

SCENIC RAIL Journeys in Britain

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A sprinkle of snow on the summit of Black Combe, Cumbrian Coast Line

Scenic Rail Journeys in Britain

Looking for a rail journey with a difference? Something that's a million miles away from the peak-hour commute, crammed platforms and the annoying shrill of ringtones?

You're in luck. Because you need to look no further than Scenic Rail Britain, a collection of railways that have the feel-good factor built into their blood - together with journey's that really do stir the soul.

A small selection are featured within this booklet, ranging from a railway for all seasons which crosses the roof of England to the Far North line where the air is so fresh it feels like it's never been breathed before.

All these railways have one thing in common - the journey is more important than arriving.

But before you rush out to buy a ticket please remember the golden rules of rail travel:

- Study the up-to-date timetables carefully
- Allow plenty of time between connections
- Book well in advance
- Use your railcard

Happy travels!

Route

Glasgow to Mallaig

Journey Time

5hrs 15mins

Distance

160 miles



Just the names are inspiration a'plenty!

Lochs Long and Lomond, red deer on the remote fastness of Rannoch Moor, implacable Ben Nevis towering majestically over Fort William, the viaduct of Glenfinnan with its monument to those who died fighting for a lost Jacobite cause, the silver sands of Morar and – as if all this wasn't enough – spell-binding sunsets over the Hebridean islands of Rum and Eigg.

C'mon now – what more could a world-weary traveller ask for?

The West Highland line is a rail journey showing Scotland in all its flawless beauty, filled with those gasping catch-your-breath moments. Glorious scenery and untamed splendour greets at every curve on this world-famous railway. From the start of the adventure on a bustling Glasgow platform to an epic finish of rocky coast, turquoise seas and pearl-white sands, the passing landscape is a joy for heart and soul – making a rail journey you'll remember for the rest of your life.

If there's one railway in Scenic Rail Britain where every superlative in the dictionary hits the buffers it's this one! Travel its length once and you'll ache for a swift return.

A young wizard called Harry Potter found magic on this line as he rode the rails across the 21 arches of the Glenfinnan Viaduct on his way to Hogwarts. To discover your own special magic just get hold of a ticket!

WEST HIGHLAND LINE

Hogwarts bound via the Glenfinnan Viaduct



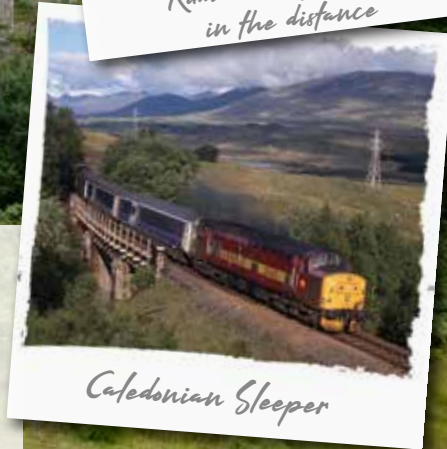
Something Special

Adding to the magic couldn't be easier!
Take a day-long Small Isles cruise from Mallaig
on board a CalMac ferry. Stupendous!

CALEDONIAN SLEEPER PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT TO JONATHAN ALLEN



*Rum and Egg Island
in the distance*



Caledonian Sleeper

Route

Settle to Carlisle

Journey Time

1hr 41mins

Distance

72 miles



A fellow traveller summed it all up. ‘Where does pretty end?’ she sighed quietly, lost in the views of lush rolling greens in the Cumbrian valley of Eden.

But it’s so much more than pretty, this wonderful railway which crosses the high roof of England. A journey today is a tribute to all those people who mounted a long and exhaustive campaign to save the line from closure in the 1980s and to the 6,000 navvies who toiled in bitter winter weather and inaccessible places during construction of the line. History perhaps, but living still - the remains of one navvies camp can be seen near the engineering marvel of the Ribbleshead viaduct.

Today it’s a journey of memorable contrasts where snow often lingers into late spring in the hidden hollows and folds of the Yorkshire Dales and North Pennines and every station is an evocative reminder of a bygone age. The summit at Aysgill north of Garsdale station is the highest point reached by main line trains in England. It’s a journey of slow climbs and long descents, the 16-mile section from Settle to Blea Moor is still known to railwaymen as the ‘long drag’.

