

MAKE TRACKS

FROM STEAM TRAINS THAT PUFF THROUGH THE HIMALAYAS TO BULLET TRAINS THAT SHOOT BETWEEN ANCIENT SITES AND COSMOPOLITAN CITIES, RAIL TRAVEL IN ASIA OFFERS EPIC ADVENTURES.

TRAIN TO THE TAJ

Forget all those images you've seen of trains in India laden with commuters squatting on the roof. The reality of the rail network on the subcontinent paints a different picture with reserved seating in air-conditioned berths on express trains. And to experience the hubbub of a station here is one of the country's most authentic pleasures. But how to enjoy this vital part of the nation's infrastructure? Take the scenic train from historic Jhansi to Agra and immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of local life as you make your way to the magnificent marble mausoleum of the Taj Mahal.

SPEEDING TO SHRINES

Japan's iconic bullet trains – known as 'shinkansen' – are an everyday part of life for the Japanese. But for tourists, a journey aboard is as essential as visiting the shrines of Kyoto. Speaking of Kyoto, you can soak in a traditional hot-springs bath in the seaside resort of Atami, and then be in the city known for its Geisha district and sake-tastings in just over two hours. The trains are clean, comfortable and ultra-efficient, with late departures and arrivals marked in seconds. The local cuisine can best be enjoyed by buying an ekiben box at the station before you board.



BULLET TRAIN, JAPAN

KANDY, SRI LANKA



TAKE ME THERE

Spirit of India

13 days from **£2699**

Departing Feb to Nov 2020

Ref: SLIND

Japan Revealed

11 days from **£5439**

Departing Apr to Oct 2020

Ref: SLJPN

Sri Lanka - Pearl of the Indian Ocean

14 days from **£3399**

Departing Feb to Nov 2020

Ref: SLSRL

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TAKE ME THERE

Delhi to Darjeeling

10 days from **£2799**
Departing Apr to Oct 2020
Ref: SLIDAR

Inspirational China

12 days from **£3099**
Departing Apr to Nov 2020
Ref: SLCHI

Must see

The toy trains of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway are no ordinary means of transportation.

SHOOT BACK TO THE PAST

China is a land of contrasts, with ancient sites linked by trains so fast and futuristic they take your breath away. The high-speed train from Beijing to Xian travels at speeds of almost 200 mph as it passes Mount Huashan, home to a 2nd century BC Tao temple. It's hard to imagine the daredevil hikes the mountain offers, but you'll soon be in Xian, where you can watch a show from the days of the Tang Dynasty. The high-speed train onwards to Chengdu has cut the journey time to the 'City of Leisure' dramatically, providing much faster access to the adorable pandas of the city's breeding centre.

TRAVEL TO COOLER CLIMATES

Few trains can claim UNESCO World Heritage status, but the toy trains of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway are no ordinary means of transportation. Their bold engineering solved many of the problems associated with getting a train across a mountain, and they provided easier access to the cooler climate of the Darjeeling hill station for the British to reach their summer hideaways. On route to Ghoom, the highest railway station in India, the tiny train chugs over hundreds of bridges and around even more bends. Enjoy scenic views of the tea gardens and marvel at the spectacular scenery.

TIME FOR TEA

Sri Lanka might be a tiny country compared to neighbouring India, but that doesn't mean epic train journeys aren't possible here. Depart from culture-rich Kandy on a train that snakes over beautiful hills en route to Nanu Oya, gateway to the tea capital of Nuwara Eliya. Almost every slope is covered with thick bushes that produce some of the finest tea in the land. Keep a look out for tea pickers wearing colourful saris popping their heads over carpets of green leaves. Hawkers will climb aboard at every stop and try to sell you tasty treats, while a refreshing cuppa at a tea plantation awaits on arrival in Nuwara Eliya.

DARJEELING RAILWAY, INDIA

