

# AAA TRAVELER

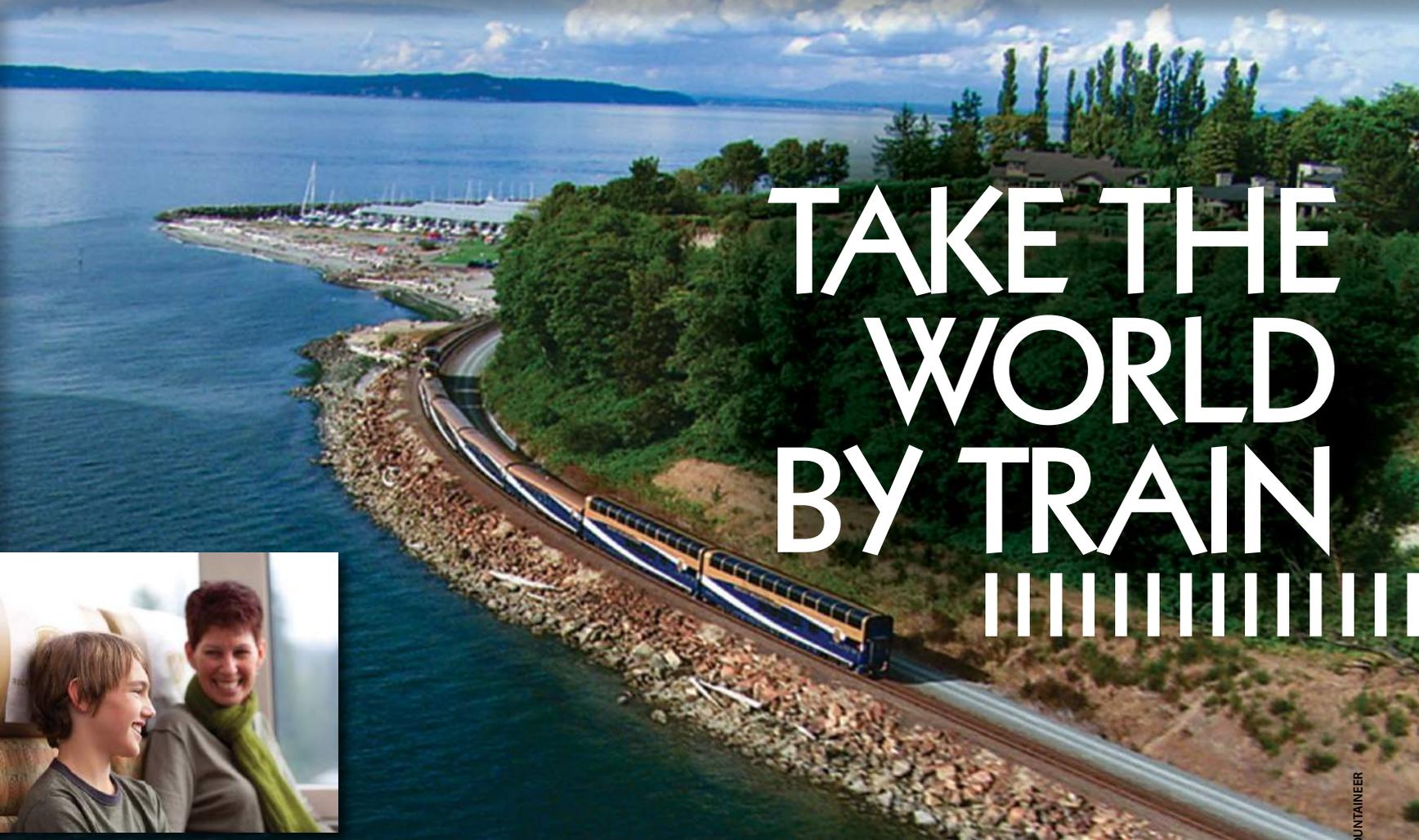
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## *Worldwise*

# TAKE THE WORLD BY TRAIN

*Experience vast continents,  
stunning mountain vistas  
and cultural diversity  
through train travel.*

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# TAKE THE WORLD BY TRAIN



*Experience vast continents, stunning mountain vistas and cultural diversity through train travel. Here are some of the world's finest journeys.*

Coastal Passage route on Rocky Mountaineer

By Deborah R. Huso

## ROCKY MOUNTAINEER: VANCOUVER TO BANFF

Rocky Mountaineer's First Passage to the West journey has been rated consistently among the best train trips in the world, and there is good reason for that status. It's arguably the easiest way to experience the Canadian Rockies in style. From Vancouver, Rocky Mountaineer crosses the varied landscape of British Columbia, passing through the Coast and Cascade Mountains and Fraser Canyon.

One of the highlights of the trip involves the train's journey into the Canadian Rockies of Alberta, climbing over Rogers Pass and winding through the Spiral Tunnels. Passengers spend two nights in Banff and can tour the area's natural wonders, including the Hoodoos, which are otherworldly limestone pinnacles rising above the Bow River.