And if, as you travel this beautiful railway, you come to wonder on the bronze statue of a border collie at the impressively-restored station at Garsdale, remember this. Ruswarp was his name, and he signed the petition to save the line with his paw print. His owner was Graham Nuttall, one-time secretary to the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Railway. On 20th January 1990 Graham never returned from walking the hills, and his body wasn’t discovered until 7th April. Faithful Ruswarp was still by his side, having endured 11 weeks of biting winter cold, so weak and emaciated he had to be carried downhill.

Fabulous stories for a fabulous railway!

SETTLE TO CARLISLE LINE

Sunshine and Showers from Dent station

Something Special

Make Skipton a stop. A lovely market town, often called the gateway to the Yorkshire Dales, with a castle pummelled by Cromwell's troops in the Civil War and memorable walks and eating places.

DENT STATION PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT TO ANTHONY WARD



Ribbleshead Viaduct



Thornton Force

Route

Inverness to Wick & Thurso

Journey Time

4hrs 30mins

Distance

110 miles



Wild, remote, lonely, far-flung, unspoiled, exceptional – this is a rail journey for the purist. And it's so much the better for that!

The Far North line is an absolute treasure of a railway, single-track for most of its length, starting in the busy streets of Inverness and ending at the farthestmost point of the compass, where fresh northern winds tinged with salt sweep in from the turbulent tides of the North Sea and Pentland Firth.

This is one of those unique railways where you can have your own front-row seat to experience the finest qualities of all - quiet contemplation, peace and space. Sit back and watch mile upon mile slowly unwinding like a spool of thread, true balm for the soul.

Here's a tip - prepare to be overwhelmed by it all! The unfolding drama of pristine distance, impossibly remote stations, unspoiled coast and country, tumbling rivers rich in salmon, the weight of history and the sheer vastness of the Flow Country. This is really a unique landscape covering Caithness and Sutherland, a horizon-stretching blanket-bog shaped by water, ice and time.

It's a rail journey of surprises too. Just before you reach the tiny village of Golspie you'll see a statue on the heights of Beinn a'Bhragaidh. This is a monument to George Granville Leveson-Gower, the first Duke of Sutherland, a landowner who put profit before people and was responsible for the most notorious of the Highland Clearances in the 19th century. At the village of Brora, stone from the quarry was used in the building of London Bridge and Liverpool cathedral. Nearby Dunrobin Castle looks as if it was designed for a Disney movie. Remote Fosinard station lies in the middle of the Flow Country and houses an RSPB centre.

Slow miles always did make for slow thoughts. This is a rail journey where you can settle back, gaze left and right, and make everything you see through the window a milestone in memory.

THE FAR NORTH LINE

158 climbing to the highest point of the Far North Line at County March summit



Dunrobin Castle



Orkney Islands

Something Special

You've come this far so why not take another step north? Regular ferries run to the Orkney islands, treasure houses of history and archaeology.

[FAR NORTH LINE PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT TO NIALL LAYBOURNE](#)

Route

Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog

Journey Time

1hr 25mins

Distance

30 miles



‘The best railway in Britain’, remarked a fellow traveller, buying a day return at the booking office and pocketing the change. He grinned and added, ‘cheap too.’ Who’s arguing?

The Conwy Valley line is short in distance but perfectly formed. What else could describe a railway that starts with the wide sweep of Llandudno Bay and ends in the heart of mountainous terrain of Snowdonia?

Everything you could possibly wish for in a rail journey is here – wrapped-up, pocket-sized, perfectly presented. It’s brilliant!

It’s a journey that follows the beautiful Conwy valley, much of which was laid waste during the Wars of the Roses on the orders of Edward IV, the Yorkist king. Stunning wooded scenery surrounds the slopes of Betws-y-Coed, a lovely resort dating back to Victorian times and where the River Conwy meets the rush of three tributaries – Llugwy, Lledr, and Machno. And, as a special bonus the miniature railway and museum await! From here it’s a climb into the mountains, a dark journey through the longest

tunnel in Wales and then daylight at the historic slate-mining centre at Blaenau Ffestiniog. Sublime!

