

Title:

Siberia, Russia Part 6 - When Stairs Attack in the Khabarovsk Train Station

Word Count:

678

Summary:

In this continuing series, we cover my move from San Diego to Chita, Siberia to be a professor at Chita State Technical University. We pick up the story going to the train station in Khabarovsk to catch the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Keywords:

sibera, russia, travel, travelogue

Article Body:

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Day 4!

If you've been reading this series on NomadJournalTrips.com, you know my original travel estimate was 2 ½ days from San Diego to Chita, Russia. Well, day 4 has arrived and I am just getting on the train. This horrible time estimate is evidence of a poor math education. I blame the American education system!

I never could figure out those math hypotheticals, "If a train is going south at "x" speed and a cyclist is going north at "x" speed, when will they meet?" When are they going to meet? More like, "What the heck is cyclist going to look like WHEN they meet?" What about his family, not to mention the nightmares suffered by the conductor. I mean, really, who can do math under such circumstances?

Stairs...Evil, Evil Stairs

At the Intourist hotel, we arranged for train tickets to Chita. By we, I mean my friend Grae did everything. For \$27, "we" had arranged a private berth and all was good. With a good nights sleep, we headed down from the room and out into the...pouring rain. A local was kind enough to give us a ride to the train station and all seemed good. After a bit of pointing, extreme facial expressions and so on, we discovered our train was running about an hour slow. We hunkered down and did a bit of people watching.

As we sat, I pondered my luggage. I had a large hiking backpack and something I called "the lump." The lump was an extremely large duffle bag with tiny wheels on one-end and plastic bars running down the flat side/bottom. In theory, you could roll it or drag it anywhere. Mine was black, wet and weighed about 70 pounds. Before you snicker, keep in mind I was going to Siberia for a year. What would you take? Still, I had an uneasy feeling, but couldn't really figure out why.

Our hour was up and it was time to head to the track platform. Like many European train stations, one had to actually walk down stairs, through a tunnel and then back up stairs to get to your platform. This is not the way it works in San Diego. It also doesn't rain in San Diego. Rain, 70 pound bag on wheels, plastic bars, stairs...I think you get the picture.

The stairs were packed as I shuffled forward pulling the lump behind me. You would be proud. I made the first flight without maiming anyone or being slapped. Just as I stepped down the second flight, "thou was nudgeth from behind."

Time slowed.

The lump hit me in the back of the knees. I fell back onto the lump. In a transformation beyond my primitive understanding of quantum physics, the lump became a high performance bobsled. Down I went.

Still in slow motion, I couldn't help but notice the agility of the Russians in the stairwell. Some jumped up an ornamental shelf running down the stairs. Overweight individuals sucked it up and suddenly became thin. Miraculously, not one soul was hit on my way to the bottom. My landing was uneventful, which is to say there wasn't a loud smack on the wall at the bottom of the stairs.

I jumped up and turned to see if anyone was injured. There was total silence. Faces just stared back at me. Apparently, the only thing injured was my ego and skin, which was turning a dark shade of red. Well, I like to make an impression! I vehemently prayed that none of them were going to Chita.

Everyone started moving again and not a word was said. Alas, the lump was not so accommodating when it came to climbing up the stairs on the other end of the tunnel.

Next - The Trans-Siberian Railway...How Many Days To Chita?!