

# Rail Travel Outlook

Winter 2015

Welcome to the 2015 Rail Travel Outlook from Vacations By Rail -- a special issue that also commemorates our 10th anniversary. It has been a privilege to create classic rail vacation experiences for travelers for the past decade and in doing this, we have built a company that is now the most comprehensive provider of global rail travel and tours. We have helped travelers plan trips to classic USA destinations and national parks onboard legendary trains like the *California Zephyr*, *Empire Builder*, and *Coast Starlight*, created trans continental Canadian vacations with renowned trains including the *Rocky Mountaineer*, and VIA Rail's *Canadian* and *Ocean*, arranged rail journeys across Europe utilizing local, regional, high-speed and luxury trains and trips that venture into Asia aboard the *Trans-Siberian Express*. And this is just the beginning!

At Vacations By Rail, we believe that rail is the classic way to travel. No other vacation-style can provide the elegance and romance of the rails or the sense of timeless experience as travelers lose themselves in the scenery, wildlife and real life that passes by on a train journey.

We pride ourselves in not only the comprehensive number and variety of destinations we serve, but also in our unique ability to source and partner with a wide variety of rail providers around the world. This gives us an excellent perspective on emerging issues and trends in the rail industry, and enables us to be an objective and trusted source for travelers.

Inside this issue of the 2015 Vacations By Rail Travel Outlook, we'll examine all things "classic" about rail travel. You will find:

- Insights into the best booking windows for the greatest value for some of our most popular vacations
- Vacations By Rail customer feedback on classic train routes and the most desired bucket list vacations
- New rail routes launched in 2014/15
- A look back at how rail travel has evolved
- A customer interview showcasing the benefits of a rail vacation

Now is the time to start thinking about your 2015 rail vacation and we hope our 2015 Rail Travel Outlook will inspire you to start planning one today. We'd love to help you book your next vacation and, we hope to hear your feedback on this issue and suggestions for content you'd like to read in future Rail Travel Outlooks. Please feel free to contact us at: [info@vacationsbyrail.com](mailto:info@vacationsbyrail.com)

Happy travels by rail!

Best,



Todd Powell  
CEO and Co-Founder  
Vacations By Rail

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## Vacations By Rail

309 W. Washington Street  
Suite 450  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
[www.vacationsbyrail.com](http://www.vacationsbyrail.com)  
1-877-929-7245

## Best Booking Windows for Global Train Vacations

As is the case with many thoughtful purchases, booking a rail vacation calls for a bit of research, a fair amount of planning, and securing your reservations at the ideal time.

September to December is the time period when travelers will find the very best promotions for the following year's travel. Early Booking Bonuses during this time period offer the greatest savings in nearly every travel category.

### Typical monetary and added value savings on 2015 travel purchased from September to December 2014:

- Up to \$1675 per couple on Europe train vacations
- Up to \$1200 per couple on Canada train vacations
- Up to \$800 per couple on South America train vacations
- Up to \$500 per couple on USA train vacations
- Up to \$400 per couple on Asia train vacations

While seasonal savings and promotions offering upwards of \$600 per couple in savings are available from January through July, the overall value of rail travel promotions—either in monetary savings or through added value—diminish the shorter the booking window becomes, and the number of qualifying vacations are slimmer.

### Traveler Savings Tip

Travelers can take advantage of additional savings throughout the year with evergreen travel offers, like senior discounts of up to 15% on the rail portion of a vacation package or AARP member benefit savings—in this case, an additional 5% savings (an average of \$175 per member) off the base package price of a rail vacation booked through Vacations By Rail, AARP's preferred rail provider.

In addition to cost savings, travelers should be aware of the best booking window for availability, especially for those vacations that are seasonal in nature or offer limited departure dates. In many instances, the suggested booking window to secure the best availability coincides with the optimum savings window.

### North America Train Vacations

Independent vacations within the USA and Canada should be booked **up to 11 months in advance of travel**. This ensures the best availability including private sleeping accommodations onboard the train, which become available for sale 11 months prior to departure. Travelers electing to book even earlier and who wish to take a private sleeping accommodation can place their request at time of booking and it will be confirmed once space becomes available.

*Sample promotion:* Receive up to \$1200 (CAD) in added value on qualifying vacations onboard the *Rocky Mountaineer*. Added value credit can be used to customize vacations with additional hotel nights, sightseeing, meals, transfers and more.

The recommended booking window for escorted train tours and vacations to special events like the annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta or Calgary Stampede is **six to 15 months before departure** to ensure availability on desired departure dates. The exception is fall foliage tours. The best booking window for leaf-peepers is **five to 12 months prior to departure**. These rail vacations sell out year over year and due to the extraordinary seasonality, it is recommended travelers conduct their research well in advance to secure their first choice itinerary and departure date.

