



Join TravelQuest and Sky & Telescope to witness the awe-inspiring total solar eclipse on August 1, 2008, outside the Siberian city of Novosibirsk. Rekindle the adventurous spirit of early explorers traveling cross-country by rail on the legendary Trans-Siberian Express train.

Our exclusive Trans-Siberian Express private train programs provide the highest standard of comfort available, combining the elegance of fine old-world rail travel with modern amenities and superb cuisine. Along the way, we'll disembark for outstanding cultural excursions at fascinating locations.

Itinerary Overview

Day 1	Sun, Jul 27	Arrive Moscow
Day 2	Mon, Jul 28	Moscow • depart on the Trans-Siberian
Day 3	Tue, Jul 29	Yaroslavl
Day 4	Wed, Jul 30	Ekaterinburg
Day 5	Thu, Jul 31	Novosibirsk
Day 6	Fri, Aug 1	Novosibirsk • Total Eclipse Day
Day 7	Sat, Aug 2	Onboard the Trans-Siberian
Day 8	Sun, Aug 3	Irkutsk
Day 9	Mon, Aug 4	Lake Baikal
Day 10	Tue, Aug 5	Ulan Ude
Day 11	Wed, Aug 6	Onboard the Trans-Siberian
Day 12	Thu, Aug 7	Onboard the Trans-Siberian
Day 13	Fri, Aug 8	Onboard the Trans-Siberian
Day 14	Sat, Aug 9	Vladivostok
Day 15	Sun, Aug 10	Depart Vladivostok

ITINERARY *Grand Passage, through Siberia Total Eclipse*

Day 1 Sunday, July 27, 2008

Dinner

Arrive Moscow

Upon arrival at Moscow International Airport, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. (Optional pre-tour packages to Moscow and St. Petersburg will be offered in Fall 2007.) Your accommodations at the Hotel Metropol offer five-star luxury in a historic setting, perfectly situated across from the famous Bolshoi Theater and just a short walk from Red Square and the Kremlin. The beautiful rooms are decorated with antiques and equipped with state-of-the-art electronics and security systems. Join us this evening for a welcome dinner.

Day 2 Mon, July 28

B/L/D

Moscow: Novodevichy Convent, The Kremlin, Armory Museum, Trans-Siberian Express

Following breakfast we will depart on a full day orientation of Moscow, the economic and political center of Russia. Founded in 1147 by Yuri Dolgoruky (literally "Yuri of the Long Arms"), Moscow rose to prominence during Mongol domination and eventually became the Russian capital. Eclipsed for 200 years by St. Petersburg, Moscow was restored as the Russian political center after the October Revolution in 1917.

We'll begin our orientation with a drive to Moscow State University to enjoy panoramic views of the city and continue on to the beautiful grounds of Novodevichy Convent, founded in 1524. We will also stop at the huge memorial complex of Victory Park, with its many fountains and monuments. Our tour will continue with a drive back to the city center, past the Bolshoi Theater and the notorious Lubyanka Prison.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, our tour will take us to the Kremlin and Armory Museum. The Moscow Kremlin reminds modern-day Russia of its medieval past. In the mid-14th century, the Russian princes, ruling from the Kremlin, became so powerful that Moscow was named the center of the Russian Orthodox Church. Today, the Kremlin remains the center of Moscow and Russian politics. Inside the fortress walls are palaces, cathedrals and government buildings and the Armory Museum, which now houses Russia's national treasures such as religious icons, Faberge eggs, a bejeweled chalice belonging to Prince Yuri, and Catherine the Great's ball gowns and shoes.

This evening we will board the Trans-Siberian Express to begin our cross-country journey to the Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan. Tonight, we'll enjoy our first sumptuous meal onboard the train.

Overnight: Onboard the Trans-Siberian (12 nights)

Day 3 Tue, July 29

B/L/D

Yaroslavl

Traveling northeast of Moscow, we will pause in Yaroslavl. In 1010, Kiev's Grand Duke Yaroslavl the Wise founded this town at the confluence of the Volga River and one of its tributaries, the Kotorosl. Our driving tour will take us along the riverbank and through the city with its white and green onion-domed churches. We'll stop at the massive Volga Bastion, built in 1660, and the 17th-century former Metropolitan's Palace that now houses one of Yaroslavl's art museums. In the Old Town are examples of the red brick churches with decorative ceramic tiles crafted by members of Yaroslavl's renowned posad, an artist and craftsmen's settlement.

This evening, we'll dine in style aboard the train, heading over the Ural Mountains and crossing from Europe into Asia.

