



NEWS & VIEWS

Winter 2009

Journeys to Legendary Destinations at the Crossroads of Europe & Asia

"MIP" - MIR: The Russian word meaning "Peace" and "World"

DEAR TRAVEL ENTHUSIAST,



Welcome to 2009! We start off the new year excited to announce that, for the second year running, *National Geographic Adventure* magazine has named MIR as one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” in a recently conducted comprehensive ranking of the world’s top outfitters (adventure.nationalgeographic.com).

2008 was a year filled with challenge and memorable events that the intrepid global traveler will not soon forget. If there’s one thing we know about 2009, it’s that flexibility in travel planning is key. Actually, we’ve been practicing that mantra for over two decades while planning customized tours to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg and beyond.

Russia is a place where one often hears the word “impossible,” but it’s also a place where just about anything is possible. MIR has 22 years of experience transforming complex travel dreams into realities. The following pages contain stories about some of the one-of-a-kind programs we planned this past year, including venturing inside the Russian space program and arranging for 320 people to see the total solar eclipse in Novosibirsk, Siberia.

With flexibility in mind, MIR has designed new travel planning tools for 2009 to assist you in creating a personalized custom journey for you, your family and friends. I invite you to contact us for detailed itineraries on our scheduled group tours, as well as for our new Flexible Essential Trip Series – and for our new Regional Travel Planners designed to make custom travel planning with MIR fun and hassle-free.

Best wishes for safe and enjoyable adventures in 2009.

Douglas Grimes
President
douglas@mircorp.com

P.S. New MIR brochures: *Experience The Trans-Siberian Railway – Your Route - Your Way* and *Experience The Silk Route – Your Route - Your Way*, are due out shortly. Call 800-424-7289 or email info@mircorp.com to receive your copy.



SIGNATURE ADVENTURES TO THE BALTICS & BEYOND

MIR has created many one-of-a-kind tours for the not-for-profit **Washington Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation** leadership program. Designed to challenge and stretch the imaginations of future natural resource leaders, these journeys of discovery whisked farmers, ranchers, bankers, loggers and conservationists off to rural Romania, where they met with a community of Roma; to China, where they explored a rural medical clinic not far from Xi'an's Terra Cotta Soldiers; and to Ukraine, where they visited a private farm in the "Black Earth" region, formerly known as the "Breadbasket of the Soviet Union." In 2008, the organization returned to the Baltics for the first time in 15 years, visiting the capitals, Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius, as well as Talsi, a small town in Latvia that the group had first visited on a tour that MIR designed for them in 1993.



To **plan your own Romania, Ukraine or Baltics journey**, or for more information on our *Kaliningrad & The Baltics* small group tour, email Charity Shaller at charity@mircorp.com. Learn about our new flexible *Essential Baltics* private journey – our tour, your dates – for solo travelers, couples or small groups who prefer to travel privately but appreciate a savvy pre-designed program. Email charity@mircorp.com for more details on small group tours and Flexible Essentials.



Essential Baltics:

The Best of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

7-day Flexible Essential Series private trip:

Your choice of dates - start on a Sunday.



Kaliningrad & the Baltics:

Definitive Journey Through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Kaliningrad

2009 dates for this 13-day Premier Series small group tour: May 3-15, August 2-14.

Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses:

Through the Valley of the Roses to the Painted Monasteries

2009 dates for this 17-day Cultural Series small group tour:

May 29-June 14, August 28-September 13.

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova:

An In-depth Study of Three Unsung Countries

2009 dates for this 16-day Premier Series small group tour:

May 15-30, August 14-29.



EXCEPTIONAL RUSSIAN TRAVEL EXPERIENCES TO SIBERIA & BEYOND

A rare **total solar eclipse** was visible from the heart of Siberia on August 1, 2008, and MIR arranged for over 320 passengers to arrive in the major Siberian city of Novosibirsk via plane and train to enjoy the celestial event at a beachside locale. Novosibirsk is a featured stop on MIR's **Trans-Siberian Rail Journeys**, including the *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express Classic* and Mongolian Routes as well as the new *Tsar's Gold* private train trip from Beijing to Moscow. For more information on our Trans-Siberian Rail Journeys contact Andrew Barron at andrew@mircorp.com.