What you see through the window is a grand juxtaposition of Welsh contrasts – and all within 30 short miles. Spectacular scenery, rolling pastureland, tumbling rivers, wide estuaries, historic castles, gentle slopes giving way to jagged crags, slate mines and Snowdonia..... go on, try it for yourself!

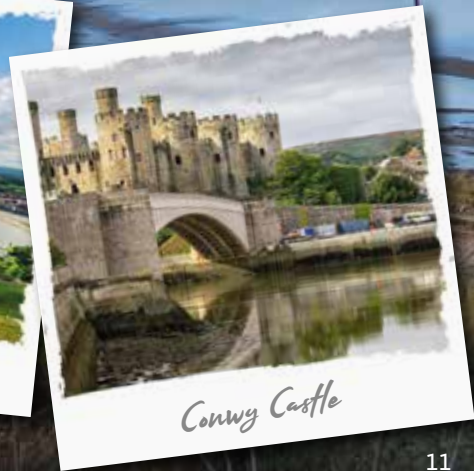
The adventures don’t stop on the main line, because you must try the Ffestiniog narrow-gauge heritage railway which runs through mountain and forest to the harbour at Porthmadog. It’s a ‘must-do’ attraction, featuring within ‘The Great Little Trains of Wales’.

CONWY VALLEY LINE

From the North Wales Coast to the heart of Snowdonia



Llandudno Sea front



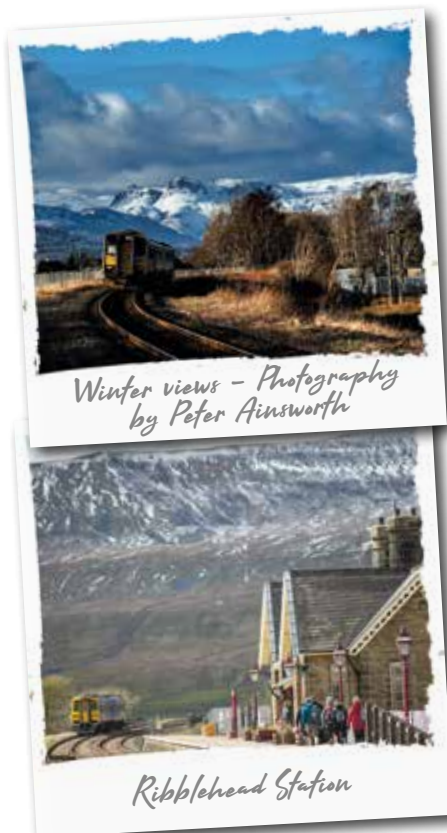
Conwy Castle

Something Special

Visit Conwy Castle, a hugely impressive medieval fortress built during the conquest of Wales by Edward 1 between 1283 and 1289. The construction cost £15,000, a huge sum for the period.

CONWY VALLEY PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT

SCENIC RAIL BRITAIN



This brochure contains just a small selection of rail routes where you can sit back and watch the incredible diversity and beauty of scenic rail Britain roll past your window.

What are you looking for on your rail journey? Epic landscapes? History? Coastal views or picturesque countryside? The website www.scenicrailbritain.com has everything you could wish for, ranging from individual journey details to links with local websites which provide a wealth of helpful information.

Here's a small sample of other rail adventures featured on the website

- East Coast Main Line. From York to Edinburgh. From one fabulous city to another, across the River Tyne with views of the famous bridges of Newcastle, followed by the stunning Northumberland coast. Don't miss!
- Hope Valley Line. From Sheffield to Manchester. Tranquil valleys, rugged hills and quaint villages. Perfect for window-gazing!
- Heart of Wales line. From Swansea to Shrewsbury. Justifiably famous as one of the most scenic railway journeys in Britain. 121 miles of splendour outside your window. Once travelled, never forgotten!
- Bishop Line. From Darlington to Bishop Auckland. This journey might be just 17 miles long but it's alive with railway history.

