

Title:

Siberia, Russia Part 2 - Where Are We and What Day Is It?

Word Count:

470

Summary:

Standing in the airport in San Diego, I began to wonder exactly how long it was going to take to get to the city of Chita in Siberia. The combination of a vodka hangover, three flights, one train ride and a jump over the international date line didn't help. At first glance, it looked like a total of two days, which wasn't bad for going to the other side of the earth.

Keywords:

sibera, russia, travel, travelogue

Article Body:

Standing in the airport in San Diego, I began to wonder exactly how long it was going to take to get to the city of Chita in Siberia. The combination of a vodka hangover, three flights, one train ride and a jump over the international date line didn't help. At first glance, it looked like a total of two days, which wasn't bad for going to the other side of the earth.

I should have paid more attention in math.

The itinerary for getting from San Diego to Chita read like this:

1. Fly from San Diego to Seattle.
2. Meet charity representative and other professor.
3. Fly from Seattle to Anchorage.
4. Fly from Anchorage on Aeroflot [gulp] to Khabarovsk, Russia.
5. Take train from Khabarovsk to Chita.

How bad could it be? Very, very, very bad. Did I mention "bad"?

Day 1

The flight to Seattle was no problem. I met Tom Dickinson, the founder of

Siberian Intercultural Bridges, but we couldn't find the other teacher. Turns out the flight to Anchorage wasn't till the next morning, so it didn't really appear to be a problem. Around midnight, our attitude changed and we had written off the teacher.

Day 2

At 8 a.m., Grea Waters from Kentucky appears out of the Seattle mist. We have our second professor and he speaks fluent Russian. This is a big relief as I had spent a lot of the previous evening contemplating my Russian skills. That is to say, I had none. I couldn't even pronounce the name of city we would land in, Khabarovsk. I nearly had a panic attack during the night when I bolted up in bed upon the realization that I would have no way of knowing how to get to the train or when to get off. You see, the Russian language is based on the Cyrillic alphabet. There is no way to wing the Cyrillic alphabet. For example, the letter "y" is pronounced "ch" as in Charlie. I was in definite trouble. Would the rest of my life be spent riding around aimlessly on trains? The continued grinning of Tom Dickinson didn't make me feel any better.

Our flight from Seattle to Anchorage was uneventful. Yes, we flew Alaska Airlines. While waiting for our connection in Anchorage, two thoughts kept running through my head. First, isn't Aeroflot the airline with all the crashes? Second, how did a man from Kentucky become fluent in Russian? I mean, what about his accent? I was feeling less confident about my translator and decided to investigate. I started rubbing my temples when he told me that he had never been to Russia.

Alas, there was no turning back. Trust me, I tried. But that's a story to be told in Part 3 of this nomad adventure travel series...