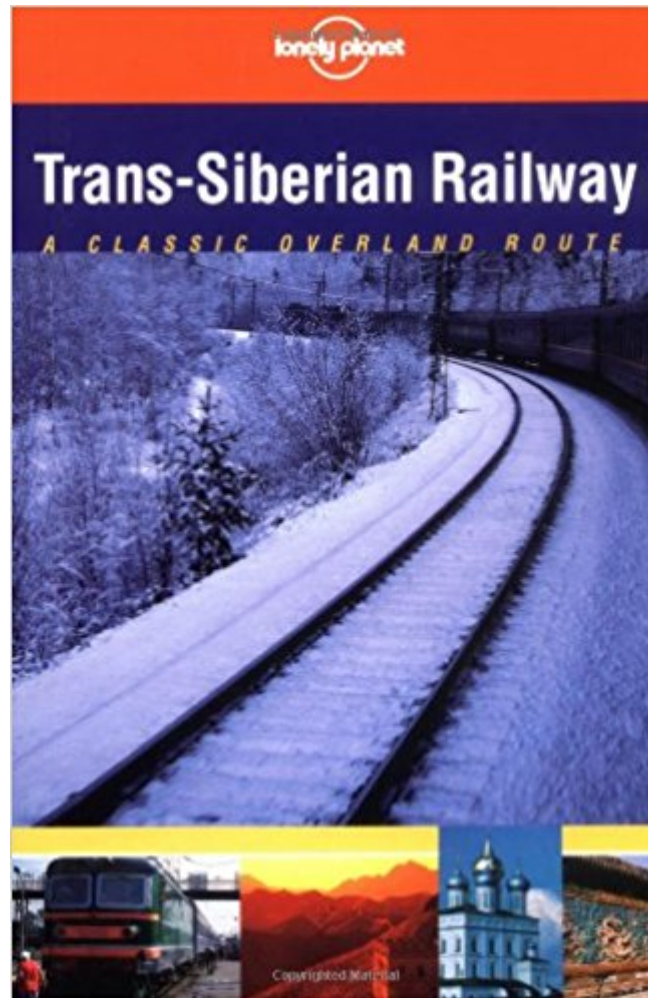




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Lonely Planet Trans-Siberian Railway



Synopsis

Including maps covering routes as well as major cities, this guide provides all the details for enjoying an epic journey on this classic rail route. It also has special features on the history and wildlife of the railway route.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Lonely Planet for honesty, history, irreverence and budget.” --Esquire --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Good Reference.

excellent item, solved my problem

It was a very thorough source for traveling in that area. It was very helpful in planning our trip on that train.

I used the first edition of Lonely Planet's TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY guide on a Trans-Manchurian journey three years ago, and picked up the second edition (April 2006) for a Trans-Mongolian journey I'm embarking on tomorrow. The book is a very useful resource for this great train journey, especially for those planning to disembark in the many cities and towns en route. The guide covers all three traditional Trans-Siberian lines and the cities along them: Moscow-Vladivostok, Moscow-Ulan Bator-Beijing, and Moscow-Harbin-Beijing. It also covers the Baikal-Amur Mainline, a northern Siberian route that is still little-used by Western travelers (or even by Russians, for that matter). The reference material is substantial, with plenty of information on the food and drink of the countries one can visit, and a good history of the railway from its construction through all of the political turmoils since. The listings of large cities such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Ulan Bator, and Beijing are abridged extracts from the RUSSIA, MONGOLIA, and CHINA guides, respectively, with only a couple of days worth of sightseeing, and one main walking tour selected. What don't I like about the book? Well, as with every Lonely Planet title since they changed their philosophy a few years ago, I'm unhappy with the lack of budget advice and the inclusion of hotels and restaurants priced for a crowd with enough money that they'd probably look to other publishers anyway. For pete's sake, the "Author's Choice" for Moscow lodging, the Golden Apple Hotel, is nearly three hundred euro a night! Despite what you may have heard, Russia is indeed a budget destination, especially if you choose to stay for free with hosts from hospitality associations and self-cater or eat at student canteens. It's a pity that Lonely Planet no longer gives meaningful advice on lodging and food to any but the wealthiest of travelers. A further problem is that the book was kept a little too slim for a Lonely Planet guide. Obviously minor cities on the route like Yoshkar-Ola have been left out, that's understandable. But it's odd that the authors are so passionate about the variant Moscow to Yekaterinaburg through Kazan, and yet give Kazan awfully meagre coverage. Twice interesting hikes are mentioned (one in Ulan Bator and another along the Great Wall), but without enough details to comfortably set off, or even for a local to know what it's

