

RIDING THE RAILS



MELLOW YELLOW
Le Petit Train Jaune, main; right, Lake Brienz in Switzerland



50 FANTASTIC RAIL BREAKS

From the beautiful West Highland Line of Scotland to India's epic Vivek Express, our experts deliver their top tips

DAY TRIPS

1 WEST HIGHLAND LINE SCOTLAND

The most scenic railway in Britain, known in Scottish Gaelic as the "Iron Road to the Isles", is a kaleidoscope of mountains, moors, lochs and seascapes in a 165-mile (266km) odyssey through the west Highlands from Glasgow to the fishing port of Mallaig. Look out for Ben Nevis towering over Fort William, the UK's highest station at Corraur, and scenes from *Harry Potter* films. There's a bonus at the end – it links with ferries over the sea to Skye.

☐ Singles £35.90; returns from £59.50 (buytickets.scotrail.co.uk).

2 LITTLE YELLOW TRAIN FRANCE

Le Petit Train Jaune runs daily on a narrow gauge electric line that climbs for almost 40 miles (64km) through the eastern Pyrenees from the medieval fortified town of Villefranche-de-Conflent to the Spanish border, via the highest station in France at 5,226ft. With vintage open and closed carriages it is like a toy train tooting through tumultuous scenery of ravines, deep forests and meadows ablaze with wild flowers.

☐ Singles from Villefranche to the ski station of Font Romeu €13 (£11.70; about-france.com/tourism/yellow-train-pyrenees).

3 LAKE BRIENZ SWITZERLAND

Standing on the open veranda of a vintage coach listening to the sound of a 1913-built steam locomotive will become another way to enjoy the picturesque line between Interlaken and Meiringen this year. It runs beside the waters of Lake Brienz and there is the chance to travel one way by a paddle-steamer dating back to 1914. Adding to the historical



concentration is the steam-worked rack railway from Brienz which climbs the greatest vertical distance of any of Switzerland's railways, up the Rothorn.

☐ Moriarty Express (0041 79 724 0535; swiss-railway-services.ch) runs on selected dates April-October; from £24 one way.

4 KURANDA SCENIC RAILWAY, AUSTRALIA

It may only span some 23 miles, but the Kuranda Scenic Railway, which links Cairns, Queensland's gateway to the Great Barrier Reef, and Kuranda, "the village in the rainforest", certainly lives up to its name. The journey takes about two hours, and the line rises dramatically from sea level to nearly 1,100ft, snaking its way through the Barron Gorge National Park, and offering spectacular views back towards Cairns and the Coral Sea.

☐ One-way from AU\$50 (£28); ksr.com.

5 CANAL LINE PANAMA

Everyone knows you can cross an isthmus on the water, whether as part of a cruise or on one of the locally

bookable full and partial transits. But how about going overland by means of the characterful retro-style Panama Canal Railway? Railway, note – not railroad. As many a proud Panamanian will tell you: "This ain't America, señor." It was built in 1851-55 for gold-seekers who were bound for California.

☐ One-way tickets from Colón to Corozal cost \$25 (£20); panarail.com.

6 HELLO KITTY TRAIN JAPAN

This train mixes two of Japan's deeply-rooted passions – high-speed bullet trains and Hello Kitty. The train whizzes between Osaka and Fukuoka in southern Japan's Kyushu prefecture. The first carriage of the train – whose exterior is festooned in pink ribbon motifs – is a temple to all things Hello Kitty, with a space decorated with the famous cat and her friends, merchandise and a photo booth for taking the ultimate Hello Kitty selfie.

☐ Use JR Rail Passes to travel: (jr-hellokitty.shinkansen.jp/en/).



7 BUENOS AIRES-TIGRE ARGENTINA

Once the largest network in Latin America, the Argentine railways are much shrunken and shoddily maintained. The best-kept, most reliable suburban line runs from the handsome Retiro Mitre terminal in Buenos Aires – designed by British architects Eustace L Conder, Roger Conder and Sydney G Follett and engineer Reginald Reynolds, and recently given a thorough polish and clean-up – to Tigre, a town and river delta that has long been the weekend breakaway for tired city folk. The train departs/returns every 11-12 minutes from dawn until 9.30/10pm.

