TOUR CODE

TS2

ADVENTURESABROAD

TRANS SIBERIAN RAILWAY

St Petersburg • Moscow • Irkutsk • Lake Baikal • Vladivostok

22 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in St Petersburg*

Arrive in St Petersburg, Russia.

St. Petersburg is a relatively new city, founded in 1703. When it was nine years old it became the capital of Russia and retained this status till 1918. Even now it is referred to as the "Northern Capital" of Russia. Over almost 300 years of its history St. Petersburg accumulated all the grandeur of the Russian Imperial Court and became one of the largest centers of culture, science and industry. Created by Peter the Great as a sea port on the Baltic it was essentially "a window to the West" for Russia, combining the best of the West and the East.

Overnight in St Petersburg. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *St Petersburg: The Russian Museum & Peter and Paul Fortress*

This morning we visit the Russian Museum. The museum opened in 1898 by Alexander III in the beautiful Mikhailovsky Palace -- well worth inspecting before we take a look at the collection inside. Works of Russian art abound with over 370,000 pieces in the collection. There are prized paintings, sculptures, iconographic art and several masterpieces. It truly is an encyclopaedia of Russian life, character and soul.

We also visit the Peter and Paul Fortress and St Isaac's Cathedral. At the fortress we will see how the fort played an important role in the development of St Petersburg. Inside the stone walls we will visit the Cathedral of Peter and Paul, the final resting place of the Romanovs. At St Isaac's Cathedral we will notice the interior reliefs of exceptional beauty. We will also hear of the many legends that make this church famous throughout Russia.

As we travel around from point to point today you will also have a general orientation / panoramic tour of this compact city.

Overnight in St Petersburg. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *St Petersburg: Peterhof Palace & the Hermitage*

This morning we visit Peterhof Palace (Petrodvorets), a remarkable example of an eighteenth and nineteenth century country estate. Built by Peter I in 1717, the palace was to be "better than the French king's at Versailles." An intricate system of water fountains surrounds the palace in the immaculate gardens. We will have a chance to walk through the palace and the gardens. We return to the city by hydrofoil (weather/season permitting).

This afternoon we explore one of the world's leading museums, the Hermitage. With over 400 exhibition halls, it is virtually impossible to list all of the treasures. While walking through the many galleries, look out for Madonna by Raphael, Judith by Giorgione, Titian's Saint-Sebastian, and many, many paintings by Rembrandt. Inside this beautiful Winter Palace are some of the finest collections of French impressionist works. In addition, there is a fine collection of

ancient and classical works from ancient Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. One could easily spend several days wandering the halls inside the building; for the purposes of our formal guided tour today, we concentrate on the highlights and provide an orientation to those wishing to explore further on their own during some designated free time.

Overnight in St Petersburg. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *St Petersburg: Pushkin & Pavlovsk Palace*

This morning we travel to Pushkin to see the sumptuous Catherine Palace, created in the eighteenth century by Catherine the Great, the second wife of Peter III. Designed by Rastrelli, this palace is a truly stunning example of classical baroque architecture and interior design. The true glory of the palace is the Amber Room, made of several tons of the golden tree resin -- the lightest gem in the world. The room was first installed in the Winter Palace, but in 1755 Empress Elizabeth ordered Francesco Rastrelli to move it to the Catherine Palace.

We also visit Pavlovsk Palace, one of the most splendid residences of the Russian Imperial family and part of the World Heritage Site of Saint Petersburg and related groups of monuments.

Overnight in St Petersburg. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *St Petersburg - Moscow*

Today we travel by day train to Moscow, the staging point for our Trans-Siberian train journey.

ABOUT THE TRAINS: We will book 1st class cabins (DBL room) for the segments: Moscow--Krasnoyarsk and Ulan-Ude - Vladivostok. For the other shorter segments of travel some of the trains do not offer 1st class. For these segments we will book two tickets of 2nd class for each passenger to ensure that there are only 2 travellers per cabin. Limited single cabins available.

Russian classification of the wagons: 1st class wagon consists of 9 cabins with two beds in each. Beds are low both and there is a table between them. There is plenty of space to keep your luggage in the compartment, either in an overhead luggage storage area, or under the bed. There are two toilets in each wagon. Second class wagon consists of 9 cabins with four beds in each. Two beds lower and two beds upper and table between them. Two toilets are in the wagon at opposite ends. There are no showers in any of the trains.