*Sample promotion:* \$500 per couple savings on select USA escorted train tours.

**Eight to 10 months before departure** is the best time to book a Rail-Cruise vacation beginning in the USA or Canada to destinations including Alaska's Inside Passage, Mexico, the Hawaiian Islands, the Panama Canal, the Caribbean, and New England and Atlantic Canada. This ensures cabin availability on both long-distance trains and ships.

*Sample promotion:* Free pre- or post-night hotel stay or free connecting rail on USA and Canada rail tours.

## **Vacations to Europe and Beyond**

Train vacations to Europe, South America, Asia, and the South Pacific should be booked **nine to 12 months in advance of departure**, with additional time added should a visa need to be secured.

*Sample promotion:* Save up to \$800 per couple on air-inclusive European rail vacations.

The exception is a European rail-river cruise vacation, with a recommended booking window of **12 to 16 months prior to departure**. Europe's river cruise vessels accommodate an intimate number of travelers. This combined with the popularity of this travel experience create high demand for these vacations, which have a tendency to sell out quickly.

*Sample promotion:* Save \$1300 per couple on select Europe river cruises.

## **Luxury Rail Journeys**

Like river cruises in Europe, luxury rail journeys around the world are intimate experiences and accommodate an exclusive number of guests. For instance, Europe's *Royal Scotsman* transports an elite 38 guests on each departure. The recommended booking window for any luxury rail vacation is **11 to 16 months prior to departure**.

*Sample promotion:* Complimentary pre- or post-night hotel on select rail journeys.

## New Trains and Rail Routes

The *Golden Eagle Danube Express* introduced service from Budapest, Hungary to Tehran, Iran by way of Istanbul in October 2014. This new rail service comes after Turkey completed the Marmarmay tunnel, providing a rail link under the Bosphorus Strait and effectively joining the continents of Europe and Asia. This link connects the railways of Central Europe, Turkey, and Iran utilizing a standard gauge rail line, allowing travelers to begin their journey in Europe and travel into Iran (or vice versa) without changing trains one or more times.

*Thello* will launch daily service between Marseille and Milan with intermediate stops in Nice, Monaco, and Genoa on December 14, 2014.

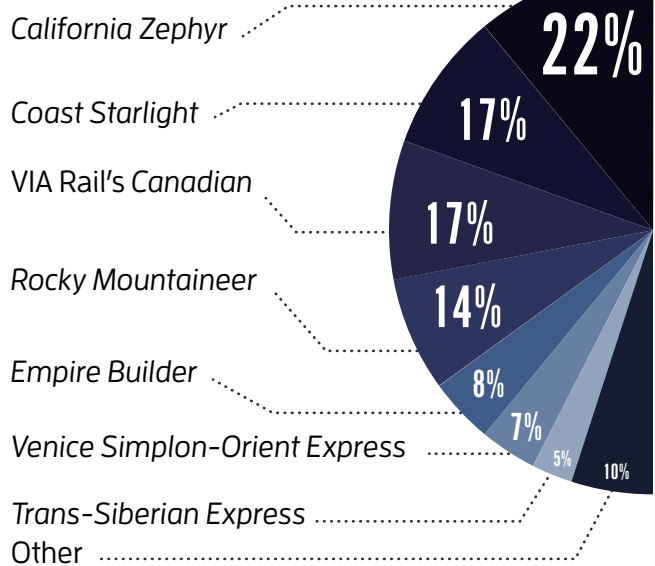
Amtrak roundtrip daily service between Chicago and Rockford is scheduled to return in late 2015. The rail link between these two cities has been defunct for more than 30 years.

*Eurostar* will add new service to Geneva via Lille beginning December 14, 2014. New UK to Provence service with stops in Lyon, Avignon and Marseille will launch in May 2015.

