

**TRAIN TRAVEL:
JOURNEYS OF EASE & AWE ON TERRA
FIRMA**

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Swift, smooth, rather silent, remarkably scenic. The benefits of train travel are right there in front of you.

Not to mention simpler security processes, and shorter pre-departure arrival and waiting times, with no seat belts and no technology switch-off required.

Whether for work or wanderlust, the appeal of train travel continues to grow, mirroring growth in the numbers of global travellers. Once the backbone for travel, long, long before the days of voyages by air, trains were busy moving people as an essential means of travel for business or pleasure, providing a critical vehicle, literally and figuratively, for economic and social development of nations. One of the earliest demonstrations of the invaluable role that travel and transport plays in opening up physical and mental borders, unlocking opportunity and understanding, train travel took on a leading part in shaping the history of the world.

Today, offering not only an alternative way to travel, it is offering a whole new perspective to travelling, even if a repeat destination visit. Physical and mental space expands when onboard, sitting watching the world wiz by, the gentle blur and embracing silence of all around allowing for the opening of one's mind into new, creative, selfishly self-defined places... Whether alone or sharing the journey, the bubble of the coach create a safe, peaceful space, an enjoyable aloneness even with hundreds of others sitting through the snaking row of coaches, connecting all to one another, from one point on the map to another.

Herein lie the seeds of the romance of train travel. It is fast enough to make movement more time efficient, yet not so fast as to love the details of the here and now. It is full enough to feel the presence of others, yet not overstuffed to overtake a feeling of space and movement. It is freedom of travel within a clear form, its formula one which is loved by millions when wanting and/or needing to undertake travel without the troubles of other options, and with the little touches that make trains just such an easy decision of 'yes'.

FIRST SIGNS OF FIRST TRACKS

Looking far back to when the first signs of rail transport were evident, 600 BC in Greece, train travel was in its infancy as a result of engineering now yet being able to move innovation forward. Still, conceptually the potential for great things down the tracks was clear, design needing to travel a long period of time until it was able to step-change possibility.

It was not until the invention and advancement of the steam locomotives by British engineers in the 18th and 19th Centuries that train travel really started to gain momentum. While shipment of goods was a priority, especially as wars and after-periods of reconstruction were reshaping nations, it was Thomas Cook who pioneered the first passenger journeys, reshaping the travel experience.

In the same period's latter days, electrification of railways increased not only the reach of train travel, but also the speed, with high speed tail becoming a signature of rail travel and transport of the 20th century.

Evolving in some cases with bullet train speed, the 21st Century continues to see expansion and investment into railways. Governments across the globe continue to look to their rail lines as the basis for effective, efficient movement of people and goods for the good of their economies and societies. In China alone, national spend in rail expansion is estimated at over \$130 billion, with similar levels of spend anticipated over the following five years as the country moves its growth aspirations towards 2020.

Noting and saluting the remarkable role of railways for trade and development, the value of railways for travel and tourism is not to be overlooked. Time & cost efficiencies aside, the beauty of journeying from A to B through an array of landscapes and city views, adds a distinct bonus to an already comfortable and convenient experience, be one a commuter or holiday seeker.

LUXURY ON THE LINES

For this reason, travel by train has continued to evolve, its appeal timeless.

Unsurprisingly, the spectrum of train travel experience is ever-widening in both functionality and frills. From the 10 million+ annual travellers on the Eurostar and millions invested into bullet trains such as that connecting commuters in Japan, to the millions of miles covered by luxury train trips offering voyages on legendary lines such as India's 'Palace on Wheels', Canada's 'Rocky Mountaineer', South Africa's 'Rovos Rail', the Orient Express's global network of unforgettable experiences, rail travel has become a part of the dream of travel. 2015's top luxury train journeys reveal just how magnificent the immersive nature of train travel can be:

<http://www.luxurytrainclub.com/news/cond%C3%A9-nast-traveller-best-trains-in-the-world-2015/>

Unpack, sit back, stretch out, walk about and stretch your legs, exhale as you look out and stretch your spirit, enjoy the space and solitude with its fine hospitality....and let your hosts take you wherever you want to go. As perfectly stated by Simon Wallace, one of Orient Express' tour mangers: *"Our trains are a destination and journey in themselves, offering a luxurious way to explore a region leisurely in comfortable surroundings."*

Importantly, tourism by train brings to life, in so many subtle and sensual ways, a truism held dear by not just millions, but billions of people across the globe, and so beautifully captured by Ralph Waldo Emerson: *"Life is a journey, not a destination."*

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