Overnight in Moscow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Moscow: City Tour*

Today we will have a walking tour of the Kremlin--the famous triangular-walled citadel of the Soviet Government dating from the end of the 15th century with its many cathedrals and their iconostases, the bell tower of Ivan the Great; and the Czar Bell, which weighing 200 tons, is the largest in the world. Upon leaving the Kremlin, be sure to touch the Kremlin Wall--an omen foretelling your return to this hospitable city. We also include a visit to the Kremlin Armory.

In the afternoon we tour the famous Red Square, once the centre of Soviet life. Around the square is the History Museum, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the Lenin Mausoleum, built in 1929. In the 16th century, Ivan the Terrible ordered the construction of one of Moscow's most famous landmarks--Saint Basil's Cathedral. Originally called Pokrovsky Sobor (the Cathedral of the Veil), each of the nine cupolas cover a chapel named after the saint on whose feast-day the Russian armies won their battles.

Our sightseeing today will also include a tour of the Moscow Metro system, in which each station is designed and decorated in a different style, with chandeliers, mosaics, and paintings. Amazingly the underground trains are nearly silent. Some of these stations are so deep that they were used as air raid shelters during WWII.

Overnight in Moscow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Moscow - Train to Krasnoyarsk*

You have free time today prior to our transfer to the railway station to enjoy Moscow on your own.

Later we depart by train from Yaroslavsky Railway Station, en route to Krasnoyarsk.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON SUITABILITY: YOU MUST BE ABLE TO MANAGE YOUR OWN BAGS ONTO / OFF TRAINS AND IN TRAIN STATIONS. We regret that porters are generally not available and your Tour Leader has very limited ability to assist with baggage. Packing lightly is essential. If you are unsure about your suitability for this type of trip, please call and speak to one of our sales agents for more information.

Overnight Train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Trans-Siberian Railway*

What is the Trans Siberian: The Trans-Siberian railway (usually called TransSib in Russia) is the world's longest and the most famous train route that goes through Russia. It crosses the whole continent, starts in Moscow, passes through the European Russia, crosses the Ural Mountains (which separate Europe and Asia), continues into Siberia's taiga and steppes, and finishes in Vladivostok -- the Russian Far East coast on the Pacific Ocean. The Trans-Siberian Route from Moscow to Vladivostok is the original Trans-Siberian Railway.

The Trans-Siberian is an immense route: along more than 9000 kilometers of its length you will see different landscapes, meet many different people and cultures (especially when we break up the journey at different locations), experience the magnificent Siberian Baikal lake, and just enjoy the trip in the train.

Overnight on Train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Trans-Siberian Railway*

The original Russian name for this railway is "The Great Siberian Way", the name "Trans-Siberian" was given to this route by the West, and soon became very widespread. This railway is the backbone of Russia as it is the only overland route going through the whole country. This unique status makes the railway still quite important for the economy and safety of the country, as it was supposed to be more than 100 years ago, when it was built.

It takes more than six days to travel along the whole Trans-Siberian, so we chose to make stops along the way, making this trip even more interesting.

Overnight on train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Krasnoyarsk*

Mid-day arrival in Krasnoyarsk, one of the earliest settlements of Siberia. Cossack Andrey Dubenskiy founded Krasnoyarsk as a fort in 1628, and at that time it was only a wooden fortress with a wall with five towers. For 100 years Krasnoyarsk played the role of frontier advanced post. During its existence it was never conquered, and when Siberia was finally joined to Russia in 1690 the fortress officially received the status of a town. This afternoon we will have a tour of the town including a visit to the local museum.

Overnight in Krasnoyarsk. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Krasnoyarsk / Stolby Reserve*

Today we make an excursion to the Stolby National Reserve ("Krasnoyarsky Stolby") where we will take a walk within the reserve. Stolby National Park is an area of great natural beauty, and is a popular place with the local population for weekend outings. The main attractions of the park are cliffs of strange curved forms as if they were worked on by water.

Today we will enjoy a picnic lunch during our excursion.

In our afternoon we will also make an excursion to the Enisey Hydro Electric Station. As well we will enjoy a visit to Prospekt Mira Street. This is the main street of the city and a pleasant place to take an evening stroll, where one will find many restaurants, cafes and shops.

Evening transfer to railway station for train to Irkutsk.

Overnight on train. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 12 *Irkutsk*

Evening arrival in Irkutsk, one of the tourist centers of Russia situated close by to Lake Baikal. Irkutsk was founded in 1661 by Cossack troops and became the gate to eastern Siberia and the capital of Siberia at that time. The wonderful historical and architectural monuments in Irkutsk keep the memory of the many events and changes that influenced the economy, culture and politics. Here in Irkutsk, the first Russian revolutionaries, the Decembrists, lived in exile. Nearly all of the centers of the cultural life of the city are situated in ancient buildings of different architectural styles and Irkutsk is often referred to as being a living museum. Very famous here are the ornate old one and two-storied wooden houses, some of which date back to the late 18th century.

