THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY
CHINA/MONGOLIA/RUSSIA
SUMMER 2014

The Great Wall at Mutianyu  Horse trekking in Mongolia  Moscow’s skyline

Director: Prof. David Galloway, Russian Area Studies

Introduction
This incredible journey begins in Beijing, the capital of China, the most populous nation in the world, traverses Mongolia, the most sparsely populated country in the world, and ends in Moscow, capital of the Russian Federation, the largest country in the world. Along the 4,736 mile rail trip, you will visit China’s famous Great Wall, the nomadic steppes of Mongolia, the deepest freshwater lake on the planet (Lake Baikal), the endless Siberian taiga (coniferous forest), one of the oldest towns in Siberia (Tomsk, established 1604), and the golden onion domes of Moscow’s cathedrals. For seven days, the train will be our classroom as we travel from Asia to Europe following the Trans-Mongolian route, and the remaining weeks of our time will be spent at multi-day stops on the way. We will actually circumnavigate the globe, flying west to China, traveling overland by train to Moscow, and then returning to our starting point in NYC. This is the trip that every world traveler dreams of taking!

Program Dates
This is a 28-day program running from June 10 - July 7, 2014.

INFO SESSION: Monday, September 16, 2013 at 4:30pm in Trinity 305

Application Deadline
Friday, November 1, 2013, at 5:00pm. Note that the application requires your advisor’s signature.

Eligibility, GPA Requirements and Prerequisites
Qualified first-years, sophomores, juniors and graduating seniors may apply. First-years, sophomores and juniors will have priority and seniors will be admitted on a space-available basis. Higher priority applies to: majors/minors in Asian Studies, Russian Area studies, and those studying Chinese or Russian.

All accepted students will be required to attend a Readers College in the spring of 2014, which will meet weekly for ½ credit. The meetings will include an orientation to the history and languages of the countries visited, notes on cultural norms in each country, and practical considerations for our trip.
Students applying for this program should have a minimum of a 2.5 cumulative GPA. In the case of first-year students, we will have to wait until your fall grades are in before we can formally admit you. Provided that there is space on the program, first years with successful applications will normally be given a conditional offer based on achieving at least a 2.5 GPA in the fall 2013 semester.

Course Title
RUSE 115, *The Trans-Siberian Railway: Gateway to Three Cultures*

Course Description
Western conceptions of Europe often omit Russia, just as conceptions of Asia proceed no further north than China, ignoring Asiatic Russia and Mongolia. This course will explore all three countries through the lens of the Trans-Siberian railway which links them, focusing on broad topics of contemporary culture, economic development and political changes of the past two decades. We will critically examine the ways in which the railway affects our notions of culture. In particular, we will consider issues such as the nature of “West” and “East,” historical memory and the nature of cities, the legacies of Communism and challenges of free-market economies, and the ecological issues of modern tourism.

Assessment
Grading in the course will be mainly based on the following components: journal entries, which students will complete at regular intervals; a seminar for Russian students held in Tomsk, at which students will present on a pre-prepared topic related to the American collegiate education system; discussion questions, written responses to issues posed by the instructor weekly; final paper, an integrative and summative assignment due after the end of the course’s travel portion.

Credit
This course will be worth one HWS general course credit. It will also count towards a major/minor in Russian Area Studies and for IR majors/minors as part of an Asian regional focus. Students will also receive a ½ credit for the Readers College.

General Itinerary
Day 1: Depart JFK for Beijing (13.5 hours)
Days 2-5: Beijing: Forbidden City, Great Wall, Chinese cooking class
Day 6: Train leaves Beijing station for Mongolia early morning
Days 7-11: Ulan Bator, ger-to-ger experience w/Mongolian families
Day 12: Return to UB in the morning, afternoon train to Irkutsk
Days 13-16: Irkutsk, including village of Bolshie Koty on Lake Baikal
Day 17: Early morning train to Tomsk
Days 18-21: Tomsk, homestays and work with NGO “Dobro”
Days 22 & 23: train for Moscow
Days 24-27: Moscow: Red Square, Stalin’s Secret Bunker, cuisine class
Day 28: Leave mid-a.m., arrive same day afternoon at JFK (9 hrs)
Physical Demands
All travel is physically taxing, but this trip requires more exertion than other programs we have run. In each country visited, participants will face extended hiking and horseback or camel riding. Participants must be able to hike with all their luggage a distance of 26 miles over two days without hardship. In addition, on the Great Wall we will be hiking two days of very steep terrain. There are no exceptions to this requirement—facilities in these countries do not accommodate tourists with disabilities.