☐ One-way tickets: AR\$26.50 (55p).

8 THE BRIDGE COPENHAGEN-MALMO

The dramatic 16-km-long bridge connecting Copenhagen to Malmo has made it possible to include visits to both cities in the course of a weekend break and to enjoy a taste of the quite different cultures of the Danes and the Swedes. Services are frequent and there are good views of the Oresund Strait. For lovers of the Scandi noir crime series *The Bridge*, however, the compelling reason for making this journey is that, this is *The Bridge*.

☐ One-way fares cost from 110 SEK (£10).

LATIN FLAVOUR

Japan has a Hello Kitty train, left; tango on the streets of Buenos Aires, below

9 CHURNET VALLEY BRITAIN

The North Staffordshire Railway was laid during the 1840s to shuttle passengers around the Potteries. The line was so pretty that train tourism swiftly followed (the Churnet Valley was nicknamed "Staffordshire's little Switzerland") until Dr Richard Beeching wielded the axe in the Sixties. Thankfully 10 miles (16km) of tracks have been preserved between the Peak District and Alton Towers by volunteers of the Churnet Valley Railway. Nostalgic steam and diesel services also allow passengers to partake in driving courses, steam stoking and footplate rides through bucolic countryside.

☐ Churnet Valley Railway (01538 750755; churnetvalleyrailway.co.uk) offers year-round rides. Adult tickets from £17; children £11.

10 TRENINO VERDE SARDINIA

DH Lawrence loved Sardinia's 400km rural rail network: "we take the slow train, no matter where it goes."

Now the four railway tracks offer the most idyllic – and sometimes only – passage through Sardinia's rugged interior using Fifties railway stock. Some locations are so rural that drivers often disembark to shoo geese and sheep off the time-worn track.

Sadly steam engines are disused (they kept setting fire to local terrain) but the prettiest coastal lines (to Bosa and Palau) call at secret beaches and vineyards.

☐ From £3 per hour ride; for more details, see *Trenino Verde* (treninoverde.com).

11 BOHINJ RAILWAY SLOVENIA

The three-hour journey from Jesenice to Nova Gorica winds through the Julian Alps, burrowing through 36 tunnels and crossing the world's longest stone arch railway bridge over the Isonzo Gorge. A steam locomotive pulls historic passenger carriages with staff in the uniforms of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which built the railway between 1900 and 1906.

☐ Tickets from £40 with ABC tourism (00 386 59 070 512; abc-tourism.si)

12 COASTAL PACIFIC NEW ZEALAND

The 2016 earthquake at Kaikoura on the east coast of New Zealand's South Island severed the railway between Christchurch and the ferry terminal at Picton, but it has just reopened. The journey – in panoramic carriages with a buffet car – is full of variety, taking passengers through thick forest, past densely stocked sheep farms and an extraordinary pink lagoon of salt production, but it is the long stretches beside the Pacific Ocean that are the highlight of the 6¼ hours.

☐ From £86, Rail New Zealand (0800 014 8106; railnewzealand.com).

13 DEVIL'S NOSE ECUADOR

Quito is at 9,350ft above sea-level. Ecuador's second city, Guayaquil, is on the Pacific coast. Trains operate along the entire line (including the posh four-day Tren Crucero service), but a high point – and a popular day trip – is the 7.5-mile (12km) zigzagging section known as the Devil's Nose for the mountain on which it was built in the 1900s. Connecting Alausi and

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Sibambe, it drops, or climbs, 1,640ft in around 65 minutes.
 ☐Tren Ecuador operates two trips a day, Tues-Sun, for US\$33 (£26) return, including lunch or dinner (trenecuador.com/en/day-trips/the-devils-nose).

14 DRESDEN-PRAGUE

A lovely journey south of the "Florence of the Elbe" which incorporates breathtaking views of the craggy mountains of the area known as the *Sächsische Schweiz* (Swiss Saxony) and a lovely stretch along the river near the border at Bad Schandau. Sit back and relax in the restaurant car with a glass of Czech beer.

☐The route is operated by Deutsche Bahn (bahn.co.uk) and Czech Railways (cd.cz/en). The journey takes just over two hours and single fares cost from about €15.