Overnight in Irkutsk. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Irkutsk & Lake Baikal*

Today we will have a sightseeing tour of Irkutsk including the Decembrists Museum. Irkutsk is recognized as the Decembrists center of Russia, and Museums have opened in the houses where the families of Sergey Trubetskoy and Sergey Volkonsky lived. Here one can find genuine items that belonged to the Decembrists and replicas of those objects that were lost, such as pieces of furniture, musical instruments, embroidery, books, pictures & photographs in the museums.

In the afternoon we will depart for Lake Baikal and Listvyanka Village. The small old-style Siberian village of Listvyanka, 70km from Irkutsk, is famous for its trade history. We will visit the wooden orthodox St. Nicholas Church, which possesses some rare icons dating back to the 18th century. During our visit we hope to be able to taste the cold or

hot smoked omul and grayfish, usually offered at the fish bazaar near the harbour. Both of these are a delicacy of Baikal and can be smoked just for you.

We will also visit the ‘Open-Air' Museum of Taltsi (the Wooden Architecture Museum), situated near the Angara River. This museum possesses nearly 40 monuments of architectural heritage and 1000's of exhibits of high cultural value. There are two ethnographic complexes, Russian and Buryat, showing the life and traditions of Siberians from the 16th to the 19th century. The most valuable monuments of architecture are the Saviour's gate tower of Ilimsk stockaded town (1667) and the Kazan chapel (1679).

Nearby is the Limnological Museum (Baikal Lake Museum), which will introduce us to the origin and wildlife of the lake. This museum is the center for exploration and science of Baikal. The unique exhibits tell us about the origin and the history of the lake, its flora and fauna, geological structure, climate and tectonics of Prebaikalye. One can see exhibits found on different scientific expeditions. Our tour of the museum will also include a 20-minute video titled "The Planet‘s Well", with unique shots filmed at the lake‘s deepest point of 1637 m.

Overnight in Irkutsk. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Irkutsk & Lake Baikal*

For the Russian people Lake Baikal is a natural treasure. Today, as in the past, this area remains a crossroads of cultures where native Sayats still herd reindeer and Buryat people maintain many of their old traditions. Located in Siberia near the Mongolian border and surrounded by mountains, forests and wild rivers, Baikal is an immense and breathtaking area of physical beauty. Baikal, the deepest lake in the world, holds twenty percent of the earth's fresh water and harbours more endemic species of plants and animals than any other lake in the world. There are a number of islands in the lake, the largest of which is Olkhon, 72 kilometers (45 miles) long. Over three hundred rivers and streams flow into Lake Baikal, of which the six main ones are: Selenga, Chikoy, Khiloh, Uda, Barguzin, and the Upper Angara. Only the Angara River flows out of the lake. The deepest point in Lake Baikal is 1637 m (5371 ft) and the average depth is 630 m (2067 ft).

Today we will enjoy an excursion along the Trans Siberian Railway to the settlement of Slyudyanka. We will also enjoy an excursion by train along the Old Railway, taking us along the Baikal lakeshore to Port Baikal (with stops en-route). After a visit to the Locomotive Museum we will take the ferry to Listvianka, located to the southwest of Lake Baikal near the source of the Angara. This settlement stretches in an arc along the coast at the foot of a high stony ridge. Russian pioneers came to this spot in the middle of the 17th century and a hundred years later there was a stage-post here. The settlement grew along with the development of navigation on Lake Baikal. Listvyanka is now a small settlement but it has shipbuilding and ship-repairing yards of its own. From here we will drive back to Irkutsk.

Overnight in Irkutsk. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Ulan-Ude*

This morning we transfer to the railway station for our trip to Ulan-Ude

This afternoon we will arrive in Ulan-Ude, the Capital of the Buryat Republic. From the 13th to the 17th century, the area now known as the Buryat Autonomous Republic was part of the Mongolian empire. The Buryats were originally nomadic herders with cultural and language similarities to the Mongolians and religious similarities to Tibetan Buddhists. In the 18th century, Tsarina Elizabeth officially recognized Buddhism as a religion in Russia. Unfortunately for the Buryats, future generations of Russian/Soviet leaders were not so tolerant. In the 1930's, Buryat culture and religion were practically stamped out by Stalin during the years of repression. Mongolian script was replaced by Latin,

and then Cyrillic, and Buddhist temples were razed or put to other uses.

