

УГПС 43:02:06

Text 1: Platzkart Trains - Government Services and Business

Russia's railway system is one of the world's largest, connecting cities across eleven time zones. The platzkart train service represents a unique aspect of Russian public transportation - affordable long-distance travel managed by Russian Railways (RZD), a state-owned company.

Platzkart carriages offer budget accommodation for travelers willing to experience authentic Russian travel culture. These open-plan sleeping cars feature 54 berths arranged in compartments without doors, creating a communal atmosphere where passengers share their journey for several days. The government subsidizes these services to ensure transportation accessibility for all citizens, regardless of their economic situation.

The business model focuses on volume rather than luxury. Passengers bring their own food, bedding, and entertainment. Tea service from the conductor's samovar remains a cherished tradition, served in traditional glass holders called podstakanniks. Basic facilities include shared washrooms and limited storage space.

This service reflects Russia's approach to essential public services - prioritizing accessibility and coverage over comfort. While modern high-speed trains serve major routes, platzkart trains continue operating to remote destinations where flying isn't economical. The experience teaches patience, adaptability, and social skills as passengers navigate shared spaces and varying comfort levels.

For the government, maintaining this service demonstrates commitment to universal transportation access. For Russian Railways, it provides steady revenue while preserving cultural traditions. Despite basic conditions, platzkart trains remain popular among budget travelers, students, and those seeking authentic Russian experiences, proving that efficient public services don't always require luxury amenities.

Vocabulary (15 words):

1. **Subsidizes** - financially supports / финансово поддерживает
2. **Accessibility** - ability to reach or use / доступность
3. **Berths** - sleeping places on trains/ships / спальные места
4. **Communal** - shared by a group / общий
5. **Affordable** - glass holders for tea / доступный по цене
6. **Cherished** - valued highly / дорогой, ценный
7. **Facilities** - equipment or services / удобства, оборудование
8. **Prioritizing** - treating as most important / отдавать приоритет
9. **Coverage** - extent of service area / покрытие
10. **Economical** - cost-effective / экономичный
11. **Adaptability** - ability to adjust / способность приспосабливаться
12. **Navigate** - find one's way / ориентироваться
13. **Steady** - regular and reliable / стабильный
14. **Revenue** - income / доход
15. **Amenities** - pleasant features / удобства

Discussion Questions:

1. How do government-subsidized transport services benefit society?
 2. What challenges might arise when providing basic services to remote areas?
 3. Is it better to offer luxury services or focus on accessibility for everyone?
 4. How can businesses balance profit with social responsibility?
 5. What role should governments play in essential services like transportation?
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Choose one of the statements below:

1. Affordable public transportation is more important than luxury in a country as large as Russia.
2. Platzkart trains reflect true Russian culture and traditions better than modern high-speed trains.
3. Government support of low-cost train services ensures equal access to transportation for all citizens.
4. Comfort is not the most important factor in long-distance travel — shared experience and accessibility matter more.

Give a 1.5-minute talk on one of these statements.

You can use the following plan:

- state the problem;
- express your personal opinion and give reasons for it;
- express an opposing opinion and give reasons for it;
- say why you do not agree with the opposing opinion;
- make a conclusion restating your position.