15 GLACIER EXPRESS SWITZERLAND

Europe's most popular tourist train is adding an "Excellence Class" of carriage from March 2. One Glacier Express a day in each direction between St Moritz and Zermatt will include the new coach for just 20 people. In addition to enjoying the scenery through the panoramic windows, passengers will have a five-course lunch of regional and seasonal dishes, including wine and an aperitif and canapés during the afternoon.

☐First-class one-way fare from £215 (Swiss Pass and Half-fare card can be used); then there is the Excellence Class supplement of £331. Glacier Express (020 7420 4934; switzerlandtravelcentre.co.uk).



BAROQUE AND ROLÉ
Dresden, right; the way it was on the Orient Express, main

OVERNIGHTERS

16 BLUE TRAIN SOUTH AFRICA

There are some journeys that you don't want to end. One is South Africa's luxurious Blue Train between Cape Town and Pretoria. An additional 10 hours are being added to the schedule giving passengers a second night and allowing a visit to Kimberley's famous "big hole" for diamonds. A new observation car is being added to the train set that lacked one, bringing them both up to the same standard.
 ☐A one-way journey on the Blue Train between Cape Town and Pretoria costs from £1,067 through Ffestiniog Travel (01766 512400; ffestiniogtravel.com).

17 SHOSHOLAZA MEYL SOUTH AFRICA

There are faster and smarter ways of

travelling the length of South Africa, but none offer as much luxury on a budget as Shosholaza Meyl's Premier Classe service. The train trundles up and down the same route between Johannesburg and Cape Town as the legendary Blue Train, but at a fraction of the cost. Single, double and four berth compartments with sleeper couches are comfortable and there are two restaurants and lounge bars.
 ☐One-way tickets with meals cost R3210 from JB Train Tours (0027 11 913 2442; jbtours.co.za).

18 BALTIC SEA SLEEPER MALMO TO BERLIN

The sole direct train from Sweden to Germany includes a night cruise across the Baltic Sea. At 5pm the Berlin Night Express putters through Malmö's leafy suburbs en route to the Swedish port of Trelleborg. Here carriages are eaten by a special train-ferry, before trundling out four



hours later in the ritzy German period resort of Sassnitz. The final leg is a straight shot through the former East Germany to Berlin for a 7am breakfast.
 ☐The Berlin Night Express operates in spring and summer. Sleeper berths cost £43 (0046 40 669 62 00; snalltaget.se).

19 SILVER METEOR NY TO MIAMI

Each afternoon the Silver Meteor glides out of New York's Penn Station on a 1,389-mile (2,235km) voyage to the sun. Depending on the season, the train's panoramic windows may frame a sunset in Philadelphia, Baltimore or Washington DC, before passengers bed down in Viewliner rooms with en suite facilities. Overall the near 30-hour service passes through 33 cities in 11 states, allowing passengers to jump off at Savannah for southern soul food, or Orlando for Disney World. The luxury service began 80 years ago, with wartime intelligence operative Ian Fleming one of its early passengers. His East Coast route is fictionalised in Bond novel *Live and Let Die*.

☐Amtrak offers one-way journeys for the full length of the Silver Meteor for £370, including a luxurious viewliner bedroom and free meals (001 800 872 7245; amtrak.com).

20 SILK ROAD RAILWAY BAKU TO ANATOLIA

This autumn, passenger carriages will rattle from the former USSR into central Turkey along the recently opened 514-mile (827km) line. The planned two-night sleeper service (using coaches made by Swiss firm

A FINE PHILLY
Philadelphia's skyline as seen from across the Delaware river, below

Stadler with en suite showers) begins at Baku's sparkling new train station. It will then skirt through the former East Caspian Sea and cross the Caucasus, allowing passengers to alight at Tbilisi. The final leg continues to the Turkish city of Kars near the Unesco-listed archaeological ruins of Ani. A connection between Baku and Istanbul is expected further down the line.

☐The Baku-Kars line is in operation for freight, with passenger services due to start later this year. Sleeper berths from £60 (tcd.gov.tr).