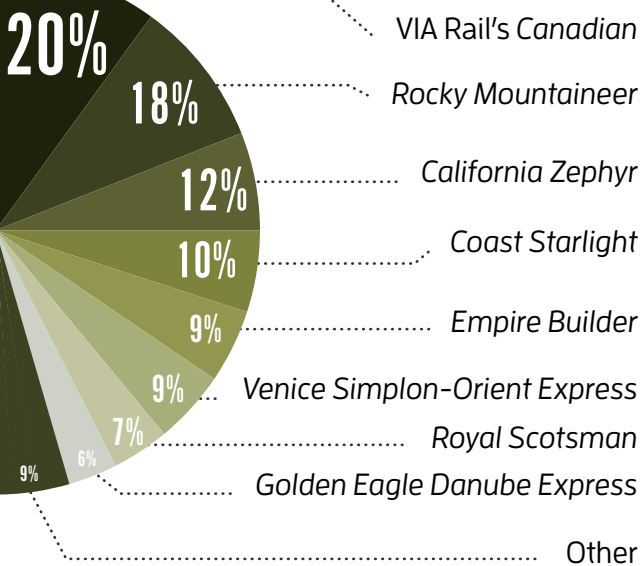
The newest generation of *Eurostar* train, the e320, will be introduced into service by the end of 2015. This new train will reach speeds of up to 320 km/hour.

Miami-Orlando train service is officially in the works. The privately-held rail line is expected to roll out service in two phases: the first leg, between Miami and West Palm Beach, is anticipated for 2016 and the second leg of service, between West Palm Beach and Orlando, in 2017. It is predicted that trains running along this route will reach speeds of up to 125 mph.

### TRAVELERS FAVORITE CLASSIC RAIL JOURNEYS



### TRAVELERS BUCKET LIST CLASSIC RAIL EXPERIENCE



Data collected from a Vacations By Rail customer survey conducted in October 2014.

# THE WORLD'S CLASSIC TRAINS



**A VIA Rail's Canadian** Toronto – Vancouver

**B Rocky Mountaineer** Canadian Rockies

**C Amtrak's California Zephyr** Chicago-  
Emeryville, CA

**D Amtrak's Empire Builder** Chicago to Seattle, WA

**E Amtrak's Coast Starlight** Los Angeles-Seattle,  
WA

**F Pike's Peak Cog Railway**, CO

**G Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad**  
Durango, CO

**H Cumbres & Toltec** Chama, NM

**I Cape Cod Central Railroad** Cape Cod, MA

**J Conway Scenic Railroad** Conway, NH

**K Mt. Washington Cog Railway** Meredith, NH

**L Royal Scotsman** Edinburgh and the Scottish  
Highlands

**M Venice Simplon-Orient Express** Venice to  
Paris

**N Trans-Siberian Express** Moscow-Vladivostok

**O Golden Eagle Danube Express** Budapest  
through Central Europe

**P Shangri-La Express** Alanshankou-Beijing

**Q The Ghan** Adelaide-Darwin

**R El Chepe** Copper Canyon, Mexico

**S Vistadome** Sacred Valley to Machu Picchu

**T Tren Crucero** Quito to Guayquil

**U Rovos Rail** Dar es Salaam to Capetown

**V Shongololo Express** Capetown to Soweto

## Perspective: Select Historic Trains & Rail Routes and Their Relevance Today

### Introduction

The early 20th century was the Golden Age of rail travel. Not only were trains the fastest way to reach your destination, they were also the most glamorous. Social, comfortable, and relaxing, traveling aboard a luxury train across Europe or a classic overnight train through the Rocky Mountains was a vacation in itself. However, as we developed into a fast-paced, “need-it-now” society, rail travel fell by the wayside in favor of more technically efficient air travel, thus putting the destination ahead of the journey.

Luckily, some people have remembered the value of the journey in their travels. Over the past few decades, historic rail lines have been restored all over the world. Trains like *the Orient Express* or *the Pikes Peak Cog Railway* are the next best thing to time travel, offering adventurous travelers a direct connection to the past as they are whisked through timeless scenery. In these meticulously restored rail cars, you’ll be able to take time to appreciate the beauty of the landscape, the comfort of your cabin, and the company of your fellow passengers. Riding a historic train lets you enjoy the romance of a bygone era of travel, all while discovering exciting new destinations.

### Trans-Siberian Railway

This is the great rail adventure. Completed in 1916, the Trans-Siberian rail journey stretches across Eurasia, providing routes from Moscow and St. Petersburg to Vladivostok. Taking this train across the vast expanse of Siberia is nothing short of an epic endeavor. En route, immerse yourself in a new culture in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia’s capital city. Visit Siberian cities like Khabarovsk and Irkutsk. See Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake on Earth, containing 20 percent of the world’s fresh water.

### Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

The *Orient Express* is one of the best known trains in



*Venice Simplon-Orient-Express*



*Pike’s Peak Cog Railway*



*Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad*

history. Thanks to Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the route has become synonymous with the intrigue and romance that defined rail travel's Golden Age. On the original train, you could travel across continental Europe from London to Istanbul. A vital link between the European and Asian continents, you could find adventurous spirits from all walks of life mingling in the bar car. The elegance of the *Orient-Express* is the stuff of legend. Today's *Venice Simplon-Orient Express* travels to many of the same destinations as its predecessor including some of the world's most romantic cities such as Paris, Budapest, and of course, Venice.