July 27 - August 10, 2008



Day 4 Wed, July 30
Ekaterinburg

B/L/D

This morning we'll awaken to find ourselves arriving in Ekaterinburg. Founded in 1721 and named after Catherine I, Ekaterinburg is best known as the place where the last czar, Nicholas II, and his family were imprisoned and executed by the Bolsheviks.

The city is also where Boris Yeltsin was born and attended university, and where US pilot Gary Powers was shot down in his U2 spy plane in 1960. Known as Sverdlovsk during the Soviet era, the city is markedly different from other Siberian towns due to its rich mining industry, developed before the revolution, and because of its many defense plants, which caused Sverdlovsk to be closed to foreigners until 1990.

Our city tour will include a stop at the Soviet Army Square with its unusual Black Tulip monument, commemorating the tragic loss of life in the various Soviet military campaigns, most notably Afghanistan. We will also visit the small but interesting Mineralogical Museum, the History & Local Studies Museum and the Military History Museum, as well as the impressive Church on the Blood, which stands over the spot where Czar Nicholas II and his family were killed in 1918.

Day 5 Thu, July 31
Novosibirsk

B/L/D

With a population of 1.6 million, Novosibirsk is the largest city in Siberia, and its industrial and scientific center. Novosibirsk did not exist before the Trans-Siberian railway was built, growing up around the place chosen for the rail line's Ob River crossing.

Today we'll explore this thriving Siberian city with a visit to the Novosibirsk Art Museum, which displays mainly 19th and 20th-century Russian art, and includes an extensive collection of mystic/artist Nikolai Roerich's representations of the Altai Mountains south of the city. Our next stop will be the Novosibirsk State Museum of Regional Studies, whose task has been to collect original artifacts and information about Siberia's many indigenous peoples, most of who were still living in the old ways in 1920 when the museum was founded. Today, fourteen of the Siberian indigenous nations are represented here, as well as the early Slavic settlers in the area.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll continue on to Akademgorodok (Academy City), founded in 1959 by Nikita Khrushchev when he relocated the USSR's top scientists to this special town built expressly for scientific research. Akademgorodok continues today as perhaps the most renowned world-class research campus.

ITINERARY

Grand Passage, through Siberia Total Eclipse

Day 6 Fri, Aug 1

B/L/D

Novosibirsk: Eclipse Day!

Today we will have the opportunity to experience the total eclipse of the Sun as few people in the world will – from the center of the path in the middle of Siberia! After fourth contact, we'll return to the city for dinner and to share our eclipse experiences.



Local eclipse contact times (approx).

First contact (eclipse begins):	16:41
Second contact (totality begins):	17:44
Third contact (totality ends):	17:46
Fourth contact (eclipse ends):	18:45
Duration of totality	2m 20s



Novosibirsk Eclipse Day Weather

by Eclipse Meteorologist Jay Anderson

Russia's fourth-largest city provides ready access to the eclipse track and to the most favourable area for viewing outside of China. Novosibirsk lies within a small region of south central Siberia that has a notable sunny microclimate. Lying in the midst of the world's largest landmass, the city is well-removed from oceanic moisture sources. The immense Altai Mountains and the Gobi Desert to the south block monsoon flows that invade Asia at this time of year.

Southern Siberia experiences the same types of weather systems typical of the northern Great Plains, with periodic low-pressure disturbances and generous thunderstorms. Temperatures are pleasantly warm and humidities typically low. Cooling associated with the eclipse will tend to dissipate smaller cloud elements and the higher angle of the Sun when compared to Chinese locations will make viewing more certain in a partly-cloudy sky.

July 27 - August 10, 2008

Day 7 Sat, Aug 2

B/L/D

Onboard the Trans-Siberian

Visit with friends and relax onboard as the private train rolls through the endless Russian taiga, the immense forest of pine, larch, spruce and fir. There will be a few brief stops at small towns, where local folks may have snacks and homemade trinkets to sell.

Day 8 Sun, August 3

B/L/D

Irkutsk

We will pull in to Irkutsk today and disembark to explore. Irkutsk began as a wooden fortress founded by Cossacks in 1661. Fortified and armed to a greater degree than other Siberian settlements, Irkutsk became a staging area for trade convoys and exploring expeditions, and by the early 18th century, settlers had already built 13 churches.

