



The Nomad

Days	Westbound	Countries	Distance	Activity level
16	Beijing to Moscow	China + Mongolia + Russia	7,865 km	●●●●○



Consider yourself as the ultimate nomad? This is the journey for you. Discover dinosaurs and dunes in the Gobi, contemplate the tranquility of the Orkhon Valley and marvel at the ancient capital of Mongolia at Kharkhorin. You might even end up speaking Mongolian by the end of this journey. Az jargaltai ayalal! (Happy Travels!)

Itinerary

Days 1 - 2: Beijing

Before meeting your Honcho at 5pm today, why not choose your own adventure! Take the opportunity to step back into Imperial times at the Forbidden City, soak up modern life in Tiananmen Square, explore the many colourful markets – especially those steaming and sizzling with local culinary delights, or jump on a rickshaw for a tour of the Hutong neighbourhoods; these ancient alleyways have been here since Mongol conqueror Kublai Khan established his capital here.



Day 2 of your stay in Beijing is yours to explore. Of course, no trip to China would be complete without a stroll along the great wall, and there are several sections to choose from. The Huanghaucheng section is a lesser visited part that's rich in vegetation with lush mountains sinking into the emerald waters of Haoming Lake.

Day 3: Trans Mongolian Railway

Climb aboard the Trans Mongolian Railway, listen for the whistle that marks that start of your Nomad journey! Settle into the rhythm of life aboard the train, and people watch as you decipher your phrasebook. It's time to practise a few words on fellow passengers. You'll meet ballerinas, babushkas, monks and more as they come and go at stops along the way. Ask how long the train is staying and hop off to try local food sold along the platforms. Look out the window as the Gobi Desert becomes the grasslands of the nomads, keep your eyes peeled for wildlife and the gers of roving herders.

Day 4: Ulaanbaatar

Check out Mongolia's quirky capital, a surprising city embracing modernity while holding on to ancient traditions. The National History Museum will walk you through the history of the region, from ancient times to the present – a great starting point to get into the national psyche. Discover a skyline with Soviet blocks, Buddhist temples and tent suburbs. Get into the spirit of things with a feast of local cuisine and a tasty brew, like Crazy Shaman IPA at Hop & Rocks Brewery – Mongolia's first ever producer of craft beer. No matter what you're into, night owls will find plenty to keep them up; from live music venues, beer gardens and chill bars to pulsing clubs and luxury lounges.



Itinerary (cont.)

Day 5: Kharkhorin and Erdene Zuu

As we visit the ground where Genghis Khan was chosen as the next great leader, you could walk in his actual footsteps. One of the biggest drawcards to the region is the earliest surviving Buddhist Monastery in Mongolia. Erdene Zuu was constructed in 1585 after a meeting with the 3rd Dalai Lama, beginning a declaration of Tibetan Buddhism as the state religion. Between Mongol wars and Soviet purges, it's a shadow of its former self, yet still an impressive sight.



Enjoy a night in a ger camp, and learn how to build one yourself. Mongols are a roving race and may move their homes up to four times a year, in search of greener pastures for their animals. With a collection of wood, felt and tarp, you'll have it up in no time.

Day 6: Orkhon Valley

Before leaving the steppe we visit Orkhon waterfall a set in a beautiful location in the Khangai Mountains in the picturesque Orkhon Valley. Established by Zanabazar, the first Buddhist leader of Mongolia and great sculptor, as a place of solitude it soon grew as a significant monastery and place of pilgrimage after his death.

Days 7-8: Bayangobi

Already feeling like true nomads you will have another couple of nights in a ger as we travel out to the Gobi Desert. Settle into your ger camp and enjoy the twinkling canopy of stars. Surrounded by mountains, rivers and grasslands, keep your eyes peeled for foxes, deer, wolves and eagles as you hike part of the Mongol Els, an 80km stretch of colossal dunes. Ask your Honcho about hiring a few camels to go further afield.