In the past several years there has been a resurgence in Buryat culture. Despite the repression of the Soviet years, by most accounts Buryats and Russians live peacefully with little of the ethnic conflict that plagues other regions in Russia.

Our sightseeing in Ulan-Ude will include a visit to the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum just a short drive from Ulan Ude. Here we will find a large settlement of local architecture from Prehistoric times to the present. Our walking tour will introduce us to the different types of architecture through the centuries. The houses are furnished like the time period they represent and in the rooms are all the objects that show how people lived, including pieces of embroidery and wooden objects.

Overnight in Ulan-Ude. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Ulan-Ude*

Today we make an excursion to the Ivolginsky Datsan (Buddhist Monastery) located in the hills a few kilometers from Ulan Ude. This is a big center of Buddhist culture, housing temples, a library, a school for monks, and accommodation for visitors. Here we find a richly decorated temple with large Buddha sculptures, colourful mandalas and a special seat for the Dalai Lama when he visits. Young monk students, dressed with long dark red robes study Philosophy, or Tantrism, Buddhist art and the Tibetan language. In the library there are scripts with the words of Buddha and comments on his words. Prayer drums circle the territory of the Datsan, and it is situated in a vast green area at the foot of the hills surrounding Baikal Lake.

This afternoon we transfer the railway station for train to Vladivostok

Overnight on Train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Trans-Siberian Railway*

The train follows the Shilka and Amur rivers close to the Chinese border. This is Siberia at its most remote and the train enters an area of permafrost where vast distances and forbidding geographic conditions make this a region difficult for human existence.

Overnight on Train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 18 *Trans-Siberian Railway*

During our last full day on the train we reach the most easterly point of our journey, passing Khabarovsk where we cross the River Amur. As the train heads towards the Pacific and we approach the end of our journey, we enjoy our final night on board.

Overnight on Train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 19 *Vladivostok: City Tour*

Morning arrival in Vladivostok, "Lord of the East," in Russian.

Vladivostok is located less than 100 km east the Chinese border just across the Sea of Japan from the main Japanese island of Honshu. Home base of the Russian Pacific Fleet, the city was closed to all non-Soviets from 1958 until 1991. Between its founding in 1860 and closing to foreigners in 1958, Vladivostok was a fairly international city. In the early part of the 20th century, Russians were actually outnumbered by Chinese in Vladivostok and during the years following the Revolution, there were large Japanese and US populations. The US maintained a consulate in Vladivostok until 1948. Vladivostok became Russia's main naval base in the East after Port Arthur (located in Chinese territory and ceded to Russia in 1898) fell in January 1905 during the Russo-Japanese war. Modern Vladivostok has been compared to the American West during the Gold Rush years. Businesses from all over the world have flooded in to take advantage of the city's position as a crossroads of Northeast Asia.

Our sightseeing tour will pass many historic, cultural and architectural landmarks that make up the flavor of Vladivostok. We will start with some great views of the city, Golden Horn Harbour and Amursky Bay. We will visit the central square of the city. This is the site of all major public holiday celebrations with its main landmark - the memorial complex dedicated to "Fighters for the Soviet Power in the Russian Far East in 1917-1922." Svetlanskaya Street is one of Vladivostok's oldest and main streets, and along Pushkinskaya Street one finds many impressive pre-revolutionary buildings (many of them being restored) that serve as foreign consulates commercial offices, scientific centers and academic institutions. We will also see the St. Nikole Russian Orthodox Church, the city's symbol and memorial built to honour seamen and ships lost during the 1905 Russo-Japanese war.

Overnight in Vladivostok. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 20 *Vladivostok - Moscow*

Morning departure for our flight back to Moscow. Late afternoon arrival in Moscow.

Overnight in Moscow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 21 *Moscow - Sergiev Posad - Moscow*

Today we will take an excursion to visit Sergiev Posad. About 45 miles north of Moscow, along the road to Yaroslavl, is the small city of Sergiev Posad (called Zagorsk during the Communist era). This city grew up around the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra Monastery, established around 1340 by St. Sergius of Radonezh. This monastery has been the single most important spiritual center in Russia for well over 600 years and is today a working monastery, seminary, theological academy and place of pilgrimage.

Return to Moscow.

Overnight in Moscow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 22 *Departure*

Departure from Moscow.

PLEASE ADVISE US AT THE TIME OF BOOKING IF YOU PLAN TO ARRIVE EARLY OR EXTEND YOUR STAY IN RUSSIA AFTER THE TOUR (DUE TO VISA REGULATIONS).

SCASTLIVOGO PUTI! Meal plan: Breakfast.