21 ZIMBELA STAR ZIMBABWE

The first tourist train in Zimbabwe launched last year, taking passengers in style from Victoria Falls to Hwange National Park in refurbished classic Fifties rolling stock of two sleeping cars, a lounge car and a dining car. After dinner the train stops overnight at Dete for a motionless night's sleep before continuing on to Hwange. There is also a connecting railcar, the Elephant Express, for those staying at safari lodges along



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Hwange's northern border at Camdeboo or Bomani.
 ☐Expert Africa (020 3405 6666; expertafrica.com) offers an eight-night package using the train to reach Bomani Lodge. From £2,735pp, excluding flights.

22 CALEDONIAN SLEEPER

Britain's longest night train service connects London's Euston station with Inverness, Fort William and Aberdeen. The ambience on board is convivial, with decent haggis and neeps, and malts available in the lounge bar. The train has traditionally been an old diesel that produced a nice rocking sound, running slow so customers needn't get up at the crack of dawn. New cabins with en suite lavatories and double beds are being rolled out in May. The real wonder of the trip is raising the blind – perhaps as brekky is delivered – to see the mountains in morning mist.
 ☐One-way from £150 (sleeper.scot).

Berlin-Vienna portion now under Austrian Railways' control and upgraded to one of its Nightjets. There will also be a revival of the Berlin-Krakow sleeper service.
 ☐See the German and Austrian rail websites bahn.com and oebb.at/en/

25 MUSSOORIE EXPRESS INDIA

The fascinating old British hill station of Mussoorie offers a pleasant weekend break from Delhi, particularly to escape the summer heat. Reach it on the daily Mussoorie Express, which leaves Delhi mid-evening and arrives in time for breakfast at Dehra Dun, the nearest station to Mussoorie. From there, take a taxi for a 20-mile (32km) drive up a twisting, turning road with ever more amazing views over the plains you're leaving behind. The return journey to Delhi is also overnight.
 ☐Around £10 in Second Class AC (bedding provided). For full details, see seat61.com.

23 PADDINGTON-NIPENZANCE NIGHT RIVIERA

Cornwall is always further than you think! Flawed as it is – the down train doesn't stop at Totnes, but the up does, and the 4.1am arrival on weekdays in Exeter is grim – this service to the South West is kept going thanks to stalwart users and a shortage of flights linking London to Devon and beyond. Agatha Christie – resident of Greenway, on a branch line off the main GWR – would have been underwhelmed by the coachettes, but they're clean and smart after a slick fashion.
 ☐From £45 to share a cabin, £70 for one for yourself, one-way, plus your ticket (gwr.com).

24 BERLIN-VIENNA

The old "Metropol" Berlin-Budapest/Vienna via Prague service, discontinued in December 2017, is being brought back to life in the form of a new "Metropol" train between Berlin and Budapest/Vienna, with the



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26 PARIS-MOSCOW

This is the classic way to cross the continent. Each Thursday evening, the Russian Railways train rattles out of Paris Gare de l'Est, arriving in Moscow in time for Saturday breakfast. Ultra-modern First Class sleepers offer dual bunks, lockable doors, wash basins and water service – there are even private showers in the pricier VIP section. Better still, Europe's second-longest train route (Moscow-Nice is a shade lengthier) offers a taste



SHOOTING STAR
On board Zimbabwe's Stimela Star, above; Sweden's Inlandsbanan, above left

of the five nations it passes through. Expect German beers, a Polish buffet car from the old Soviet Border at Belarus.
 ☐Russian Railways (007 495 505 6325; russianrailways.com) offers one-way tickets in a First Class sleeper for around £400.

TOURS

27 INLANDSBANAN SWEDEN

Sweden's Inlandsbanan traverses what is described as the continent's last wilderness of untouched forests and lakes. The 663-mile (1,067km) railway from Mora to Gallivare links isolated Lapland settlements with a variety of attractions. Most are either within walking distance of stations or linked to the railway by bus and include open-air museums, 19th-century lake steamers and Sami villages.
 ☐Discover Inlandsbanan (0046 771 53 53 53; inlandsbanan.se) offers a nine-night return tour from Mora from £777 per person.

