



Iran, the Trans-Siberian Express, China and Europe. The travel plans of Peter Hanseler

Traveling is the order of the day this summer. I'm fulfilling some dreams that I've been trying to realize for years. I'm traveling to Iran, taking the Trans-Siberian Express to Vladivostok, visiting Beijing, Xiang and Shanghai. Then I meet a lot of smart people in Europe and relax. Follow me in a preview of my planned trips halfway around the world.

Peter Hanseler

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Introduction

I still remember well when I traveled to Russia for the first time in 1997 and colleagues - experts without a clue - warned me about this evil giant empire. I might even be killed.

Today I live in Russia, enjoy the best of health and am sure that I have learned considerably more about the world than all of these alarmists, who for their part are probably standing around on the respective golf courses, hanging out in horribly furnished vacation homes, musing about the good old days and trying to confirm their encrusted world views in leading media such as the NZZ, although these are increasingly being caught up and overtaken by reality.

Iran

Iran has an image problem in the West like Russia - that's why these criminals get along so well. Evil also reigns in Iran and the oppressed people there also live in an unjust state that is backward, threatens our freedom in the West and promotes terror around the world. - Really?



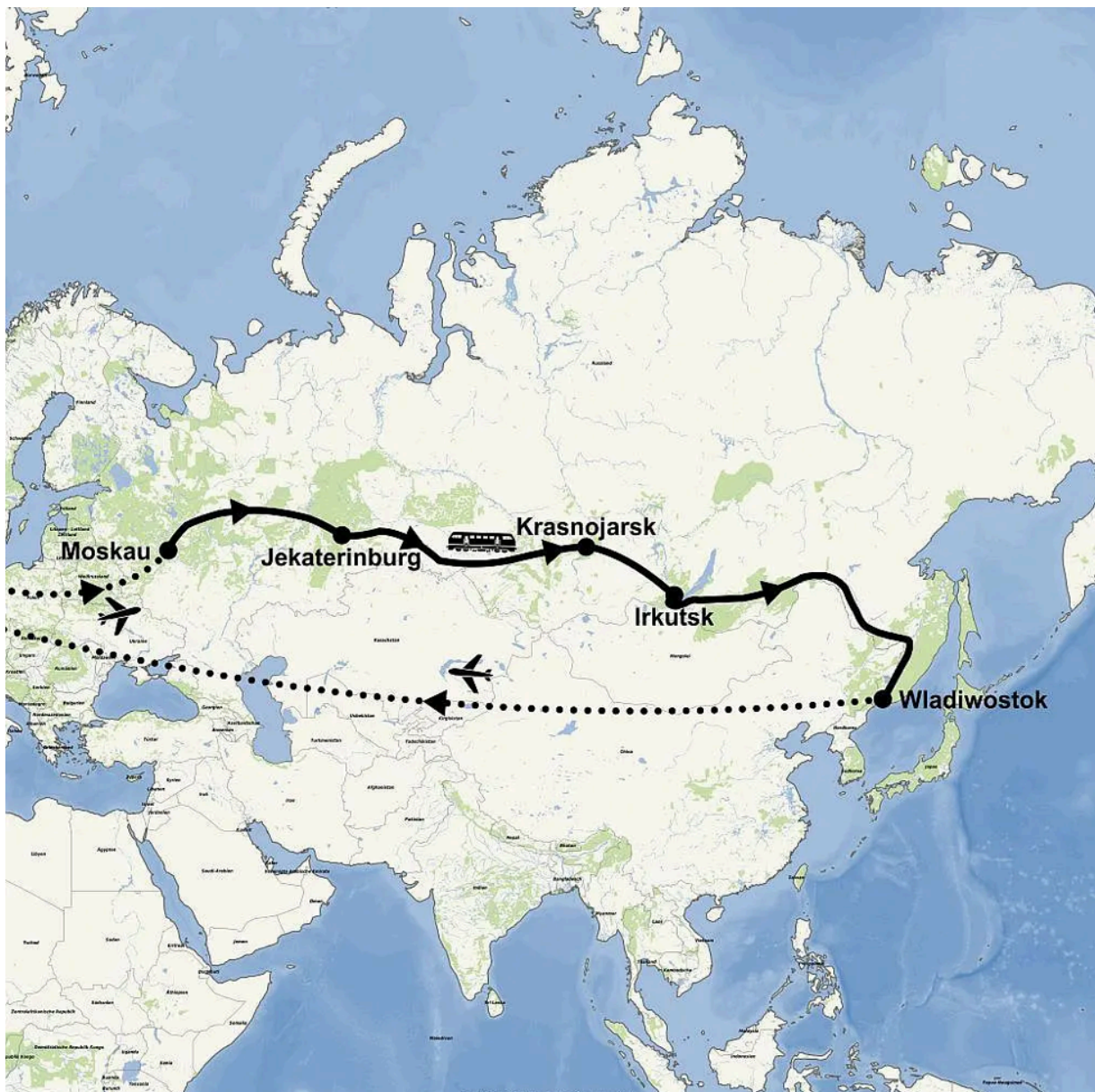
I will spend eight days in Iran and meet people to listen and learn. My experience shows that listening is much more effective than repeating propaganda and half-knowledge like a prayer wheel.

