Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express via the BAM and Yakutsk

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Overview

The Highlights

- Explore smaller and remote towns of Russia, rarely visited by tourists

- Grand Moscow’s Red Square, the Kremlin Armoury Chamber, St. Basil's Cathedral and Cafe Pushkin

- Yekaterinburg, infamous execution site of Tsar Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra, their son, daughters and servants, by the Bolsheviks in 1918

- Fantastic Sayan Mountain scenery, including the Dzheb double horse-shoe curves

- Visit one of the biggest hydro-electric dams in the world in Bratsk and one of the world's largest open cast mines in Neryungri

- Stop at the unique and mysterious 3.7-mile (6km) long Chara Sand Dunes

- Learn about the history and building of the BAM line at the local museum in Tynda

- Marvel at Komsomolsk's majestic and expansive urban architecture of the Soviet era, including the stupendous Pervostroitelei Avenue, lined with Soviet store fronts and signage intact

- City tour of Vladivostok, including a preserved World War II submarine

- All meals, fine wine with lunch and dinner, hotels, gratuities, off-train tours and arrival/departure transfers included

The Tour

Travel by private train through an outstanding area of untouched natural beauty of Siberia, along the Baikal-Amur Magistral (BAM) line, visiting some of the lesser known places and communities of remote Russia.

The luxurious *Golden Eagle* will transport you from Moscow to Vladivostok along the less-traveled, northerly Trans-Siberian BAM line.

Itinerary

Day 1: Moscow

Arrive at Moscow Airport, where you are met and transferred to the stylish five-star Four Seasons Hotel Moscow, a short walk from the Kremlin, Red Square and the Bolshoi Theatre. Meet your fellow travelers at a champagne reception followed by welcome dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Moscow

Our touring program of Russia's capital takes us to the grandeur of the Kremlin – the spiritual, historical and political heart of Moscow – and to see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber, where we have an exclusive private viewing. Continue to Red Square, with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, including the ornate onion-domed spires of St Basil's Cathedral and the beautiful façade of the world-famous GUM department store, constructed in Tsarist times.

Lunch is served in the Pharmacy Hall of Café Pushkin, a legendary Moscow restaurant serving traditional Russian cuisine with a host of traditional pharmaceutical features and collector's items meticulously preserved and displayed. An essential part of any visit to Moscow is a tour of the opulent and unique stations of the Moscow metro – showpieces of Socialist art furnished with

statues, frescoes and mosaics, unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

If you have been to Moscow before, we offer an included Freedom of Choice touring program, where you visit other sights of Moscow, such as the famous State Tretyakov Gallery (National Museum of Fine Art) or travel out of the city center to Sergiev Posad, home to one of the most beautiful monasteries in Russia and the historical and spiritual center of the Russian Orthodox Church (subject to train schedule).

In preparation for our departure from Moscow Kazansky Station, you will be greeted in the ornately decorated Imperial Waiting Room with a cold glass of Russian Champagne and canapes as you mix with the other guests and are welcomed by the train staff. The excitement in the waiting room audibly mounts and, 30 minutes before departure, your car attendants will escort you to Platform 1 where the *Golden Eagle* awaits ready for departure, hauled by a recently restored P36 steam locomotive for the first section of our journey.

Day 3: Kirov

Kirov is a port city of 518,000 on the Vyatka river. It is named after Sergei Kirov, who was expected to succeed Stalin as leader of the communist party, and whose assassination in 1934 gave Stalin the pretext for his great purge.

There will be a town tour which will include a visit to the Holy Uspensky Trifonov Cathedral and other well-preserved historical buildings from centuries gone by.

Day 4: Yekaterinburg

Founded in 1723 by Peter the Great, Yekaterinburg is the capital of the Urals. The Ural Mountains create the natural border between Europe and Asia, and the influences of each continent come together in this fascinating city.

More important for students of Russian history, Yekaterinburg is the execution site of Russia's last Czar, Nicholas, as well as his wife, Alexandra, their children and servants. Khrushchev ordered the destruction of the building where the crime took place, but the Russian Orthodox memorial which replaced it several decades later is a moving tribute to the doomed Romanovs.

We will also drive to the obelisk marking the geographical border can drink a glass of champagne with one foot in Europe and the other in Asia.

Our Freedom of Choice program will offer activities such as a walking tour of the city, or explore the intriguing Soviet military past at the Yekaterinburg Military Museum, which displays fragments of the U2 American spy-plane flown by Gary Powers that was shot down in this area in 1960 during the Cold War.

Day 5: Novosibirsk

Stop in this modern "Soviet" city situated on the River Ob, and visit the Opera House, one of the world's largest, completed in 1944 and whose stage reportedly was ordered by Stalin to

withstand the weight of a squadron of tanks. In front of the Opera House, we visit an impressive statue of Lenin – a marvelous opportunity to have your photograph taken with this iconic political leader.

Alternatively, you can visit Novosibirsk's excellent Railway Museum south of the city on our Freedom of Choice tour. The museum displays locomotives and rolling stock from the late 1800s, including carriages of the Tsars, through to the Soviet era. Or choose to go to the Mineralogical Centre with its fine display of Siberian minerals.

From Novosibirsk we leave the Trans-Siberian Railway and head 124 miles (200 kms) south towards Barnaul. Then we turn northeast, enjoying the peaceful pace onboard as the *Golden Eagle* climbs through the Abakan mountains. Perhaps you would like to attend an on-board lecture, or simply socialize in the lounge car.

Day 6: Abakan

This morning we enjoy a visit to Abakan, followed by an afternoon on board the train, traveling through some fantastic mountain scenery, which includes the Dzheb double horse-shoe curves as the line gains height in the spectacular Sayan Mountains. The section between Abakan and Taishet took 23 years to complete.

