

Traveling by Train A Different Way to See the Countryside

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Traveling by train is now a novel way of seeing the countryside that is reminiscent of a bygone era. Back at the beginning of the century, train travel was the most popular way of seeing the country, but in our age of automobiles and airplanes not many people ride the train as they used to. If you are one of the fortunate ones that does ride the train, you have discovered the best way to enjoy the scenic beauty of the nation.

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Imagine chugging along at 60 miles per hour in a plush coach car with padded seats, a cold drink in your hand and a comfortable pillow beneath your head. Imagine watching the cows in their meadows as you pass by, while the waiter brings you another mint julep. You can relax knowing that you'll travel in comfort to your next stop, and then have lots of time to sightsee. In the US, Amtrak provides train service to most major cities. Using Amtrak allows a passenger to sleep, read or enjoy the scenery and arrive at their destination still fresh. In the US you can go from New York to California, from sea to shining sea, and all points in between. You can travel in comfort, adding new cities and regions to your been there, done that list, like Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Nashville, St. Louis, Kansas City, Dallas, New Orleans, Denver, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Seattle, and San Francisco.

When visiting Europe, you'll find the train system is even more extensive. A favorite vacation method in Europe is to buy a Eurorail pass, or Britrail if traveling in the UK. A Eurorail pass gives you unlimited travel on trains throughout all of Europe, and many college age travellers fill up a backpack with a few duds and supplies, buy a Eurorail pass and hit the track. Imagine hopping on the train to Paris, passing the day visiting the Eiffel tower, the Louvre and the Champs d'Elysee and then in the evening, jumping on the train and sleeping until you arrive at your next point of interest. With luck and the right train, you can end up in the South of France, possibly Nice, or St. Tropez or San Rafael. Simply detrain, carry your backpack to the beach, claim a spot of sand, and dive into the refreshing water of the Mediterranean Sea. You are on the famous French Riviera, where people pay thousands of dollars a week for vacation spots, but you've got a little patch of sand to sleep on for nothing and a train to jump on when you get wanderlust again. You can swim or windsurf or just laze in the sun. Don't forget your suntan lotion.

When you're ready for a change of scenery, hop the train again with your Eurorail pass and hit Amsterdam, the famous Dutch city. Treat yourself to some of the reknowned Dutch croquettes and French fries with mayonnaise on the side, and enjoy a walking tour of the city. You'll pass the famous Anne Frank house, and the Heineken brewery. A tour of each will be worthwhile. Then explore the famous museums, like the Reiksmuseum, and the Vincent Van Gogh. After a few days in Amsterdam, hit the train again and cross the border into Germany, if possible down to the southern part, in Bavaria. Visit beautiful Munich. See the Olympic Village and if you have planned well, and have come at the right time of year, get in on a famous Bavarian beer fest. The most well known is Oktoberfest, but there are many small fests celebrated at various times of the year. Try one, and see why so many people love Germany. Take the train south to Augsburg and stroll through a city named after the Roman emperor Augustus, with narrow brick streets and welcoming people. Go a little further south to Garmish Partenkirchen and take in the ski slopes in the winter, or go backpacking and hiking in warmer weather. Germany has something for every taste.

Traveling by train promises a unique vacation, whether through America or Europe, that no other form of transportation can equal. You are provided with all the comforts of home in your train car, full meals served whenever you want in the dining car, great people to get to know, other cultures to absorb and most important, someone else will be driving. Try train travel for the most hassle free vacation ever.