It would be presumptuous to try to understand Iran on the basis of a short visit. That is impossible. Even after 27 years in Russia, I only know certain facts and can better assess and classify Russia and its behavior today.

The aim of this trip to Iran is to gain a first impression in order to be able to better assess facts and events as a geopolitician. I'm really looking forward to meeting people I don't know yet and I'm just as excited as you are about the country, its people and culture.

Trans-Siberian Express

After my return from Iran, I will be traveling from Moscow to Vladivostok by train. That's an incredible 9,288 kilometers - a six-day train journey with no less than 145 stops.



I will be traveling alone. Masha declined a six-day train journey politely. She took this train from Moscow to Chita when she was thirteen. She found it boring, because it wasn't a vacation trip, but a family visit to south-eastern Siberia, which

others had decided on - 6,200 km of boredom. Only a Swiss person could come up with such an idea without need - as a Swiss person, I'll leave it at that.

This trip has several personal goals for me. I want to experience the greatness of this country for myself. One of my longest road trips in Russia took me to Kursk a few years ago - 600 km - a stone's throw in Russia. We drove for hours through fields of sunflowers and felt the vastness of this country. Traveling over 9,000 km by train will probably make me personally more aware of the true size of this huge country.

What do you do on a trip like this? I will sleep, look out of the window, read and write. I hope for the inspiration of being alone.

China

A few days in Beijing, then a visit to the Terracotta Army in Xi'an, followed by a few days in Shanghai before flying to Zurich.



Europe

In July and August, we will be traveling through Europe, simply enjoying the time and surroundings and meeting people in various cities that I have got to know through the blog - mostly in correspondence.

Our blog forces me to put what I read every day into a structured form that is understandable for someone else and is clearly different from a level produced by a bunch of pals having a beer and discussing world matters.

When writing, you expose yourself when you end an article with a conclusion, which I regularly do. It takes great care not to be caught up in your own past of wrong conclusions. It is also a very solitary activity that requires discipline. Describing complex things in a way that is understandable without becoming banal is a challenge that often pushes me to my limits. My two-hour walks regularly ensure that I find my center again, because understanding is one thing - putting it on paper is something completely different.

The biggest dividend of my work is that I meet so many interesting people who get in touch with me. The level of our readers never ceases to amaze me. Many of them are much more educated than I am and are real experts on the topics I cover. They criticize and give me pointers, point out new aspects and invite discussion. With some of them, I first exchanged letters and then developed friendships - like with my co-author René Zittlau. This feedback is very important to me.

We will therefore be traveling, pondering, dreaming, marveling and learning over the summer. We'll be spending less time at our desks, but we'll still be reporting back with new articles on important topics and personal impressions, albeit probably not quite as often.

Stay with us.

We wish you a great summer!

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