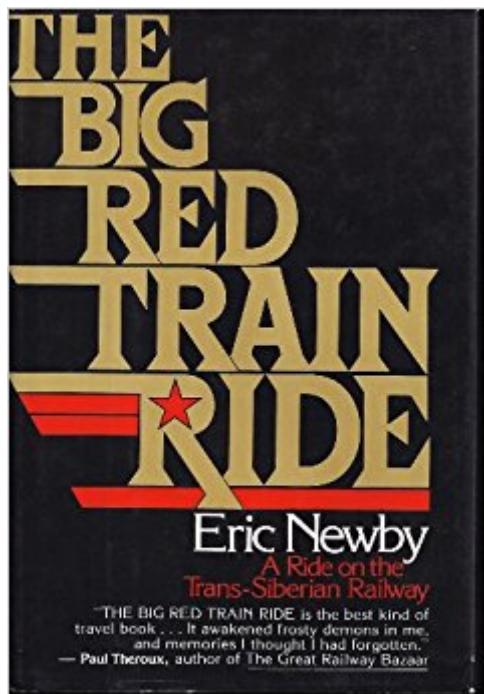


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# Big Red Train Ride



## **Synopsis**

From Moscow to the Pacific on the Trans-Siberian Railway ("the big red train ride") is an eight-day journey of nearly 6000 miles. Eric Newby made this trip with his wife, an official guide and a photographer. Harrassed by the Soviet conductor, hindered at every stage by bureaucratic officials, off his feed from bad food and worse drinks, Newby still managed to gather a wealth of detail about life in the USSR. And, most importantly, his sense of humor never deserted him. "The best kind of travel book....It awakened frosty demons in me, and memories I had thought forgotten." --Paul Theroux --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

8 1.5-hour cassettes --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I found this fascinating because of all the little annoyances the writer had to deal with being accompanied on his trip with a government official. It was a little cynical but it was done in a humorous way.

If you are planning on riding the rails on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, this book will warm up your engine and give you a realistic idea of what to expect.

This was my first Eric Newby book, and I was hooked. Newby and wife Wanda travel throughout the Soviet Union searching hopefully (and often in vain) for a decent meal, a warm blanket, and helpful railroad staff. They never really succeed, but the journey they bring us along on is worth the trouble.

It's just plain funny. Newby doesn't lob jokes at the reader, but tosses them off underhand for the most part, so the humor creeps up on you. He knows how to go for the bellylaugh, but most of the book has a dryer touch. Newby doesn't go for cheap shots, he's not mean spirited in the least, but his semi-sympathetic, long-suffering, and sometimes hung-over take on exploring the side roads of Russia is addictive fun. I have now followed eric and Wanda on many journeys and am still enthralled. Discovering an unread Newby is like getting a surprise birthday gift. This is a great introduction into the globetrotting adventures of Eric and Wanda.

Eric Newby has written a number of excellent travel books. In fact they are more essays on the human condition, with emphasis on its humorous side, than simply travel books. The idea of boarding the Trans-Siberian and riding the width (or is it length?) of the USSR must have seemed a fine prospect for more humor arising from shedding light on the Communist side of the human condition. Paraphrasing an intentionally humorous review of Hamlet I read when I was a kid (many, many years ago), I would describe Newby's trip as gloom from the moment it starts to its final approaches to the Pacific Ocean. Take some pictures here? Nyet. National security you know. That bleak skyline? What does it risk? Nyet. How about those peasants at the side of the train? Nyet. No good beer either; sometimes none at all. Vodka, yes, if you make the right connections. Open some windows for air? Nyet, How about some courtesy, just a little in helping with luggage or doors? Nyet to that too. It all reminded me of an account by a young man who rode the same train in the late 1980s, after Perestroika. Maybe it wasn't the same train; the one he took was one used by the common man. He encountered many Turks and other rough citizens of Russia, enjoying those contacts. His description of crossing the Siberian waste, though, was that it was like crossing Nebraska fifty times. Newby is a fine writer, but this trip did him in. Maybe worth reading just to see how it was done. Charles Tillinghast, author of "How Capitol Got the Beatles, and Then What Happened," and "American Broadcast Regulation and the First Amendment." Newby, often a thousand laughs, as well as interesting anecdotes about the people encountered

Another adventure with the Newbys find Eric and Wanda hurtling through Brezhnev's Russia on the famous Trans-Siberian railway. From collective farms to asylums, the Newby's take you along with them on their tour. Part endurance challenge, part history lesson the book does suffer in part by capturing Russia at its worst: food shortages, restricted travel, stern officials and windows that won't open! But the Newby's accept it all with relatively good humour and like all their adventures, they manage to find lots of interesting characters along the route. I've always been able to think of lots of

reasons NOT to visit Siberia, the trans-siberian train ride might have just given me one!

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