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## Eight of the Best Train Journeys

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Eight of the Best Train Journeys

Our Travel Expert shares some of her favourite train journeys from around the world.

Often overlooked in preference for their faster, sexier high flying aircraft cousins, trains are to travel what slow food is to gastronomy. Sure, you could take the express option and fly to your destination, but that would miss the point. As well as much of the pleasure. Train travel is all about lingering, lapping up the landscape through big picture windows while imbibing in a little indulgence.

At the risk of offending trainiacs (train fanatics) by leaving out plenty of worthy contenders, here are 8 of my favourite rail journeys:

### 1. Indian Pacific

Specifically, the annual Outback Christmas Train which departs Sydney early in December with Santa on board to spread Christmas cheer in remote communities. Santa's helper changes each year with a noteworthy entertainer staging concerts trackside, accompanied by school choirs who practice all year for this gig. From coast to coast the Indian Pacific is named after the two oceans bookending the journey. One of the few Great Train Journeys catering to all budgets, comfort varies depending on how much space you're willing to pay for. From airline-type seats with significantly more room than the airborne type through to plumped up Platinum level cabins, kangaroo spotting trackside at dawn and dusk along with blazing burnt orange desert sunsets keep passengers entertained as 4,500 km of trackside scenery slips by.

Boarding: Sydney or Perth [www.gsr.com.au](http://www.gsr.com.au)

### 2. Pride of Africa

Suites that come with their own minibar circumvent the pesky hassle of figuring out in which direction the lounge bar carriage is located come sunset, which, let's face it, is about the only decision you'll have to make once on board. Just as well too that suites also come equipped with modern ensuite bathrooms, oodles of fluffy towels and a hair dryer as this is one train where glamour oozes from every shiny brass button. For those blessed with deep pockets and unhindered by a tiresome job to rush home for, hop on board for the 14 day Dar Es Salaam to Cape Town ultimate African adventure.

Boarding: Cape Town or Dar Es Salaam [www.rovos.com](http://www.rovos.com)

### 3. Eastern and Oriental Express

Steeped in old fashioned opulence, don't be surprised to see Inspector Hercule Poirot lurking behind etched glass lampshades on this Agatha Christie-like journey with an Oriental twist. Winding through the heart of the Malay Peninsula the sister train to Europe's Venice Simplon Orient Express takes three days to travel between Singapore and Bangkok. A handful of Epic Journeys also venture deeper into Thailand over seven days with whistle stop tours that take travellers deep into rural Thailand. Impeccable attention to detail coupled with friendly service make this train a standout.

Boarding: Singapore or Bangkok [www.orient-express.com](http://www.orient-express.com)

### 4. The Canadian

Canadians are a spoilt for choice when it comes to wild dramatic landscapes that take one's breath away, particularly when viewed through a glass-roofed rail carriage. So it's no real surprise that VIA Rail, when looking to keep their guests entertained, directed their eyes inward by offering free on board Wi-Fi. Yes, all those snow-capped mountains pierced by gushing rivers or forest clad valleys, vast river plains dappled with autumnal foliage, moose and bears trackside, along with endless rolling prairies, their crops waving in the breeze do get a little tiresome after four days.

Boarding: Vancouver or Toronto [www.viarail.ca](http://www.viarail.ca)

### 5. Hiram Bingham

Climbing almost 2500m above the Pacific Ocean along the well-worn Inca Trail, the train that bears the name of US historian Hiram Bingham is one of the world's shortest luxury train journeys. While trekkers can take days to ascend the Andes Mountains, on board revellers barely have time to crack a second bottle of champagne before the ancient ruins of Machu Pichu appear through the mountain mist. Leave your hiking boots behind and opt for slinky sandals and a party frock for the cocktail party on the return evening journey.

Boarding: Poroy or Machu Pichu [www.orient-express.com](http://www.orient-express.com)

### 6. Le Massif Charlevoix

Sleek modern carriages bathed in natural light epitomise the train (services started in 2012) known as Le Massif de Charlevoix. The journey to French Canada's Charlevoix region and the resort town of La Malbaie is only 140km but has quickly become one of those essential 'when in Rome' type Canadian adventures. The brainchild of Cirque du Soleil co-founder Daniel Gauthier, expect exquisite cuisine, impeccable service against a lakeside backdrop overshadowed by ubiquitous mountains. The Mimosa's served with breakfast are not bad either, setting the mood for a fun frolic into rural Quebec.

Boarding: Quebec City [www.lemassif.com/train](http://www.lemassif.com/train)

### 7. Venice Simplon Orient-Express

Wood burning stoves and etched glass panels evoke sultry Parisian Art Deco sophistication from the Roaring 20's. No shrinking violet, once Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot stepped aboard through her pages, the Orient Express' fame was assured. Shared bathrooms take the gloss off an otherwise glamorous train journey which rumbles through Continental Europe following the seasons.

Boarding: Various cities throughout Europe [www.orient-express.com](http://www.orient-express.com)

### 8. Trans Siberian Railway

One to tick off the bucket list for serious trainiacs, it's possible to travel from the Pacific Ocean to St Petersburg in around eight days via some of Russia's most remote and stunning countryside. But what would be the point of that? Anyone mesmerised by Omar Sharif's smouldering good looks or Julie Christie's sensual innocence (wasn't everyone?) in the original Doctor Zhivago movie should watch it again before departure. De-train en-route to explore the Russian Arctic, the Silk Road or the Ural Mountains. Though do leave the dinner suit at home, opting instead for plenty of decidedly unromantic thermal underwear.

Boarding: Moscow or Vladivostok [www.realrussia.co.uk](http://www.realrussia.co.uk)

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