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Journal

7(1)

5

The train car jolted as the railroad tracks stretched forward into the rising of the morning sun. I quickly was awakened by the sudden halt. As I stretched out of my dream world I remembered that I was no longer in the stunning city of St. Petersburg, but on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. I thought about my previous day in the North European Plain. I remembered looking out of the tour bus window as I passed the Vosges Forest and the Jura Mountains. The city was filled with numerous wonders and stories. My first educational stop had been the Hermitage Museum; along the embankment of the Neva River. I recall the beauty of the Winter Palace and stunning portraits. That night I had visited the Mariinsky Opera House on the enchanted Mikhailovsky square.

I peered out of the train car's frosted window as the train stopped. As I stepped off of the platform, I was directed to the tour bus. The bright interior welcomed me with happiness as I approached my seat. When the engine roared the bus was filled with movement. I removed the crumpled brochure from my overly-stuffed backpack and gazed down at the list of events. My eye caught the Moscow Kremlin's bright lettering. My mind drifted to the upcoming sight of museums and tall Cathedrals. I guess I must have drifted off because again I was jolted awake by a quick stop. I strolled off the bus onto the majestic streets of Moscow. In front of me stood Spasskaya Tower and the brick gates of the Kremlin. After hours of political and geographic history, I entered the center of Red Square. Here I found an oversized market and trading center. Claustrophobically, I wobbled onto a tram that would transfer me to

*Poklonnaya Mountain. When I arrived at the great monument, I inquired further on the victory of the Great Patriotic War and the memorial of so many soldiers. I was then transferred to the St. Basil's Cathedral of Czarist coronation and was in awe of the display of Lenin's tomb. Although very interesting, this site had made me throw the idea of lunch out the window. But, I was pleased when I entered the busy Gum Department Store. The building was larger than life and filled with so many people that after my souvenirs had been purchased I had almost been run over. I was glad I would soon be able to relax at the Bolshoi Theater. Later that night, I took my seat at the magnificent opera house. I was to see a well known ballet. When it began I was amazed by the swift movements of the dancers before me. Deciding that I had experienced an incredibly long day, I began to head back to my cozy hotel room. The way back had made me exhausted and dreary, but I still seemed to noticed the thickets of deciduous forests and prairies with tall grasses.*

*I was startled by the sound of the annoying bed side alarm clock. After my daily primping was done I was ready to begin my tour of Yugud-Va National Park in the Ural Mountains. As the bus neared my destination, the excessive humidity struck and the air became mildly cold. I was amazed to be viewing the border between Asia and Europe. After arriving I visited Mt. Narodraya that is the highest point in the taiga region. The mountain slopes were covered with fir, pine, and larch forests. As I left the breathtaking landscape, I entered the world's largest area of flat land, the West Siberian Plain. The weather was chilly, but sure wasn't as cold as I*

*presume the tundra region would be. The Kaza Uplands were foggy and I couldn't get a decent look of them, although I could see their eroded surfaces. The railway soon led me to Omsk which held the state museum with the largest collection of native and foreign works of art. The Irtysh River filtered from the Arctic Ocean through this city. I boarded the train to leave this fascinating place behind. The strings of coniferous forests and herbaceous plants led the railroad to the Central Siberian Plateau. The climate was mild and a bit of warmth filled the atmosphere. Irkutsk was located right on Lake Baikal so the museum had to be visited. This was truly the deepest lake I had ever seen. After a couple of hours of the fact filled location I was rushed onto the train once more because of time shortages. Sleep came easily and quickly, but I made myself wake up ever so often to be sure not to miss a single thing. The Lena River greeted me as the train arrived in Ulan Ude. The train wandered through the alleys of Cathedrals and churches. Then, not knowing that we had ever entered a new city, we arrived in Chita. The land clover along with grasses and shrubs formed a dusty green blur as the train gained more speed. Vladivostak was very windy and smelled of salty sea water. Knowing my journey had ended, I went to my hotel to reflect on my adventure and was taken back by how quick by expedition had ended. I hadn't realized how much I had done until I had finished my trip. By this time I was filled with so much history and would hope to return to see this beautiful country become more breathtaking.*