Living Conditions
One week of travel will be on the train, in 2nd or 3rd class carriages, depending on the route. Regardless of the class of train, all come with a bunk, pillows, and sheets, and are usually air conditioned (unless the AC breaks, of course!). A dining car is attached to every train, and at longer stops (20-60 mins) you can get off the train and buy food. For one night in China and three nights in Mongolia we will stay in tents (provided). For the rest of the trip not on the train, we will stay at hostels.

In general, participants must be prepared for standards which are well below typical American or Western European norms of cleanliness and sanitation: many locations lack running water and have only pit toilets; on the Mongolian steppe water can be scarce and there are no toilet facilities at all. We will discuss how to handle these challenges, but participants should expect to see modern conveniences only when staying in the larger cities.

Costs
Program fees will be approximately $2650-$2850 for the 28-day program, which will cover tuition, all accommodation, some meals, train travel and overnight berths, entrance fees, day trips and excursions and local travel in most cases. Visa costs ($285 for Russian visa, $260 for Chinese visa) are not included and are the responsibility of each participant.

Students will need to budget an extra $400 above and beyond the program costs for the lunches and dinners not included. Students will also need to budget for round-trip airfare at approximately $1650, visas (Russian and Chinese) at ~$550, medical insurance from $30-$60 if you don’t already have it, optional immunizations at approximately $170 (see section on immunizations below) and a non-refundable administrative fee of $100 charged for all faculty-led short term programs. *Costs are subject to change based on currency fluctuations, changes in costs of services provided and the number of students confirmed on the trip.
Funding
In an effort to assist students in financial hardship wishing to participate in a short-term program, there is a limited pool of HWS funding available. If you are accepted to this program, we will invite you to submit a funding application. Funding will be allocated on a need basis and we will contact the financial aid office to verify your need status. We will also contact the Student Affairs office and the Dean’s office to access your social/disciplinary records as part of determining your eligibility for funding. We will let you know whether you have been awarded funding before the deadline by which you are required to put down a deposit for your place on the program. Please be aware that any funding award will only cover a small portion of the program costs even if you are high need, so you will need to be able to fund most of the costs yourself or be willing to take out a loan.

Flights
Group flights will be arranged by the CGE and accepted students will be notified of the cost and booking info for the flight once available.

Passports and Visas
All students will need a passport valid until at least January 2015 to participate in this program. Visas are required for both Russia and China for U.S. Citizens. Non U.S. citizens should see Sharon Walsh in the CGE about visas as soon as you are accepted. Each student must apply for his or her own visa, but the Program Director will provide guidance through the process.

Immunizations
Please check the CDC website http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list to read more about the recommendations. If you choose to get immunizations, you can do this at a local medical clinic near your home (use this link to find travel medicine clinics: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/find-clinic ), possibly with your home doctor or you can contact one of the Passport Health offices in Canandaigua, Rochester or Syracuse who provide travel immunizations. Their contact number is: (585) 275-8884.

Medical Insurance
Students will be required to have medical insurance while abroad, including evacuation and repatriation coverage*. You may have coverage abroad through your parents’ policy but you will need to check to see if this is the case and if you and your parents are happy with what their policy covers. Sometimes these policies are for emergencies only or reimburse you at an out of network rate. You will also need to check to see if their policy includes evacuation and repatriation coverage.

If you have or will purchase the year-long 2013-14 HWS policy through Gallagher Koster, this will not be enough to cover you for the whole trip because the insurance coverage through Gallagher Koster is valid until only until June 30th, 2014 and the trip does not finish until July 7th. In this case, you will need a supplemental policy for the last week of the trip.

If you need to purchase insurance or want to supplement the insurance you have, we recommend HTH Worldwide. The Travel Gap Voyager program from HTH Worldwide is a good option: http://www.hthtravelinsurance.com/1_benefits_vaca.cfm The plan costs between $32 - $59 for a 28-day trip, depending on the plan you choose. This is a good all-around plan and it includes coverage for emergency evacuation and repatriation. If you find a suitable plan through another company, that’s fine, too.

*If your policy does not cover evacuation and repatriation, you can purchase the International Student I.D. card (ISIC) card for $25 that includes this coverage. You can purchase this online at www.myisic.com.