

# TOP 5 WORLD'S EXTREME TRAIN JOURNEYS



Moving through jungles, deserts, steppes and endless plateaus, some train rides represent truly magnificent engineering work and unique travel experience. For these trains to be able to travel mountains, deserts, jungles and forests of extreme temperatures, it took thousands of workers and experts that overcame difficulties that seemed impossible. Tourism Review presents the best extreme train journeys around the world.

## The Longest Ride

When people think about the most extreme train journeys, one certainly comes to mind: The Trans-Siberian Express. The express travels 9,288 kilometers from Moscow to the far east of Russia, to the port of Vladivostok.

The railway opened in 1904 and it took thirteen years to complete, in which two additional branches were added: the Trans-Manchurian, which reaches Beijing; and the Trans-Mongolian, which also heads for the Chinese capital after going through Mongolia.

There is also a route that reaches Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, by crossing 10,214 kilometers, making it the longest commercial express in the world.

The entire journey on the Trans-Siberian takes a week. Besides watching the beautiful wilderness behind the windows, the luxury services onboard also make the trip an amazing experience.

## Through the Outback

Australia has one of the aridest deserts in the world, known as the Outback. The Ghan crosses this desert from north to south, going from Darwin to Adelaide on an almost 3,000-kilometer journey that takes five days.

The construction of the railway began in 1878, but it was not until 2004 when the route from the north to the south of Australia was completed. Nowadays, it can be very pleasant to board the Ghan train and look at the reddish desert, but the first journey of this train was actually made in 1929.

The name of this train service is a shortened version of its previous nickname, the Afghan Express, given after the Afghan camel drivers that made the same journey until the majestic railway was constructed.

## The Northernmost Train Ride

Back to Russia, but this time we'll be talking about the northernmost railway in the world: the Yamal Peninsula.

Opened in 2010, the Yamal Peninsula Express takes workers to Siberian gas plants, but tourists can also join on the 550-kilometer journey through the Obskaya-Bovanenkovo line.

While some may boast about going on a train that holds a world record, chances are it also holds the record for being the most boring train ride in the world. The view is amazing, but it's the same picture for 22 hours.

And if you are planning to get a drink, you would be disappointed: the Yamal is a dry train with an airport-style security, so alcohol is forbidden.

## **Traveling the Indian Jungle**

The Konkan Express, also known as the 'monsoon train', runs for 756 kilometers along the west coast of India, between Mumbai and Mangalore. Since 1920, a railway between those cities had been discussed, but the complex geography of the region introduced one obstacle after another.

It was inaugurated in 1998 after 20 years of work, which involved the construction of 2,116 bridges and 92 tunnels, making it the largest railway project in the history of Asia.

Tracing the line in the mountains on the edge of cliffs, cutting through the rugged jungle and raising rails in the middle of flooded terrain was an enormous effort of engineering in which those involved had to work under torrential rains, mud and water avalanches, infectious diseases and wild animals. In total, 74 workers died during the railway's construction.

## **Train to the Clouds**

In the far north of Argentina, you can find the "Train to the Clouds". This tourist train was opened in 1948 after two decades of work, and in 1972 it began being officially used by tourists as a heritage railway. After many pauses amid the economic crises that the country faced years ago, the train finally came back to life.

The train departs from Salta to San Antonio de Los Cobres, a small town that lives off the mining industry and is located at 3,775 meters above sea level.

Passing this town, the train reaches La Polvorilla viaduct, located at 4,200 meters above sea level, one of the most exciting points of the ride, when the train crosses this 64 meters high metal structure.

The engineering masterpiece of this railway line can be seen at departure and on the way back, consisting of 29 bridges, 21 tunnels, 13 viaducts, 2 spirals and 2 zigzags.

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