### **Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad**

What better way to see the West than on one of the trains that helped to win it? Operating between Colorado and New Mexico, this is the longest narrow gauge steam railway in North America and an authentic steam-operated railroad. The history of this train dates back to 1880, when its route through tunnels, mountains, and gorges was a feat of engineering. Today, you can ride the historic train through some of the most beautiful scenery in the American West, from the San Juan Mountains to the Conejos Valley.

### **Manitou & Pikes Peak Cog Railway**

Since 1889, visitors to Pikes Peak – Colorado's iconic mountain – have traveled to the summit on the *Pikes Peak Cog Railway*. Ascending 14,115, the train's route is unbelievably scenic, and remains the world's highest cog railroad. The railway runs through aspen and pine forests, past waterfalls, and up to the Pikes Peak's summit, whose views of 5 states inspired the lyrics to "America the Beautiful."

### **Rio Grande Scenic Railroad**

Including vintage diesel engines, live music in "City of New Orleans" Club Cars, and a journey through a historic mountain pass, the *Rio Grande Scenic Railroad* is an absolute delight. The route travels over the beautiful La Veta Pass and through miles of unparalleled Rocky Mountain.



VIA Rail's *Canadian*



Vancouver



Seattle Public Market

## Customer Interview with Diana Estabrook

### Vacations By Rail Clients, Diana and Ray Estabrook Embrace "Seeing The World Close Up"

Diana and Ray Estabrook were long-time cruisers, who also had a passion for trains. Ray has been a train buff since he was a kid and the couple would often incorporate some sort of train excursion into their annual cruise vacation. For example, they traveled across Panama via train on a Cunard excursion. Diana fell in love with train travel too as a result of these trips and she began traveling by train for business up and down the California coast.

Four years ago, for Diana's 70th birthday, the couple planned their first true rail vacation with Vacations By Rail: a trans continental *Canadian* journey. After this they were hooked, and for the past four years, the Estabrooks have planned one major rail vacation annually, including a 30-day rail trip across Canada and the USA for their 50th anniversary.

The anniversary vacation was truly a trip of a lifetime and included ten rail segments onboard classic trains like the *Coast Starlight* up the Pacific Coast, VIA Rail's *Canadian* from Vancouver to Toronto and the *Southwest Chief* across the southwestern United States. While many nights were spent in a comfortable sleeper cabin aboard a train, the Estabrooks also stayed in classic hotels such as The Fairmont Chateau Whistler, Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac, Westin Times Square and Westin Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Stops along the way featured Banff National Park, the Grand Canyon and city tours of destinations such as Toronto, Quebec and Seattle.

During their vacations, Diana loves to sit back and relax in their cabin and watch the scenery go by. She refers to the window as her "TV." While she is relaxing, "Ray runs up and down the train like a kid snapping photos out all of the windows," said Diana.

Another pleasure of rail vacations is the interesting people they meet along the way. Whether they are at



mealtime, at a wine and cheese tasting or in the Parlor car, Diana says they have met people from “all walks of life.”

However, their absolute favorite thing about traveling by train is “seeing the world up close,” says Diana. “When you cross a country at 35,000 feet, you just don’t see much. We love seeing people, animals, houses and factories along our journey.”

The most incredible sight they have seen occurred during their first trans Canada trip. Diana was relaxing in the Dome Car, crossing one of Canada’s great plains when she witnessed a cow drop her calf. She even saw the calf take its first steps. “This is a moment I will never forget!”

Diana and Ray love working with Vacations By Rail because they know every detail of their trip will be well planned. From hotel rooms along the way, down to taxi vouchers for their excursions, everything is handled. They also find the level of service provided by Vacations By Rail to be unparalleled. On their 50th Anniversary trip, every hotel they stayed in allowed them an early check-in and the proprietors wished them a happy anniversary upon arrival.

On the same trip, when the conductor failed to scan their tickets en route from Martinez to Seattle, Vacations By Rail reached out to them directly when they reached Seattle because they were concerned the train had left without them. Diana and Ray could not believe how closely Vacations By Rail was monitoring their trip to ensure it went well.

Next up for the Estabrooks, a Cunard cruise to Europe coupled with a rail vacation to explore the Continent.

In Diana’s opinion, “train travel is a fabulous way to see the world, and not everyone takes the time to do this.”

**“ WE LOVE  
SEEING PEOPLE,  
ANIMALS,  
HOUSES AND  
FACTORIES  
ALONG OUR  
JOURNEY ”**