28 FLYING SCOTSMAN BRITAIN

It may be three years since the nation's favourite locomotive re-emerged from a £4.2 million refurb, but the Flying Scotsman has lost none of its allure. Climb on board for the original London-Edinburgh routing as part of a special Highlands & Islands Explorer tour in May offered by Steam Dreams. Shorter trips around the Surrey Hills and between London and Salisbury are also confirmed. The locomotive will be on display at selected dates at the National Railway Museum in York.
 ☐See steamdreams.co.uk and railwaymuseum.org.uk

29 BORDEAUX, COGNAC AND THE LOIRE

Three nights in Bordeaux, reached by Eurostar and TGV, allows time to visit the World Heritage Site Old Town, the new wine museum and, with included car hire, the nearby vineyards of Médoc and St-Émilion. Three nights in Cognac for the city's medieval quarter and English Garden are followed by another three nights in the village of

Chenonceaux in the heart of the Loire Valley, home to excellent wines and Leonardo da Vinci – 2019 marks the 500th anniversary of his death, and of the construction of the beautiful Château de Chambord.
 ☐From £1,595pp with Planet Rail (01347 825292; planetrail.co.uk)

30 HABSBURG TRAIL CENTRAL EUROPE

This eight-night self-guided tour through Austria, Slovenia and Italy follows a coffee trade route developed to meet the demands of the early 18th-century coffee craze in the Habsburg Empire. Travelling by train between four cities with a common imperial past – Vienna, Graz, Ljubljana and Trieste – provides an introduction to the empire's magnificent architecture and art, ranging from Vienna's Hofburg Palace to the wonderfully preserved Old Town in Graz. Notes for walking tours and recommendations for coffee provided.
 ☐From £995pp with Intravel (01653 67000; intravel.co.uk). Includes rail travel between Vienna and Trieste, but excludes flights.

28 FLAVOURS OF TUSCANY

Ease the pace by taking the train to Italy as it celebrates a year of Slow Tourism. The tour takes the Eurostar to Paris and then a TGV for an overnight in Turin, before skirting the Tuscan coast to reach the base for six nights at the Relais dei Molini. Car hire is included so travellers can explore and taste local wines, visit thermal springs, have a cooking lesson in the charming walled city of Lucca and try cheese making outside the town of Volterra. Return is by plane from Pisa.
 ☐From £1,495 per person sharing with Planet Rail (01347 825292; planetrail.co.uk).

32 COLOMBO TO JAFFNA SRI LANKA

The railway link between Sri Lanka's two largest cities sliced through thick jungle in 1894, before being snipped by Civil War in the Eighties. For nearly three decades flora reconisled the tracks, along with the occasional elephant and crocodile. Now 10-hour

day trains, plus a night mail sleeper, rumble past the Indian Ocean from Colombo to Jaffna across two thirds of the Asian island nation. Once-off-limits, Jaffna is a base for birdwatching, kitesurfing and Tamil cuisine. Passengers on Lanka's lesser-travelled northern rail lines may hop off to visit elephant sanctuaries (at Habarana) and whalewatching hotspots (at Trincomalee).
 ☐Yonder (0208 880 8585; yonder.co.uk) offers an eight-day trip around Sri Lanka, including the Colombo to Jaffna train, with a stay at Ulagalla Resort, from £1,895pp.

33 MADARAKA EXPRESS KENYA

The new standard-gauge railway provides the link between the coast and Amboseli and Tsavo West national parks for 3½ days of game drives. The Maasai-inspired Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge has majestic views of Kilimanjaro, and the Kilgumi Serena Safari Lodge has been designed to blend into the rugged savannah and overlooks a waterhole visited daily by herds of elephant and buffalo. The four nights in the lodges are flanked by a night in Mombasa.
 ☐The Madaraka Express costs from £2,476pp through Kuoni (0800 144 8181; kuoni.co.uk).

