

What to take on your transsiberian journey (suggestions)

Luggage

You will need to carry your baggage for short distances only. We suggest that you take a comfortable back bag, a shoulder-bag, or a small hand-carry suitcase with you. You only need to bring the essentials and travelling is more comfortable the lighter you pack. We recommend taking a small daypack for camera, books, etc. No sleeping bag is required; sheets and bed linen are available in the train and at all places of accommodation.

Clothes

Pack thin clothes as for an American summer: a sweater, shirts, a raincoat etc. Shoes should be light, comfortable and strong: old sturdy running shoes are doing a good job! Bring an extra pair for the train (slippers or sandals are fine, too). Dress casually, jeans are ok even for visits to theaters and concerts. On the train, Russians usually wear tracksuits or pyjamas throughout the journey. Don't forget sunglasses and sun-cream. For the visit of the Monastery in Serguiev Posad (Zagorsk) and other religious sights, a long skirt and a heading cloth maybe required for females.

Photocopies and passport photos

Photocopies of important documents (air tickets, passports, and visa) should be kept in your luggage separately. Take also half a dozen passport photos, as these are useful for getting local travel documents.

Money

In Moscow, Ulan Bator and Beijing, and many other Russian cities, traveler checks can be changed; some restaurants also accept VISA cards. We suggest, however, that you take most of the money you plan to spend for personal expenses in US Dollar bills (in values of 20, 10, 5, 1). Make sure these are newer than 1993 and have no creases or torn (as people and banks will reject them). A money-belt is the best way to carry your valuables safely and always with you.

Medical insurance and medical supplies

Don't forget to take documents showing proof of your medical insurance with you. Inform your guide about your insurance in case of an emergency. Make sure that the insurance also covers costs of repatriation. Essential medical supply is pain and fever medication (aspirin or paracetamol), lip salve, sunscreen lotion, insect repellent, anti-diarrhea tablets (Imodium), antacid, antiseptic cream and plasters. If you use prescription medications, make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s). If you travel with a group, our guide will carry a larger medical supply including antibiotics, 1st-aid materials with sterile band-aids, syringes and swabs.

A few tips to prevent diseases: Wash hands often with soap and water. Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ices cubes, or adds a purification agent, such as 'Micropure' or 'Drinkwell' tablets. Keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot. In Irkutsk, Listwjanka and Bolshie Koty, you can drink tap water, which comes directly from Lake Baikal, safely.

Vaccination

No special vaccinations are required for our Trans-Siberian journey. We suggest that you make sure you have up-to-date tetanus-diphtheria, measles and polio vaccination. Bring your International Vaccination booklet.

Gifts

Russian, Mongolians and Chinese are great present givers, and trading a piece of Swiss chocolate against a whole bottle of vodka on the train might be a good trade-off. Ideal gifts are souvenirs or postcards from your hometown, Swiss army knives, baseball caps, candies, badges, and foreign coins. Chinese always carry pictures of their families and love to show them to foreigners.

General Items

Toilet paper, umbrella, camera, films and extra batteries (make sure you have batteries, as these will be difficult to buy on the journey), tooth brush+paste, comb, soap, shampoo, sun glasses, sun protection lotion, hat (to protect from Sun), maps, games, paper, pencil, diary, business cards, calculator, pocket flashlight, penknife with corkscrew and can-opener, plastic bottle, books to read, compass, adhesive tape, locks (to secure you luggage), string, thermos (there is always hot water available in the train), tissues, conversion guide ('Russian for travelers', will be provided) etc.

Important Restrictions

No military weapons and ammunition, narcotics and drug paraphernalia, pornography, loose pearls, are allowed to bring into Russia, Mongolia and China.