Day 7: Bratsk

Overnight we run northwest to Taishet where we officially join the BAM (Baikal – Amur mainline), the new line that runs north and parallel to the original Trans-Siberian. The BAM section of the journey was called "The Road of Courage and Heroism" by the Soviets, after the many natural obstacles that had to be overcome during its construction.

We spend several hours in the city of Bratsk, visiting one of the biggest hydro-electric dams in the world. Built during the 1960s, it is an impressive feat of technological engineering.

Day 8: Severobaikalsk

We arrive in the morning to the extremely remote location of Severobaikalsk (North Baikal), on the shores of Lake Baikal, where the road network is completely isolated from the rest of the country. The BAM is a vital lifeline to this beautiful area, and we have the morning to explore the unique biodiversity of life here and meet some of the local inhabitants.

On leaving Severobaikalsk along the Upper Angara River, we will pass through the four Mysoviye tunnels as we run parallel to the Baikal shoreline. During the afternoon we climb into the Severomuisk mountain range and late afternoon we arrive in Osypnoni, which is the start of the Severomuisk tunnel. Opened in 2003, it is the longest railway tunnel in Russia at 9.5 miles (15.3km). Prior to that, a 33.5-mile (54 km) tortuous bypass was constructed to pass over the mountains. We will either take the bypass or the new tunnel from here to Kazankan.

Day 9: Novaya Chara

Early morning we arrive in Novaya Chara and spend the morning here. The area is famous for Charoite, a semi-precious lilac-colored gemstone, only found in the Chara area. It is likely traders will be at the station. We will visit an interesting small museum that covers the history of the area, including the Marble Canyon Gulag.

We'll also make a stop at the unique 3.7 mile (6 km) long Sand Dunes. It is a mystery how they came to be here, but they have long been an important site for the indigenous people as artefacts from thousands of years ago have been found buried here. The afternoon is spent heading east along the BAM and around midnight we take the new 620-mile (1,000 km) Amur – Yakutsk Mainline (or AYaM).

Day 10: Neryungri

Neryungri is about 124 miles (200 km) north of the BAM main line and sits in a huge basin that contains an 80 ft (25 m) thick seam of high quality coal amounting to about 40 billion tonnes. Located here is one of the world's largest open cast mines, which we will visit. Look out for the massive 2,300 horsepower trucks that bring 200 tonnes at a time up from the mine. The tires of the trucks stand 16' 7" (5m), about the height of the Golden Eagle train. Late morning we continue our journey north towards Yakutsk.

Day 11: Yakutsk

After breakfast we arrive in Nizhny Bestyakh, the station for Yakutsk, the capital city of the Sakha Republic, located about 280 miles (450 kms) south of the Arctic Circle on the Lena River, with a population of 311,000.

Yakutsk has an average temperature of 16.2°F (-8.8°C) and is the second coldest large city in the world after Norilsk. Yakutsk is also the largest city located in continuous permafrost. In June the temperature will be a more comfortable 60-70°F (16-21°C).

Lunch will be served on board after our morning in Yakutsk and we retrace our steps back to the BAM and Tynda.

Day 12: Tynda

With a population of around 40,000, Tynda is the largest town for over 300 miles in any direction. It was built to be the administrative center for the construction of the BAM route during the 1970s. Our visit to a local museum gives us a fascinating insight into the building of this line.

Day 13: Novy Urgal

Traveling through the untouched tundra, we experience Russia at its most remote. We have now travelled more than 6,200 miles (10,000 kms) since leaving Moscow. The beauty unfolds before us as we enter a region of permafrost. Here the vast distances and forbidding geographic and climatic conditions render the entire region an extreme environment for human existence.

Twenty hours after leaving Tynda we arrive in Novy Urgal. You will feel transported back in time

to the Soviet Union. Little has changed in this isolated place since those days, and nostalgia for the USSR is strong. In the 930 miles (1,500 kms) between Tynda and Komsomolsk, there are no settlements of over 10,000 people.

Day 14: Komsomolsk

Komsomolsk reflects the majestic and expansive urban architecture of the Soviet era, including the stupendous Pervostroitelei Avenue, 260 feet (80 meters) wide and lined with 1970s and 1980s blocks with Soviet store fronts and signage intact, with parks and playgrounds hidden behind it. The city was infamously a center for prisoner labor, with over 900,000 prisoners estimated to have passed through its camps. After visiting Komsomolsk, we are at our most easterly point before we turn slightly southwest for the Pacific and cross the Amur at Khabarovsk where we re-join the Trans-Siberian mainline and head towards Vladivostok.

Day 15: Vladivostok

Vladivostok is a military port, located on the western shores of the Sea of Japan and home to the Russian Navy's Pacific Fleet. Due to its military importance, the city was closed to foreigners between 1930 and 1992. Vladivostok (literally translated as 'Ruler of the East') offers visitors an interesting opportunity to explore its principal military attractions including a visit to a preserved World War II submarine.

Our city tour will also take us to the iconic suspension bridge over Golden Horn Bay, one of the largest of its kind worldwide, which opened in 2012 for the APEC conference. Transfer to our hotel in Vladivostok, the deluxe Lotte Hotel, where we stay for one night.

Day 16: Vladivostok

Following breakfast, spend the remaining time in Vladivostok at your leisure. Transfer included to Vladivostok Airport.

Dates & Prices

More

Russian visa required for this trip.

Extensions: We are delighted to make arrangements for your extension, and highly recommend adding on St. Petersburg, traveling by first-class train or river cruiser from Moscow, with special visits to Catherine's Palace, the Hermitage, and more. Let us custom-design a package for you.