36 TANGIER TO MARRAKECH

Forget the Marrakech Express. The hippy train that Crosby, Stills and Nash sang about riding through Morocco has been usurped by Africa's first high-speed rail line, which connects Tangier with Casablanca in just two hours. The French-built TGV was launched in late

34 GRAND TOUR SCOTLAND

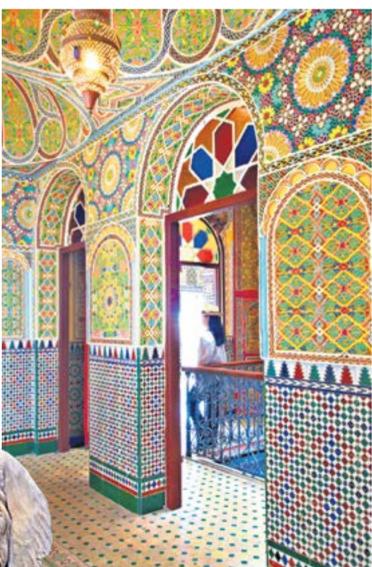
This nine-night tour by train begins in Edinburgh and takes in some of Scotland's most celebrated castles and scenic journeys. Among the places visited are the Royal Yacht Britannia, the castles of Stirling, Dunvegan, Armadale, Eilean Donan and Glamis and the Glen Ord Distillery. The most dramatic part of the West Highland line between Crianlarich and Fort William is followed by the Jacobite steam train on to Mallaig, crossing the famous Glenfinnan Viaduct, featured in four of the *Harry Potter* films.
 ☐From £2,495pp with Great Rail Journeys (01904 521936; greatrail.com).

35 HIGHLIGHTS OF POLAND

Polish rolling stock is some of Europe's most modern. The fleet of Pendolinos offer top-notch dining cars, plus free drinks in both first and second class. Rail Discoveries' newest tour offers high-speed transport between every top sight including the Unesco city of Krakow and baroque gem Wroclaw. Another highlight is the Wieliczka Salt Mine, where miners sculpted crystalline chapels deep underground during the socialist era. The tour also leaves the rails for a river cruise on the Oder past Habsburg castles.
 ☐Rail Discoveries (01904 734939; raildiscoveries.com) offers the all-inclusive nine-night trip departing through spring and autumn 2019 from £1,195, including flights.

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A NIGHT ON THE TILES
Inside Tangier's Continental Hotel, above; and a pair of elephants in Amboseli, Kenya, left

2018. Panoramic windows frame medinas and forests that rise into the Rif Mountains, while a buffet car serves thé à la menthe. Great Rail Journeys' tour from London St Pancras blasts through France and Spain in first class, before riding the new Moroccan TGV and the old High Atlas railway lines to Fes and Marrakech.
 ☐Great Rail Journeys (01904 527180; greatrail.com) offers the 15-night Magnificent Morocco & Moorish Spain tour from £2,995pp, including meals and a flight home from Marrakech to London.

37 CASTLES OF TRANSYLVANIA

This new tour starts as it means to go on: cocooned in the historic luxury of Istanbul's Pera Palace Hotel, where Agatha Christie wrote *Murder on the Orient Express*. From here, the Golden Eagle Danube Express makes a stately dash through European Turkey towards the ancient Bulgarian capital of Veliko Tarnovo, via the lofty Shipka Pass. Country number three is Romania for the beautiful town of Sighisoara – and Bran Castle, home of the infamous vampire-count. The Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace Budapest is the ultimate stop on the seven-night tour, where there's time to visit an Ottoman-era bath before the flight home.
 ☐Golden Eagle (0161 928 9410; goldeneagleluxurytrains.com) offers Castles of Transylvania from £4,395 including four nights on the Golden Eagle Danube Express, all meals and drinks, plus five-star hotels stays. Departs June 2019.

38 HIGH-SPEED ART JAPAN

Rugby fans out for the World Cup this autumn may want to change the pace a bit with a ride on what is almost certainly the fastest-moving art gallery in the world, the Genbi Shinkansen (bullet train) running between Echigo-Yuzawa and Niigata on the island of Honshu. Carriages are dedicated to different art forms with paintings, photographs and carriage decor depicting traditional themes such as harvests and festivals in a modern and vivid way. In the second coach, the wall is filled with mirrors, giving scope for self-reflection as the real landscape shoots by outside.
 ☐Inside Japan (0117 370 9751; insidejapan.com) can tailor trips to include a ride on the Genbi Shinkansen before, during or after the Rugby World Cup.