In April 2008, MIR took an intimate group of adventurous travelers **inside the Russian Space program** — as close to the vastness of space as it's possible to get without actually leaving Earth. They journeyed outside of Moscow to Star City, the formerly secret training facility for Soviet cosmonauts. Then they flew to Baykonur Cosmodrome, the Russian space launch facility in Kazakhstan, to witness a manned launch of the Soyuz spacecraft on its way to the International Space Station, enjoying unparalleled access to VIP viewing areas and briefing sessions. Back in Moscow, they took in the classic sights of the city before witnessing the Soyuz-ISS docking at Mission Control Center, an event that very few have experienced. For more information on MIR's Inside the Russian Space Program tours, contact Douglas Grimes at douglas@mircorp.com.



Trans-Siberian Express Between Beijing & Moscow:

Beijing, Mongolia, Siberia, Moscow aboard the Tsar's Gold Private Train

2009 dates for this 15/16-day Private Rail journey: (Westbound) May 25-June 8, July 20-August 3, September 14-28 • (Eastbound) July 12-27.

Trans-Siberian Classic Route Private Rail Journey:

Between Moscow and Vladivostok aboard the Luxury Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express

2009 dates for this 15-day Private Rail journey: (Westbound) May 15-29, June 12-26, July 12-26, August 7-21, September 4-18 • (Eastbound) May 3-17, May 31-June 14, July 26-August 9, August 23-September 6.



Trans-Siberian Mongolian Route Private Rail Journey:

From Moscow to UlaanBaatar, featuring Mongolia's Naadam Festival

2009 dates for this 13-day Private Rail journey: June 30-July 12.

Read the travel log of the 2008 journey and see a slideshow at <http://www.mircorp.com/blog.asp>

Contact MIR: Tel: 800-424-7289 • www.mircorp.com

EL BEYOND

July 4th marked the end of the **GlobeRiders' 2008 World Tour**, the fifth that MIR has facilitated for the motorcycle adventure company.

This year, starting their engines 300 kilometers outside of Beijing, the riders headed north through eastern China up to Russia's Lake Baikal region, across the entire length of Siberia, and down the Volga to the Black Sea, where they boarded a ferry to Ukraine and rolled through the lowlands of Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia into Germany and the end of the tour. For more information about the upcoming third Globberiders' Silk Road journey, or regarding organizing an overland adventure trip of your own, contact Dmitry Rudich at dmitry@mircorp.com.

MIR also designed an unusual 2008 trip for **Bill Altaffer**, a travel company owner and photographer who was declared the World's Most Traveled Person in 2005 (www.mosttraveledpeople.com). His favorite types of places are the obscure Russian *oblasts* that this journey to the Southern Urals and Lower Volga took him through. Visiting out-of-the-way places like Rasputin's hometown, Pokrovskoye, and typical manufacturing cities like Chelyabinsk and Tyumen, Altaffer and his group covered thousands of miles of remote Russian countryside. To read more about this trip, find his **travel log** at <http://www.mircorp.com/blog.asp>

With 22 years of experience and world-class connections, MIR can plan and execute specialty group tours for any size or interest imaginable. In operation since 1986, when owner and founder Douglas Grimes organized an exchange between Soviet and American volleyball teams, MIR specializes in tours with complex logistical requirements. To **organize your own one-of-a-kind journey**, email Douglas at douglas@mircorp.com; or consider joining one of our favorite Siberian adventures including:

Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits & Nomads:

The Trans-Siberian Railway, Lake Baikal, the Gobi, Naadam Festival

2009 dates for this 21-day Cultural Series small group tour: June 27-July 17.

Mongolia to Moscow: A Trans-Siberian Railway Adventure:

Landscapes and Cultures of Mongolia, Siberia and Western Russia

2009 dates for this 15-day Cultural Series small group tour: July 18-August 1, August 29-September 12.

Destination by Design:

Your trip, your dates, your signature experience

With the expert guidance of an experienced MIR travel specialist, you can create your own custom-crafted adventure. You choose the dates and leave the rest to us. For more details on private, custom travel, email Jennifer at privatejourneys@mircorp.com.



Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 744



85 South Washington Street, Suite 210
Seattle, WA 98104



Contact MIR: Tel: 800-424-7289
www.mircorp.com • info@mircorp.com



MEMBER
Member of the
Foundation for
Russia American
Economic Cooperation