Travelers can then enjoy overnight at The Fairmont Chateau at Lake Louise. This is possibly one of the most stunning settings in the world, with the fairytale hotel overlooking the bright blue glacial waters of Lake Louise, which form a mirror for the surrounding snow-streaked peaks. While here, travelers have the freedom to hike, canoe on the lake, or enjoy the amenities of The Fairmont, which include an indoor heated pool and nearly two dozen hotel shops selling everything from handmade chocolates to Native American art.

After Lake Louise, more breathtaking scenery awaits as passengers receive a full-day tour of Banff and Jasper National Parks along the Icefields Parkway. Bighorn sheep are often spotted along the roadway, and visitors will get to see the Columbia Icefield, one of the largest glaciers south of the Arctic Circle.



## THE EASTERN AND ORIENTAL EXPRESS: SINGAPORE TO BANGKOK

Everything you've seen in the movies about The Orient Express is true, at least when it comes to luxury. On this trip, passengers journey for four days from Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, to the island city-state of Singapore off the southern coast of Malaysia through 1,255 miles of scenery that includes the jagged limestone peaks of Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park's Tenasserim Hills and the rice paddies of Hua Hin.

Part of the journey travels the Thai-Burma Railway built by Allied POWs in World War II and made famous in the novel and movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.

Expect to be spoiled on this trip. The four-day journey gives passengers plenty of time to partake of the train's three dining cars, two bars and library and to benefit from the services of the attentive staff, which includes a pianist and

a reflexologist. Travelers also experience their own private compartments decorated with wide landscape-framing windows, embroidered curtains and Thai carpets. Passengers aboard The Eastern & Orient Express, however, should leave their laptops at home—blissfully, the train has no Wi-Fi.

Among the stops the E&O makes along the journey are a pause at the Kwai River Bridge, a new edifice that has nothing to do with the one that was once part of the infamous Death Railway of World War II, although you can learn about the trials of American POWs here at the Death Railway Museum and Research Centre.

Other excursions include tours of the Ubudiah Mosque, Royal Museum and Sultan Shah Gallery in Kuala Kangsar as well as the opportunity to explore the Moorish railway station at Kuala Lumpur. But this trip is really about sitting back, experiencing the scenery, and living in the luxurious now.

Ubudiah Mosque, Perak, Malaysia



## TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY: VLADIVOSTOK TO ST. PETERSBURG

Veteran travelers looking for the train trip of a lifetime should consider what is known as the world's longest rail journey—almost 6,000 miles across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railway from Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan to St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea. This trip traverses eight time zones during the two-week journey and is an ideal way to see the interior of Russia, which is not well served by international flights.

The journey begins in the small city of Vladivostok, which can be challenging to access. Travelers have two options—car ferry from Japan or domestic flight from a larger Russian city. From here, riders take an incredible journey across Siberia alongside and then through the Yablonoi Mountains to Ulan-Uday on Lake Baikal, the largest freshwater lake on earth. It is also, strangely enough, home to inland seals. Here the architectural influence of the Mongolian cultures that were conquered by the Russians is evident, and the massive sculptured head of Lenin in City Square looks strangely out of place. This area of Russia is also rich with Buddhist influences, and just outside Ulan-Uday is Ivolginsk Datsan, a restored Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

From here, travelers experience a journey across the vast West Siberian Plain, crossing the River Ob. At Ekaterinburg, named in honor of Peter the Great's third wife, the train arrives at the entrance to the Ural Mountains, which straddle the border between Europe and Asia. It was in this third largest of Russia's cities that Tsar Nicholas II and his entire family were murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918. The family's remains were only unearthed here two years ago.

After a week of journeying across Siberia and the Russian interior, travelers arrive in the capital city of Moscow, Europe's second largest city after London. Here passengers disembark for a two-day, two-night visit, giving them time to visit the Kremlin, the Novodevichy Convent, Red Square and the Bolshoi Ballet.

The final leg of this trans-Russian journey ends in St. Petersburg, the nation's imperial capital city, which was built under orders of Peter the Great. The city's sumptuous architecture is a major draw to tourists, and travelers aboard the Trans-Siberian Railway will have two days to explore the Peter & Paul Fortress and its cathedral, which holds the Tombs of the Tsars. St. Petersburg also has hundreds of palaces that once belonged to the Russian nobility.



Lake Baikal, Russia

# QUICK TIPS FOR TRAIN TRAVEL

- Pack light. While you can check your baggage on the train, keep a small bag with your toiletries and a change of clothes with you.
- Be sure to bring a camera, books, magazines or tablet, and slippers.
- Bring an address book and journal—you will probably make new friends, many of them from foreign countries, while traveling by train.
- If you're inclined, bring your laptop. Many trains have power outlets and Wi-Fi access at certain stops.
- Make sure to have a small amount of currency for the country in which you are traveling in case you want to purchase food, drinks or souvenirs from local vendors at stops.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF ROCKY MOUNTAINEER