about and give you pointers. And some things present in the first edition are no longer here, such as the little box explaining how there are no passenger crossings from Siberia to Alaska. The other big Trans-Siberian guide is Bryn Thomas' *Trans-Siberian Handbook* (Trailblazer Publications, 7th ed. 2006), which has been around for a long time and sees a new edition fairly frequently. Ideal for those in love in train travel, not just those looking to get from point A to point B, Thomas' guide contains things to look out for according to the kilometer markings along the railway. If your backpack isn't already too heavy, I say get that book as well.

I was overall disappointed. The guide was useful to plan the trip, but much less once on the spot. Quite a bit of information is erroneous or outdated (e.g. restaurants/hotels do not exist or are priced over double of what stated, museums have been closed or moved), which especially in Moscow and Yekaterinenburg led to cross-city walks and travels at the end of which we found nothing. This is especially for what concerns the Moscow to Yekaterinenburg part; pages on St. Petersburg, China, Mongolia and the Irkutsk area were much more useful. Train and bus info: there is quite a lot of information if you are heading in the St. Petersburg to Beijing direction, but no special indications for if you are taking the opposite direction. Last point: guide suggestions are generally targeted to a wealthier-than-backpacker budget (though Galina in Moscow was great!).

We've used the book in July/August 2002 for a trip from Beijing to Helsinki. Much information in the book, but a lot of it is copy-past'ed from the country guides. Another reviewer remarked on the rapidly changing circumstances in the countries... no guide can outrun those. We visited Beijing, Irkutsk, Listvanka, Jekaterinaburg, Moscow and Saint-Peterburg. Most of the time we found accomodation from the book. At that time, the Trans-siberian handbook (Thomas Bryn - ISBN 1873756704) was older. We had both books: LP fresh of the press and Thomas Bryn's book - THE guide to have. Thomas' had a new edition in february 2004. Best to take the most recent editions of guidebooks. The handbook is more interesting to read, so that's a must. You'll have plenty of time to read! The trip is recommended to anyone: we found a british couple with 2 kids doing it! Don't be too easily discouraged, try to take the east-west trip (to avoid wagons full of tourists!).

The guidebook is just fine for sightseeing, hotels, restaurants, but for train information, there is almost nothing. Really, almost nothing at all. To take the Trans Siberian, it is very difficult to make stopovers, and get reservations for future trains. And you can't simply board the train in a city or town other than Moscow or Vladavostok, or Beijing. None of this is addressed in the book. So, it's

great to have tons of pages of sightseeing information, but for places almost no one will get to, due to the difficulty of reserving future trains. There is almost virtually no information on how to book the train, or recommendations on how to book it, or where to book it, or the wide range in prices. Hardly anything about the different classes. Hardly anything about the cabins, onboard food, how to buy food at the stations, is there an electrical outlet, train etiquette, etc. I was very disappointed in the lack of practical information needed. The Trans Siberian is NOT as easy to book as a train from say London to Paris, and the book doesn't address that.

Despite some critics, I think it's a very good book - with lots of extremely useful information, and all up to the usual high LP standards, Where I had some difficulty is the organization of the book. One finds that you have to turn back and forth all time to get all the information that you're seeking on one place.

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