There's so many more to enjoy – and they're all detailed on www.scenicrailbritain.com

- From Chester to Shrewsbury. One of those rail journey's which has something for everyone. 84 miles of viaducts, panoramic views at every scenic curve and a World Heritage site thrown in for good measure. A must-do!
- Lakes Line. From Windermere to Oxenholme. The perfect place to visit just for the day or for a short break. However long you stay, the spectacular views, beautiful landscape, mystic lakes, woodland & rolling fells offer something for everyone.
- Cotswold line. From Oxford to Hereford. A beautiful rail journey spanning 4 English counties and passing through the memorable scenery of the Cotswolds, familiar from countless movies and television series.
- Riviera Line. From Exeter to Paignton. A lovely rail journey following river and coast and ending at Paignton on the English Riviera, renowned for its mild climate. Don't forget your bucket and spade!
- Cambrian Coast. From the lovely town of Shrewsbury to the Welsh coast. Almost 140 miles of drama, heritage and unforgettable Welsh scenery. What's not to like?

How lucky we are to have so many scenic railways on our doorstep! So, whether you want to plan your next trip, or just fancy a browse through the beautiful scenery of Britain unfolding through your train window, don't forget to visit www.scenicrailbritain.com



Route

Carlisle to Barrow in Furness

Journey Time

2hrs 36mins

Distance

84 miles



It isn't every day you'll travel a line where an ordinary railwayman aged 23 was honoured with the George Cross for an act of extraordinary valour and heroism – but then again, the Cumbrian Coast is no ordinary railway!

His name was Herbert Stubbs, fireman on board a freight train of 58 wagons loaded with munitions on the night of 22nd March 1945. At the village of Bootle the signalman noticed that a wagon laden with depth-charges was on fire and set the signal to danger. The train came to an emergency stop and Fireman Stubbs leapt out, somehow uncoupled the now-blazing wagon, and knowing an oncoming train was packed with homecoming troops, ran up the opposite line to place warning detonators on the rails. As he did so the wagon exploded, killing driver Harold Goodall outright, leaving a 50 foot-deep crater in the ground and shattering house windows and roofs for miles around.

The resultant inquiry noted that Fireman Stubbs' selfless actions had averted a far-greater catastrophe. Not only was he awarded the George Cross, but he also received the Order of Industrial Heroism, the equivalent to a workers VC.

Thankfully a journey today along the scenic Cumbrian Coast railway is a far more peaceful affair. Winding a tranquil way through the saltmarshes of the Duddon estuary and mile upon mile of sandy beaches washed by the Irish Sea – and of course the sharp crags and crannies of the Lake District – it's a line justifiably termed 'twixt fells and sea'.

The Cumbrian Coast is a fabulous rail journey, hugging the coastal margins for much of its length, unspoilt by the tourist millions who visit the Lake District every year. It's a delight of peaceful and ever-changing scenery set against a backdrop of fascinating and unique heritage.

Be sure to add this rail journey to your bucket list!

CUMBRIAN COAST LINE

The wonderful steep slopes and hidden crags of Cumbria



Something Special

Make Ravenglass a stop and steam to the hills on board the narrow-gauge railway affectionately known as 'La'al Ratty'. A few miles away visit Millom Discovery Centre located on the platform. A real treasure-trove, including a fabulous model railway and fascinating artefacts.

CUMBRIA COAST LINE PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT TO ALAN JOHNSTONE



La'al Ratty



Millom Discovery Centre

Route

Carlisle to Kilmarnock & Ayr

Journey Time

3hr 28mins

Distance

78 miles



Should auld acquaintance be forgot, And never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot, And auld lang syne?

A fitting verse for a railway that takes you deep into the heart of country beloved and immortalised by the legendary world-celebrated poet of Scotland - Robert Burns.

The South of Scotland line is a quiet unsung railway, bashfully hiding its beauty just like Galloway itself. This part of Scotland remains almost hidden from view, unnoticed and ignored by the tourists and thrill-seekers hurrying northwards towards their Highland destinations.

They don't know what they're missing, because Galloway has a gentle and hypnotic loveliness, a strong country with a remarkable history, crossed by the South of Scotland railway. From Carlisle to the seaside resort of Ayr, it's a delightfully tranquil rail journey of picturesque miles, of green, fretted hills, of higher moorland purple with heather, of beautiful Nithsdale and the long miles of the Southern Upland Way.

If star-crossed lovers and apoplectic fathers are your thing, then take a stop at Gretna Green, the village in the Borders where marriage merchants eagerly plied their trade. At Troon you can play a round of golf against the alluring backdrop of the Isle of Arran, whilst the restored station at Kilmarnock is a base for social enterprise and lovely walks through unspoilt Galloway country.