Our city tour will include a visit to the Gagarin embankment (named after the first man in space), the Cathedral of the Epiphany, built in 1724, the Church of Our Saviour, and the Trubetskoi House and Volkonsky House, two mansions occupied by exiled Decembrists. We will tour the Museum of Wooden Architecture and an area of old wooden houses, many with the intricate fretwork surrounding brightly painted window frames typical of local Siberian architecture. We will also visit the Museum of Baikal Navigation, housed in the icebreaker Angara, which was built in England and shipped in pieces to Irkutsk by train. It was used to ferry passengers across the lake until completion of the Circumbaikal line in 1904.

Day 9 Mon, August 4

B/L/D

Lake Baikal

A spectacular part of our journey, today will be spent winding our way through tunnels and around cliffs along the shoreline of Lake Baikal, the world's deepest and oldest freshwater lake, containing more water than North America's Great Lakes combined. We will stop for a barbeque at the lake's edge en route to the village of Listvyanka, where we will explore the Limnological Museum, highlighting the complex ecosystem of the lake, and will have the opportunity to see a nerpa, Baikal's unique freshwater seal.

Day 10 Tue, August 5

B/L/D

Ulan Ude

Today we will arrive in Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Republic. Our driving tour will take us through the city, with a stop at the world's largest Lenin head – a photo op not to be missed. We'll continue on to the fascinating Buddhist monastery at nearby Ivolginsk and enjoy a meal at a village of Old Believers who will also treat us to a concert featuring local dancers and musicians.

Day 11 Wed, August 6

B/L/D

Onboard the Trans-Siberian Express

Our journey will continue through Siberia at its most remote and mysterious as we enter the region of permafrost, traveling through the remote city of Chita. The next few days traversing the great wilderness will be spent relaxing, enjoying in astronomical, cultural and historic presentations, or quietly watching the landscape unfold before us.

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Day 12 Thu, August 7

B/L/D

Onboard the Trans-Siberian Express

Following along the Shilka and Amur Rivers, we will never be far from the Chinese border as we approach the Russian Far East.

Day 13 Fri, August 8

B/L/D

Onboard the Trans-Siberian Express

This will be our last full day on board the Trans-Siberian Express. Today we will reach the most easterly point of the journey passing through Khabarovsk, where we will cross the mighty Amur River and head south, hugging the Manchurian border, to our final destination. Tonight we will enjoy our final dinner on board the train.

Day 14 Sat, August 9

B/L/D

Vladivostok

As we arrive in Vladivostok, we will spot the obelisk marking the official end of the Trans-Siberian line. Over the years, Vladivostok, capital of the Russian Far East, has grown from a naval outpost to a thriving city. Due to its importance as a border zone city, Vladivostok was declared off-limits to foreigners and most Russians following WWII. On January 1, 1992, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the city was declared officially open, and began to welcome travelers. We'll disembark the train to begin our city tour which will include the principal military attractions of this once 'closed' Russian town.

After lunch, we'll check into our hotel where our luggage will be awaiting us. Join us this evening for a farewell dinner.

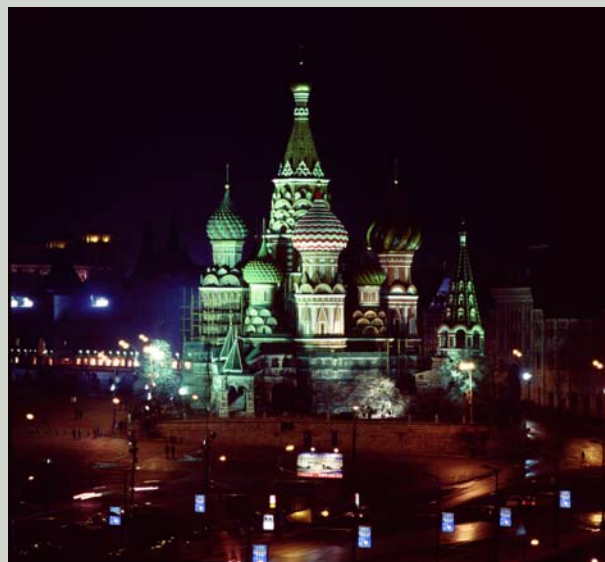
Overnight: Hyundai Hotel

Day 15 Sun, August 10

B

Depart Vladivostok

After breakfast at the hotel, we will transfer to the airport according to our flight schedules for international flight departures.

