

Australia: Exploring the History at Local Railway Stations

A popular tourist destination around the world, Australia boasts of countless attractions and sites including beautiful beaches, historical museums, amusement parks and zoos. There are also several 19th and 20th century railway stations that have stood over decades and today serve as important tourist attraction sites.

Normanton, Queensland

Constructed between 1888 and 1889, Normanton railway station was designed in an unusual yet unique manner, with the builders using hollow steel sleepers filled with mud to eliminate the need for ballast. This construction method also helped reduce damage to the line due to flooding during the wet seasons and this is why majority of the original sleepers are still in place.

Today, Normanton stands as a unique building located in an isolated railway system and is home to the "Gulflander", Australia's most unusual railway line. It has an attractive exposed stud frame, with an iron roof and verandah, which is attached to a stunning all-metal construction train. The route is considered to be more of an adventure than train ride and the train crew are experienced local guides who will explain all the points of interest to visitors.



Maryborough, Victoria

Erected in 1890 of red brick with a staggering 25-rooms and a massive clock tower, the Maryborough station boasts of one of the Southern hemisphere's longest platforms. Today it still hosts both freight and passenger services. Restoration and renovation works over the years have helped maintain the station in good condition, with the recent repairs carried out at the tower, clock, facade, roof, and guttering. Stage 2 of the repairs comprised of rendering, glazing, molding and slating to match the work carried out during the initial stage.

The historic Maryborough railways station has established itself as the Mecca for any train enthusiast around the world. In fact, many local, interstate and foreign tourists arrive here every day to wander the platform length and experience the splendor of the building's inside. The platform would make a perfect

stage for any event and lends its unique, charming atmosphere to all occasions. There are also a number of cafes and restaurants here where you can enjoy lunch or taste regional wines with friends.



Hay, New South Wales

Officially opened on 4 July 1882, the historical Hay railway station is built in an elegant Italianate style featuring bonded brick and a corrugated iron roof. The station served as the terminus of the Hay line off the Main South Line through Yanco, although it's currently closed. The last train ran in 1983 after 101 years of service while the goods service was closed a year later. However, the station is in a fairly good condition.

The central part of the building has two storeys. The platform's verandah columns are made of cast iron and there are waiting rooms, rest rooms and cloakrooms that have been incorporated into the building. You'll also find a single-storey station master's residence that was erected in 1882 with a verandah and elegant timber posts.

Today, the cast iron ridge decorated Hay railway station hosts various arts and community organizations. It is also home to the Hay Internment and Prisoners of War (POW) Camps Interpretive Centre which serves as a commemoration for the 6,600 German, Austrian, Italian, Japanese and Australian POWs. Their stories are told in the nearby Dunera Museum with collection exhibits, memorabilia, music and photographs.



Quorn, South Australia

Quorn railway station has an important role in the railway history of South Australia. Constructed in 1916 of stone and brick, the station was meant to serve as a railway junction for traffic travelling from north to south (Darwin to Adelaide) and from east to west (Sydney to Perth) across Australia and for the transportation of minerals from the Flinders Ranges. After several decades of service, the line was closed in the 1980s and is today maintained and run by the Pichi Richi Rail Preservation Society.

The society was formed in 1973 following the concerted efforts of a number of enthusiasts who campaigned for the retention of the section of the railway in Pichi Richi, an area between Quorn and Port Augusta. It now makes a huge contribution to tourist adventures and experiences in the Flinders Ranges by running the railway and rolling stock. This includes a stunning steam rail coach (nicknamed the little 'Coffee Pot') which operated between 1906 and 1931 carrying both goods and passengers between Quorn and other local towns.

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