Day 9: Return to Ulaanbaatar and to Irkutsk

Back in town, head to the Zaisan Memorial for a great view over the sprawling city. See the robed monks at Gandantegchinlen Monastery – a name which translates to 'the great place of complete joy'. And get a taste for the life of a Khan with a visit to the Winter Palace of Bogd Khan – one of the only historical attractions in Mongolia that the Soviets or Mongol communists didn't destroy.

Reboard the train for a moment's relaxation before rolling on to the Russian frontier. Take time to collect your thoughts on what you've discovered so far. Use your time to plan the activities you wish to experience at Lake Baikal, and practise a few words of Russian on local travellers. You'll soon see the landscape transform from green grasslands to the endless Siberian Taiga shimmering in a silvery light.

Itinerary (cont.)

Day 10: Irkutsk and Lake Baikal

Welcome to Russia! Upon arrival to Irkutsk, we transfer to the shores of Lake Baikal. Settle into your lakeside home and take a stroll around the water's edge as you drink in the scenery. The lake is freezing all year but by all means, swim if you're feeling brave. Warm up in a traditional Russian Banya (a sauna with an optional birch branch bashing), and sample the locally caught fish, you can eat it raw, smoked or roasted on a BBQ.

Days 11 - 14: Trans Siberian Railway

We'll head back to Irkutsk to board the train in the afternoon. This time, you're gliding on the famous Trans Siberian line. As you travel across Siberia, you'll begin to understand just how important the railroad was and is to many Russian people and commerce. Many of these places were unreachable until Tsar Alexander III conceived the project. Sit back, relax and enjoy watching the landscapes change outside our window. Do your own thing, chill with your group or make some Russian friends. A few words and inventive sign language will have you all laughing in no time.

Days 15 - 16: Moscow

A standing ovation for you! You've just completed a 7,865km journey and tasted life in three countries. That's something to celebrate. First, you're going to want to visit Red Square and take in the iconic St. Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin. Wander the streets and discover a cosy café culture and art galleries. Hop on the beautiful metro (yes, apparently public transport can be a work of art) to the many sights within this vibrant city of 10 million.

Take in the patchwork of Soviet, Imperial and modern architecture. You can even visit an embalmed Lenin; the reviled and revered Soviet leader's body is frozen in time, preserved since 1924. No trip to Moscow would be complete without experiencing the nightlife. Start your evening with Russian fare, followed by Vodka and pickles. Then hit the scene of your choosing; live jazz, underground dance or enjoy a few beers in a casual ping pong bar.

Extend your experience: Stay on the tracks to St. Petersburg, explore the European hub of Russia before delving further into Eastern Europe.



Itinerary (cont.)

Journey Summary

Day 1	Beijing - journey begins	
Day 2	Beijing	
Day 3	Depart Beijing	Early morning departure
Day 4	Arrive Ulaanbaatar	Afternoon arrival
Day 5	To Kharkhorin	
Day 6	To Orkhon Valley	
Day 7	To Bayangobi	
Day 8	Bayangobi	
Day 9	Return to Ulaanbaatar and depart to Irkutsk	Afternoon departure
Day 10	Arrive Irkutsk and to Lake Baikal	Afternoon arrival
Day 11	Return to Irkutsk and depart to Moscow	Late afternoon departure
Day 12	Onboard train	
Day 13	Onboard train	
Day 14	Onboard train	
Day 15	Arrive Moscow	Early morning arrival
Day 16	Moscow - journey concludes	

WHAT'S INCLUDED



Group size

15 people maximum. Big enough to form a posse, small enough to give you space.



Accommodation nights

4 hostels (shared), 4 ger camp (shared), 1 Siberian guesthouse (shared), 6 train (4-berth).



Tickets and transfers

All train tickets and included. Once you have joined the group, all arrival transfers are included.



Sightseeing

With no pre-arranged sightseeing, you have complete freedom to roam. Stay with your group or explore on your own.



Expertise

Our friendly bunch of specialist Travel Advisors are hand to support you with all the essentials, such as travel insurance, flights, Visa applications and destination information.

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