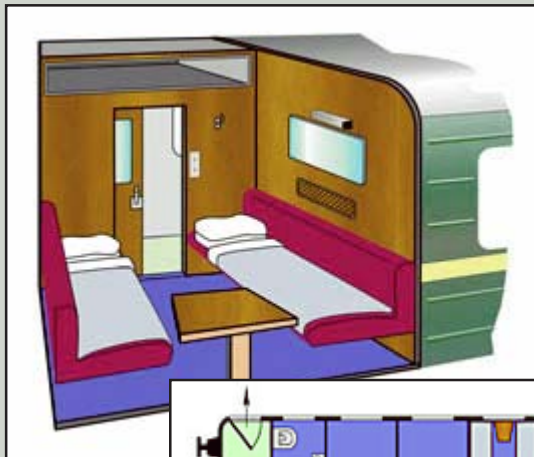


Trans-Siberian Express Packages

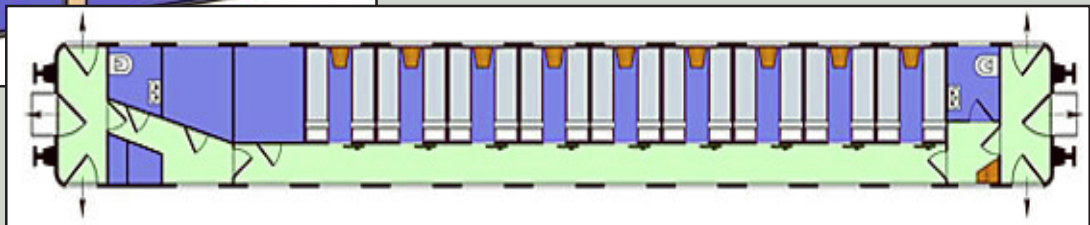
Trans-Siberian Express:

Privately chartered for our group, we will spend three days traveling through scenic countryside between Moscow and Novosibirsk on the historic Trans-Siberian Express in Heritage Class cars. Each sleeping carriage has nine private cabins. There is a bathroom with toilet and sink at both ends of the carriage. There is a separate shower car with individual compartments, each containing a shower and changing area.

Heritage Class Cars:



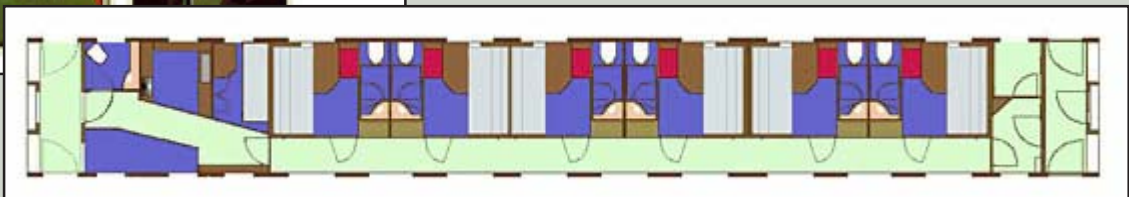
Heritage Class Cars offer comfortable accommodation in air-conditioned cars with twin-berth compartments, all fitted with lower berths. Beds convert to comfortable sofas for daytime travel and there is ample storage space in each cabin. The cars are well appointed with all amenities provided to make your trip as comfortable as possible. A washroom/toilet is located at each end of each sleeping car and there is a separate shower car in the formation.



Silver Class Cars:

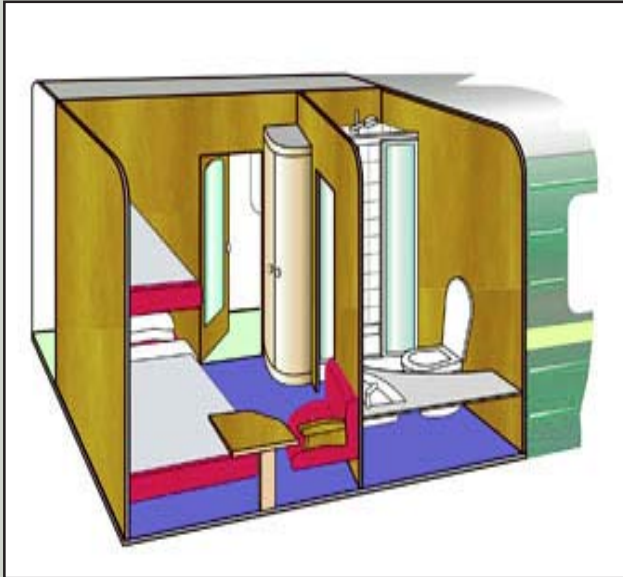


Silver Class Cars offer luxurious accommodation that equals or surpasses the best luxury trains in the world today. Each Silver Class car has six sleeping compartments, which can be configured for double, twin or single occupancy. Every cabin has its own en-suite shower and WC, an audio system, a DVD/VCR with the latest flat-screen plasma television, air-conditioning with individual climate control, a wardrobe for clothes and space for luggage storage. Each carriage has its own highly qualified attendants who keep the cabins immaculate, providing bed turndown service, plus tea and coffee 24 hours a day.