41 PERSIA AND THE SILK ROAD

This year luxury train operator Golden Eagle celebrates 30 years in business with a double first. Brand-new Imperial Suites (read king-size beds and underfloor heating) are used on a completely new route through Persia and the Silk Road (modern-day Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). The cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva reek of dastardly emirs and Great Game mystique. Later the Golden Eagle enters the Persian Empire to visit

technology, the route whisks passengers from kimchi-making classes in the capital to fish markets on the Sea of Japan. The nine-day itinerary includes a rare trip to the Korean Peninsula's demilitarised zone. Visitors might struggle to spot Kim Jong-un, but they can peek into the hermit kingdom using high-power binoculars. Combiable with GRJ's Grand Tour of China.
 ☐Great Rail Journeys (01904 527180; greatrail.com) runs its new South Korea tour from March to October 2020, from £2,795pp.

EPICS

40 MOSCOW TO BEIJING

Riding the traditional Trans-Siberian, where you're stuck in a carriage for six nights longing to explore the cathedrals, lakes and taiga tempting from your window, can be galling. That makes Regent's slow tour through Siberia on the Trans-Mongolian an inspired choice. After three days in Moscow it's overnight to Yekaterinburg for wooden churches, birth forests and the bloody history of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. Three more days of rail travel brings passengers to Irkutsk, a Eurasian east and base for Lake Baikal. Then it's back on the rails for stops and tours in Ulaanbaatar and Beijing.
 ☐Regent (0117 321 0167; regent-holidays.co.uk) operates the 16-night tour from £2,740, including a flight home from Beijing.

39 SEOUL TO THE SEA SOUTH KOREA

For those really wanting to plan ahead, book this year for Great Rail Journeys' first foray into South Korea in 2020. Using the whizz-bang Seoul to Busan high-speed train as its backbone and developed using French TGV

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seldom-seen sights like the newly inscribed Unesco city of Yazd, plus the eerie Shadad Desert, alongside must-sees Shiraz and Isfahan.

□ **Golden Eagle (0161 928 9410; goldeneagleluxurytrains.com)** operates the 15-night trip from £15,195, departing October 2019. Price includes quality meals and fine wines (which are locked away while touring the Islamic Republic of Iran).

42 CHEPE EXPRESS MEXICO

The Chihuahua-Pacific Railway, also known as El Chepe, runs 418 miles (673km) from Chihuahua to Los Mochis on the Sea of Cortez. As well as the main regional train, a six-coach Chepe Express, with a bar and viewing terrace, does a shorter nine-hour trip (a little above 217 miles/350km), focusing on the Copper Canyon – the northern valley of the Rio Urique, a cold, shadowy 6,560ft deep. Winding through dramatic gorges, the track passes through 86 tunnels and crosses 37 bridges, though you only get a glimpse of the canyon.

□ **The shorter trip costs from MX\$3,743 (£150) one way; the full trip is 15½ hours (chepe.com.mx/trenes/horarios-tarifas).**

43 CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR US

In the year that America celebrates the 150th anniversary of the First Transcontinental Railroad, which connected east with west, lovers of epic train journeys will be drawn to the California Zephyr, the 2,438-mile (3,924km) ride between Chicago and Emeryville/San Francisco via Denver and Salt Lake City. The journey, which takes just under 52 hours, covers the original Transcontinental Railroad

route from Sacramento to Winnemucca, Nevada.

□ **For how to book the Amtrak-operated California Zephyr and other US coast-to-coast rail services, see seat61.com.**

44 CANADIAN TOUR – TAKE YOUR PICK

The trouble with epic journeys by rail across Canada is which to choose – the Canadian that goes all the way from Toronto to Vancouver, or the Rocky Mountaineer, which offers a number of shorter trips into the mountains from its base in Vancouver. Can't decide? Cox & Kings has a new private tour including trips on both trains. a tour of Niagara Falls, a scenic tour of Banff and an excursion on Athabasca glacier.

□ **Cox & Kings (0203 642 0861; coxandkings.co.uk)** offers the 12-night Vancouver to Toronto by Rail from £3,495pp with three nights aboard The Canadian, nine nights' accommodation with breakfast daily and SilverLeaf service aboard Rocky Mountaineer.

