

## Irkutsk to Helsinki on the Trans-Siberian Railway

### Reading List

#### **A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin**

by Robert Service

Russia had an extraordinary twentieth century, undergoing upheaval and transformation. Updating his acclaimed *History of Twentieth-Century Russia through 2002*, Robert Service provides a panoramic perspective on a country whose Soviet past encompassed revolution, civil war, mass terror, and two world wars. He shows how seven decades of communist rule, which penetrated every aspect of Soviet life, continue to influence Russia today. This new edition also discusses continuing economic and social difficulties at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the military campaign in Chechnya, and Russia's reduced role on the world stage.

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#### **To the Edge of the World: The Story of the Trans-Siberian Express, the World's Greatest Railroad**

by Christian Wolmar

*To the Edge of the World*, is an adventure in travel—full of extraordinary personalities, more than a century of explosive political, economic, and cultural events, and almost inconceivable feats of engineering. Christian Wolmar passionately recounts the improbable origins of the Trans-Siberian railroad, the vital artery for Russian expansion that spans almost 6,000 miles and seven time zones from Moscow to Vladivostok. The world's longest train route took a decade to build—in the face of punishing climates, rampant disease, scarcity of funds and materials, and widespread corruption.

The line sprawls over a treacherous landmass that was previously populated only by disparate tribes and convicts serving out their terms in labor camps—where men were regularly starved, tortured, or mutilated for minor offenses. Once built, it led to the establishment of new cities and transformed the region's history. Exceeding all expectations, it became, according to Wolmar, “the best thing that ever happened to Siberia.”

It was not all good news, however. The railroad was the cause of the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War, and played a vital—and at times bloody—role in the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Civil War. More positively, the Russians were able to resist the Nazi invasion during the Second World War as new routes enabled whole industries to be sent east. Siberia, previously a lost and distant region, became an inextricable part of Russia's cultural identity. And what began as one

meandering, single-track line is now, arguably, the world's most important railroad.

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### **Strange Siberia Along the Trans-Siberian Railway: A Journey From the Great Wall of China to the Skyscrapers of Manhattan**

by Marcus Lorenzo Taft

Excerpt from *Strange Siberia Along the Trans-Siberian Railway: A Journey From the Great Wall of China to the Skyscrapers of Manhattan*

Throughout our journeyings in the Tsar's dominions, we were entirely free from any dread of being shadowed by a Russian spy. During our sojourn at Tomsk, the capital of Siberia, we were not even asked to show our passport. Who can say but that our exemption from all such espionage, of which travelers in Russia so generally complain, was due to the fact that a playful child was unconsciously acting as mascot for our Taft party?

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### **East of the Sun: The Epic Conquest and Tragic History of Siberia**

by Benson Bobrick

The very word Siberia evokes a history and reputation as awesome as it is enthralling. In this acclaimed book on Russia's conquest of its eastern realms, Benson Bobrick offers a story that is both rich and subtle, broad and deep.

From its conquest by Cossacks and its exploration and settlement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, through its terrifying Gulag history, to its modern place in a world hungry for natural resources, Siberia –covering a sixth of the world's surface – has a history unlike any other land. *East of the Sun* captures all of Siberia's history with a depth and flavor that will satisfy both well-informed historians and newly-cast Russophiles alike.

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### **Lonely Planet Russia (Travel Guide)**

by Simon Richmond et al

Lonely Planet *Russia* is your passport to the most relevant, up-to-date advice on what to see and skip, and what hidden discoveries await you. Brush up on your Soviet and imperial history in Moscow and St Petersburg, explore European Russia and its gingerbread cottages and golden domes, or lose yourself in the wilds of Siberia and the east; all with your trusted travel companion. Get to the heart of *Russia* and begin your journey now!

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