2<sup>nd</sup> class compartment). It is possible to get a compartment shared by 2 people (1<sup>st</sup> class compartment) against an additional payment, but not on all segments. 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 1 or 2 train-stewardesses, who take care of the daily cleaning. There is a restaurant carriage in most trains. There is also a samovar (Russian kettle) at one end of the wagon, providing hot water throughout the journey – you can use it to make coffee or tea, prepare noodles etc.

the train station and drive to local restaurant for breakfast. After that we drive from Ulan Bator up to Terelj National park (approx. 75 km) occupying wide territory amidst the vast Mongolian steppes. Here we visit the imposing Turtle Rock and the spiritual centre Aryabal. There is an option that we visit a nomad family and have the opportunity to taste local food and drinks. Stay overnight in gers - traditional round white felt tents.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### Day 14, 10/7. Terelj Park - Ulan Bator

Free time in Terelj. Possibility for hiking and horse-riding (payment on spot) in the beautiful countryside. At noon, drive back to Ulan Bator with visit on the way of Chenghiz Khan Memorial Complex with a 40-meter high monument of Chenghiz Khan on a horse. Lunch in the restaurant and proceed back to Ulan Bator for a city tour with visit to Gandan Khiid Buddhist Monastery and the Museum of National History telling about the glorious time of Chenghiz Khan and the Mongolian empire. Evening folklore show with Mongolian throat singing and traditional music. Overnight at hotel Dream 3\*.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### Day 15, 11/7. Naadam Festival

Early in the morning drive to the Naadam Stadium for the colourful opening ceremony. In the afternoon we will be able to see archery, wrestling and ankle bone shooting. After dinner go to Sukhbaatar square for music and dance show and fireworks. Overnight at hotel Dream 3\*.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### Day 16, 12/7. Naadam Festival

After breakfast transfer to the horseriding area Khui doloon khudag (about 40km from UB), where we can see the horseracing till lunch time, picnic lunch packed from UB. Free time to enjoy the events in the area. Back to Ulan Bator for overnight at hotel Dream 3\*.

Meals included: breakfast, picnic lunch

#### Day 17, 13/7. Ulan Bator – departure

In the morning departure by train to China's capital Beijing (approx. 30 hours). In the evening we arrive at the border where train cars must have their wheels replaced because of the different track width in China. Overnight on the train.

Meals included: breakfast

#### Day 18, 14/7. Beijing

Arrival in Beijing before noon. Transportation to the hotel for accommodation. Overnight at hotel Beijing Guantong Jianhui Hotel 4\*.

Meals included: -

#### Day 19, 15/7. Beijing

After breakfast city tour in Beijing. We begin with the Forbidden City (to the Tiananmen Square), where Ming and Qing Dynasties have

ruled. Here we see a selection out of 800 impressive buildings, which are said to contain 9,999 rooms. After lunch (not included) we continue to Summer Palace. Overnight at Beijing Guantong Jianhui Hotel 4\*.

Meals included: breakfast

#### Day 20, 16/7. Beijing

We continue the program to the culmination of the trip in China: The Great Wall. It is an unforgettable experience to stand at this impressive structure, stretching over 6,000 km across the country. We then head to the Ming Tombs one of the 13 tombs of the Ming dynasty is visited. The rest of the day is free. Overnight at Beijing Guantong Jianhui Hotel 4\*.

Meals included: breakfast

#### Day 21, 17/7. Departure

The tour ends after breakfast. You can order an additional transfer to the airport or prolong your stay in Beijing.

Meals included: breakfast



**Price without flight ticket: 2990 EUR**

**Group size:** min. 8 people.

The tour can be arranged at 5-7 persons at the same price but without a Penguin tour leader.

**Included in the price:** Train ticket Moscow-Yekaterinburg-Irkutsk-Ulan Bator-Beijing at 2<sup>nd</sup> class (4 persons in compartment); all excursions and transport mentioned in the program; English-speaking tour-leader from arrival in Moscow till departure from Beijing; local English-speaking guides on the mentioned excursions; accommodation as specified in the itinerary (we reserve the right to book similar hotels in case of no availability at the mentioned hotels); meals as specified in the itinerary; entrance tickets as per program, transfer Moscow airport – hotel in Moscow.