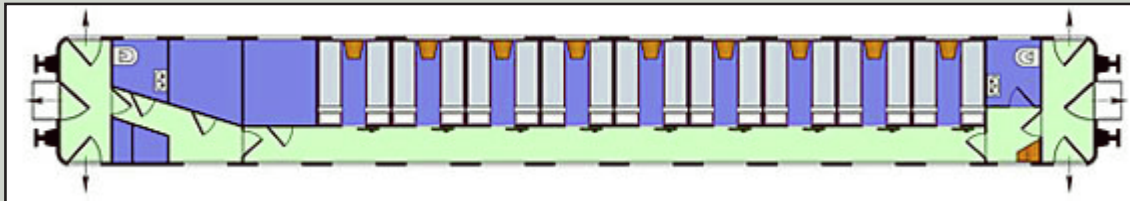


Trans-Siberian Express Packages

Gold Class Cars:



Gold Class Cars, larger in cabin and bathroom size than Silver, offer luxurious accommodation that equals or surpasses the best luxury trains in the world today. Each car has four or five compartments, which can be configured for double, twin or single occupancy. Every cabin has its own en-suite shower and WC, an audio system, a DVD/VCR with the latest flat-screen plasma television, air-conditioning with individual climate control, a wardrobe for clothes and space for luggage storage. Each carriage has its own highly qualified attendants who keep the cabins immaculate, providing bed turndown service, plus tea and coffee 24 hours a day.



Train Formation:

A typical train formation includes sleeping cars, restaurant and bar cars, lecture car, Heritage Class shower cars, staff, generator and office cars. Our restaurant cars provide both international and local cuisine, serving three meals per day if on the train. Some meals are provided in the city stops at local restaurants.



A total eclipse of the Sun has to be seen, and heard, and felt to be believed.

Sensory Overload

Much of the time, astronomical observing involves straining to perceive something at the limit of detectability, such as a faint galaxy, a dim double-star companion, or a tiny festoon in Jupiter's clouds. The more you look the more you see, so the key to really enjoying backyard astronomy is to spend lots of time doing it. It also helps if you take the trouble to learn as much as you can about what you're looking for, because even when you find it you may not be terribly impressed with the view. As I've written before (S&T: January 2005, page 8), most celestial objects are small, faint, or both, so they're best appreciated with the mind rather than the eye.

Among the relatively few exceptions to this rule, the most extreme is a total eclipse of the Sun. You don't have to use averted vision or special filters or other tricks to experience totality. You just have to put yourself in the right place at the right time and hope for clear skies. When the Moon's shadow arrives, it hits you over the head — big time!

I like to use the phrase "experience totality" rather than "see totality," because a total solar eclipse is the only celestial phenomenon I can think of that truly overwhelms the senses, so much so that it's virtually impossible for a single observer to take in everything that happens. You can't look up in the sky at the last sliver of Sun at the same time you're looking down at the ground for shadow bands. You can't admire the pretty sunset colors around the horizon or scan the sky for bright stars and planets while you're examining coronal streamers in your telescope. And you can't watch the "diamond ring" glitter at the end of totality while you're using a diffraction grating to watch for chromospheric emission lines to flash into view.

So you end up seeing some things that others miss, and missing some things that others see. But you also feel the eclipse, as the temperature drops and the wind changes. And you hear it, too, when you and your fellow eclipse-chasers holler with excitement as the event unfolds. (In Mexico in 1991 and in the Caribbean in 1998, observers enjoyed the taste of totality too, thanks to Corona beer and Eclipse Barbados rum!)

I experienced my sixth total eclipse last March 29th in the Libyan desert, with a sizable Sky & Telescope/TravelQuest International tour group that had sailed to Libya from Italy aboard the MSC Sinfonia. Afterward, as we shared with each other what we saw, heard, and felt, I realized that this eclipse had featured almost every phenomenon I'd ever heard of in connection with totality — though as usual I hadn't seen every one of them myself. About the only thing missing was a surprise sungrazing comet.

If you've never experienced totality but spend your clear nights straining at the eyepiece to check off faint fuzzies on the Messier, Caldwell, or Hershel lists, I urge you to think about traveling to totality at the next opportunity. You really owe it to yourself to check off the one celestial target that eclipses all others.

Rick Fienberg
Editor in Chief

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