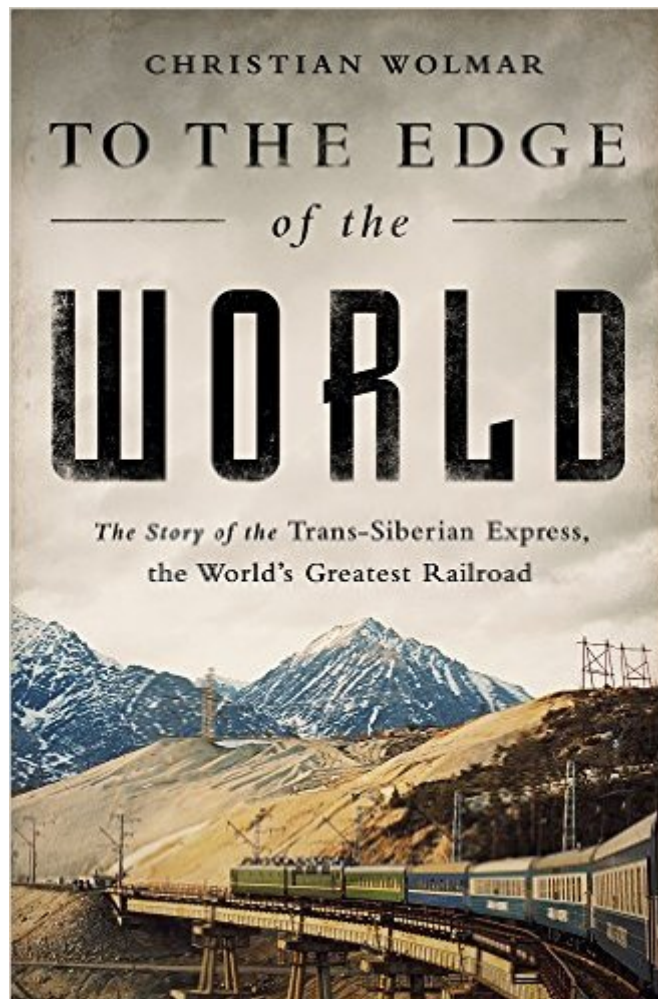# To The Edge Of The World: The Story Of The Trans-Siberian Express, The World's Greatest Railroad

## Synopsis

To the Edge of the World is an adventure in travel—full of extraordinary personalities, more than a century of explosive political, economic, and cultural events, and almost inconceivable feats of engineering. Christian Wolmar passionately recounts the improbable origins of the Trans-Siberian railroad, the vital artery for Russian expansion that spans almost 6,000 miles and seven time zones from Moscow to Vladivostok. The world's longest train route took a decade to build—in the face of punishing climates, rampant disease, scarcity of funds and materials, and widespread corruption.The line sprawls over a treacherous landmass that was previously populated only by disparate tribes and convicts serving out their terms in labor camps—where men were regularly starved, tortured, or mutilated for minor offenses. Once built, it led to the establishment of new cities and transformed the region's history. Exceeding all expectations, it became, according to Wolmar, "the best thing that ever happened to Siberia." It was not all good news, however. The railroad was the cause of the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War, and played a vital—and at times bloody—role in the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Civil War. More positively, the Russians were able to resist the Nazi invasion during the Second World War as new routes enabled whole industries to be sent east. Siberia, previously a lost and distant region, became an inextricable part of Russia's cultural identity. And what began as one meandering, single-track line is now, arguably, the world's most important railroad.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

To the Edge of the World: The Story of the Trans-Siberian Express, the World's Greatest Railroad

by Christian Wolmar was a brief history and a fascinating, speedy read. I came across it, as I often do, since I am in charge of the new book arrivals in my department. I like trains and transit history and To the Edge of the World served as my first formal introduction to the Trans-Siberian Railway, the longest railway in the world.For a nation as vast as imperial Russia, the country embarked on a system of railroad construction relatively late, when compared with Europe, the United States and Canada. Such a lengthy railway would link Moscow to the Pacific coast, bring raw materials out of the heart of the nation's central Asian mining region and bring products and services to the people of the interior. It could unite the country in a way that the Canadian National Railway linked Canada from coast to coast, an achievement that did not go unnoticed by those in power in tsarist Russia. However the main reason the Trans-Siberian Railway was built was not economical:"The military imperative was also given a boost by the completion of the Canadian transcontinental in 1885, given the shorter journey time between England and Japan, which was seen as a potential military advantage. Psychologically, for the Russians, the construction of the Canadian transcontinental proved more important than its American predecessor completed sixteen years previously. Canada was a similarly vast, rather underpopulated country and its furthermost province, British Columbia, could well have seceded had it not been for the construction of the line across the new nation. The Russian Far East, like the Canadian West, was remote and semi-detached.

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