**Not included in the price:** International flight tickets; Russian, Chinese and Mongolian visas (we provide invitations free of charge – we require copy of your passport); travel insurance; tips; drinks and meals not mentioned; personal expenses; transfer hotel in Beijing – airport in Beijing and other additional private transfers; additional excursions; extra overnights. Please, contact the embassies in your country about the latest prices and conditions for issuing tourist visas.

**Additional payment:** Single supplement at hotels (11 nights): 410 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://www.who.int/topics/travel/en/>

**Guides and tour-leader:** There are local, English-speaking guides on the mentioned excursions.

English-speaking tour-leader from Penguin Travel is coming along with the group at min. 8 persons.

**We recommend:**

Bring with you USD and/or EUR on the tour. ATM's can be used in the three countries but it is always better to have cash available especially on the train and in the countryside. Russian Rubles and Chinese Yuan can also be exchanged at many major banks at home.

#### 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. Do not go inside the Kremlin's red walls where beautiful cathedrals stay side by side with Ivan the Terrible's Bell Tower, the Tzar's Bell and the Congress Palace, where was the seat of the old Soviet government. A very Russian experience is a visit to the Bolshoy Theatre: <https://www.bolshoi.ru/en/timetable/>.

Moscow has also many world-class museums. And art lovers shouldn't miss the Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts

#### **PENGUIN TRAVEL**

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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 Trans-Siberian Railway.

### Yekaterinburg

Only few towns east of Moscow have remained in history and one of them is



Yekaterinburg – 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 began his political carrier, before becoming a president of Russia. Today you can visit The Presidential Center of Boris Yeltsin – a new and modern museum.

### Irkutsk & Baikal Lake

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! 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.



Olkhon is the biggest and probably the most interesting island in the Baikal Lake. The road to Olkhon is a bit tiresome, 6-8 hours in a bus,

but the trip can also be full of new and strange experiences. See how the landscape changes with time and watch how villages appear out of nowhere, just to disappear just as fast in the horizon. The island itself is about 70 km long and 35 km wide. To get there you need to pass Maloe More (Russian for "the Small Sea") by ferry, a trip of about 20 minutes. Please, keep in mind that many of the present-day comfort is not something you should take for granted here, but this only adds to the huge experience it is to visit the island of Olkhon. Accommodation will be in the main village of Khuzhir where there are about 1500 citizens. The island is full of nature and mysticism. Many of the areas on the island have a legend attached to them and the island is also a gathering place for shamanistic rituals.

### Ulan Bator

Although Ulan Bator has a population of 1 044 000, there is still something village-like about it – you can see, for example, a cow grazing in the middle of town! And on the outskirts people still live in the traditional round felt tents, "ger". One of the most interesting sights is Gandan Khiid – a Buddhist monastery from 1840 with four temples, the biggest of which is 42m high. But you meet the real Mongolia away from Ulan Bator. Just like their ancestors, part of the population still leads a nomadic life on the steppes. So you just feel as if you were "transported" back into the Middle Ages.



### Beijing & Great Chinese Wall

For the last twenty years the city has enjoyed an economic freedom that turned it to an international business meeting point. Today there are more than 10 million people living here and the city's development has been like a real explosion in the last ten years. It became a capital 1000 years ago and in the year 1400 the Forbidden City was built as the residence of the Chinese emperors. The central district is divided in northern, southern, western and eastern parts with the Forbidden City and the emperor's palace in the middle. The city plan reflects the Chinese perception of the world where the palace area symbolizes China as "Middle Kingdom" (or Central Kingdom). Other must-see sites are Tiananmen (Heavenly Peace) Square, the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace.

**The Great Wall is China's symbol** not only for the millions of tourists, but also for 1, 5 billion Chinese. This is the largest and the

longest human-made structure on earth. The Wall is more than 6 000 km long but when you stand there the figures do not matter. A couple of thousand kilometers plus or minus do not deprive you of the excitement to stand on the top of the Wall, built along mountain peaks and valleys.

The Wall used to protect the Silk Road (Silk Route), which was China's trade route with the countries in the Middle East and with the Roman Empire. From Beijing you can fly back home or continue exploring China and the region.



**THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING PENGUIN TRAVEL!**