

Trans-Siberian tips and costs



costs

My tickets were booked on, or 1-3 days before departure either in person at the station or through my hostel. Tickets are generally cheaper during the off-peak season and for 3rd class (I generally traveled 'kupe' - 4-berth 2nd class). I had few problems traveling during the busy summer period, though a sleeper bus was necessary for the stretch from the Chinese border to Beijing, as the direct train was booked out for a week. Prices also vary depending on train number/speed. See seat61.com for more info.

Approx total distance traveled on train [Estonia to Hong Kong]:
6569miles/10,571km

***Tallin [Estonia] to St Petersburg [Russia] - 14/07/07**

EEK336/EU21.46/US\$28.87/UK£14.58
Seat - 6 hours - Approx 217 miles

***St Petersburg to Moscow - 18/07/07**

R1928/EU55.62/US\$74.80/UK£37.77
'Kupe' 2nd class - 1 night - Approx 375 miles

***Moscow to Irkutsk - 22/07/07**

R7278.2/EU210/US\$282.36/UK£142.591
Kupe 2nd' class - 4 nights - Approx 4,735 miles from Moscow to Beijing

***Irkutsk to Ulaanbattaar [Mongolia] - 30/07/07**

R1146.9/EU33.09/US\$44.49/UK£22.46
'Kupe' 2nd class - 1 night

***Ulaanbattaar to Chinese border - 09/08/07**

T34,370/EU21.75/US\$29.25/UK£14.77
'Kupe' 2nd class - 1 night

***[Direct train fully booked, sleeper bus from border to Beijing] - 10/08/07**

T47,630/EU30.15/US\$40.54/UK£20.47
1 night

***Beijing to Hong Kong - 14/08/07**

Y580/EU56.85/US\$76.45/UK£38.60
Hard sleeper - 1 night - Approx 1,242km

Total travel cost [excluding initial flight to Estonia of approx UK£40]:

EU428.92/US\$576.85/UK£291.28

Approx cost of train from London to St Petersburg:

Eurostar and sleeper train (change in Berlin) from around £170 to £250.

[source: www.seat61.com/Trans-Siberian.htm]

Approx hostel costs (dorm bed) per night:

Estonia & Russia - US\$20pn

Mongolia & China - US\$5pn

carbon costs

Approx total carbon footprint of equivalent flight from Tallin to Hong Kong:

1.11 tonnes of CO2 (times this by 2.7 = 3.0 tonnes, as noxious gases emitted in the upper atmosphere cause more damage) - 4875.2miles

[source: www.climatecare.org/calculators/flight and 'Heat' by George Monbiot, 2006, Penguin]

N.B. The carbon footprint of my train journey cannot be accurately calculated as the carbon cost would differ greatly depending on the age/fuel/speed of each of the trains. However, train travel can save around 90% of the emissions which would otherwise be generated by an equivalent flight

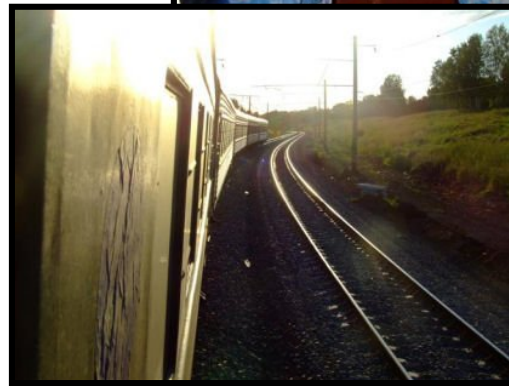
[source: www.seat61.com/CO2flights.htm]

tips

- I recommend **not** booking ahead or using an agency - they charge double the ticket face value and generally tickets are available a day or two in advance. You'd also be tied down to a schedule rather than going at your own pace. Most travellers will want to spend a few days in each city, or each 'stop', so booking the next leg of the train journey upon arrival is not a problem. (Only once, from Mongolia to China, did I find that the train was fully booked, and then we still managed to get an indirect one linking to a night bus).
- In Russia, there is actually little to see beyond St Petersburg, Moscow and Irkutsk unless you have an interest in soviet history, in which case one could add the industrial cities of

Ekaterinburg and Novosibirsk. However, I think a long 4-day stretch on the train is fantastic and part of the experience - visits to these centrally located cities would break up the 'long haul'!

- Stock up on food before each stretch, all carriages have a constant supply of hot water and a restaurant. Depending on the train, you may be able to recharge a phone, but little else - it's a matter of discretion for the almighty powerful carriage attendant (or 'provodnitsa')! The toilets are fine and the attendant may be able to rent out a length of hose so you can have a makeshift shower.
- Consider booking hostels ahead in Russia using the [Hostelworld](#) website. A 'Trailblazer' guide (better than Lonely Planet for the journey) is also handy, along with a phrasebook, as very, very few people speak any English.
- I would recommend at least 2 weeks in Russia and at least a week in Mongolia - this would offer just enough time to see the highlights.
- Plan your visas a couple of months in advance as the Russian visa procedure is somewhat nightmarish. You'll need visa application support paperwork - the most affordable place to obtain these 'invitation' and hotel booking documents is the [RealRussia.co.uk](#) website. The Mongolian visa can, in theory, be arranged in Irkutsk (Russia), but it's best done in advance, along with the China visa, which - for Brits - has to be in person in London.
- Keep an eye on the special section at the excellent [Seat.61.com](#) website for the latest information.



Journals, videos, photos:
<http://www.globalcitizen.co.uk/adventures/transsiberian/photos.html>