45 GREAT SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA

To Australia's two luxury all-inclusive tourist trains, the Indian Pacific and the Ghan, will this year be added a third, the Great Southern, which will travel between Brisbane and Adelaide from December. The choice of direction determines the off-train excursions and number of nights on board. The two-night northbound option departs from Adelaide



GETTY IMAGES



and travels through the rugged mountain ranges of the Grampians, stops in the country's capital of Canberra and, skirting Sydney, reaches the Pacific Ocean in New South Wales for a "Beachside Experience" before arrival in Brisbane. Southbound trains from Brisbane

enjoy a late afternoon run beside the sea along the New South Wales coast, a tour of Hunter Valley vineyards and an excursion along the Great Ocean Road.

□ **From £1,312 (0061 8 8213 4401; greatsouthernrail.com.au).**

46 THE GHAN AUSTRALIA

The train taking its name from the historic camelers of northern Australia – supposedly from Afghanistan though actually from north-west India – runs the 1,851 miles (2,979km) from Adelaide through the country's "red centre" to Alice Springs and Darwin. The year-round two-night option offers stops at Katherine for a boat ride between the towering limestone walls of the crocodile-populated Nitmiluk Gorge and at Alice Springs. The seasonal

HORSING AROUND Naadam Festival in Mongolia, main; the Ghan in Australia, above

southbound-only three-night tour provides the opportunity for a day at the underground opal-mining town of Coober Pedy.

□ **From £1,196 (0061 8 8213 4401; greatsouthernrail.com.au).**

47 FERROCARRIL CENTRAL PERU

An improbable feat of Victorian engineering that blasted through mountains, clung to precipices and spanned gut-churning gorges in the Peruvian Andes to climb higher than any standard-gauge railway in the world. In an epic 200-mile (320km) journey from Lima to the mountain market town of Huancayo it negotiates tunnels, bridges and zigzag sections to a pass 15,681ft above sea level. Staff include a nurse with oxygen.

□ **Journey Latin America offers a three-day package for £746pp including return train ticket from Lima, accommodation and trips to mountain villages (020 8600 1881; journeylatinamerica.co.uk).**

48 INTERRAIL EUROPE

An epic, a series of short hops, a mix of night trains and day trains: the InterRail is what you make it. Best not to keep moving all the time (under-26s do this to sleep on trains and save on hostels) and it pays to choose a loop and a region or two at most. Bear in mind that sleepers and some fast trains incur surcharges. Swiss trains are the most efficient. Spain's AVEs and Alvias are super-fast. Slower eastern-rolling stock still rocks with that pleasant train movement. A life-enhancer at any stage in life, and

a celebration of Europe's rail network, glorious stations and common passions and bonds.

□ **Passes range from five days in 15 to a month's continuous travel and cost from €208 to €510 (interrail.eu/en).**

49 TIGER EXPRESS SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Like the endangered species itself, the Tiger Express – a train journey on Belmond's languorously luxurious Eastern & Oriental Express, will be a rare beast to behold in 2019.

The plan is to run a special version of the signature Singapore to Bangkok journey, departing on September 8. The aim, planned in conjunction with the charity Save Wild Tigers, will be to raise awareness of the plight of (and funds to help preserve) these magnificent creatures. The Chinese artist Jacky Tsai will be adding a tiger motif to two of the exteriors of the train's carriages and the journey will pass through the heart of the historic tiger territories in Malaysia and Thailand.

□ **To express interest, contact Belmond directly (0845 077 2222; belmond.com).**

50 VIVEK EXPRESS INDIA

Indian train journeys come no more epic than a trip on the Vivek Express. It travels more than 2,600 miles (4,185km) from the tea-planting town of Dibrugarh in Assam, in the far north-east (almost on the Burmese border), to Kanyakumari in the far south, where thousands gather every day to watch the sun rise. The journey starts on Saturday night and ends the following Wednesday morning. On the way the train makes 56 stops and gives a slowly unfolding panorama of the changing landscapes of eastern India. It costs around £45 in Second Class AC compartments (bedding is provided). Take a toothbrush.

□ **For details on prices and how to book, see seat61.com**

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SACRED MOSCOW The beautiful Kazan Cathedral on Red Square in Moscow, left