But there's more – for this is a railway famous for its connections with Robert Burns. Before his untimely death in Dumfries at the age of 37, the poet was a frequent visitor to many of the towns along the line. His experiences and the people he met are woven deep into many of his published works. Travel this railway and you might find yourself composing your own poetry!

The South of Scotland railway is not to be missed. Without drama or excitement, without stunning scenery or hypnotising views, it's a journey of stillness and quiet calm, far removed from the hustle and bustle of everyday existence. Travel it!

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND LINE

Tranquil Galloway on a short walk from Sanquhar station



Something Special

Visit the Globe Inn located in the High Street in Dumfries. This was a frequent watering-hole of Robert Burns when he was building a farmhouse nearby and his favourite chair is still there.



Burns Memorial Centre



*156 unit approaching
Greta Station*

Route

Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh

Journey Time

2hrs 40mins

Distance

80 miles



From west coast to east coast, from one body of bright water to another, from busy shopping streets of Inverness to quiet Kyle, a small town framed by mountains and the Isle of Skye beyond.

And in-between? Why, every single thing you could possibly wish for on a rail journey through the awe-inspiring Highlands of Scotland!

The Kyle line is the perfect blend of everything Highland: desolate grandeur, sunlight brilliant in the glen, huge tracts of emptiness save sheep and red deer, long fingers of mist clinging to crags and gullies, distant heights of Torrion, brown streams of foaming peaty water, dark gorge, bare heath and wild forest.

Little wonder that Michael Palin travelled this line on his Great Rail Journey's of the World tour. It's simply unforgettable!

Just outside the railway station at Dingwall is a rough-hewn spindly cross standing on a granite plinth. It was originally erected in gratitude by the villagers of Fontaine Notre Dame in France in November 1917 in honour of the Seaforth Highlanders who fell at the Battle of Cambrai.

The cross was brought back to Dingwall in 1924 and erected the following year. The memorial bears the names of 40 war dead and its evocative inscription reads: "No burdens yonder, all sorrows past, no burdens yonder, home at last."

The names of remote stations on this magnificent line - mostly request stops - read like a roll call of Highland poetry. Achanalt, Achnasheen, Achnashellach, Strathcarron, Attadale..... out-of-the-way places, hidden in secluded glens thick with forest with few signs of habitation, making you wonder why they were built in the first place.

But it isn't simply landscape that will linger in your mind. Travel this railway just once and straightway you'll fall under that strange otherworldly spell that only the Scottish Highlands can cast - the yearning to return.

THE KYLE LINE

The unspoiled picturesque East Coast of Scotland



Something Special

Stop off and visit Plockton, a village often called the Jewel of the Highlands. Located on the shores of Loch Carron with gorgeous views all around, Plockton was the setting for the BBC series called 'Hamish Macbeth' and offers walking trails and sea-based activities.



Loch Torridon



Plockton in the Highlands

Heritage Railways

Fancy a good wallow in nostalgia? Have a yearning for the smell of soot on a steam-hauled train journey? Or maybe you just fancy a scenic ride through Britain's green and pleasant land?

Then look no further than heritage railways, operated by an army of dedicated volunteers numbering over 20,000. Britain's railway network is the oldest in the world, leaving an indelible mark on its history and identity. It's a rich and varied heritage ranging from footplate to beautifully restored stations - but the benefits of heritage railways aren't limited to history. They bring huge economic boosts to the local communities they serve, estimated to be in excess of £250m to the UK leisure economy.

And remember - travelling on an old steam loco is a great way to see scenic parts of the UK that probably haven't changed much in a hundred years.

The Bluebell Line is probably the most famous of all heritage railways in the UK, having featured in many movies and television shows. Named after the bluebells that bring such a vivid splash of colour to the views from the window in the spring this line runs for 11 miles from East to West Sussex, between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead.

The scenic route of the North York Moors railway is spectacular. Running from Pickering to Grosmont most of the journey follows the lovely valley of Newtondale, where a precipitous ravine allows the tiny Pickering Beck to trickle merrily away. Most services now terminate at the seaside resort of Whitby, where the ruined abbey provided the inspiration for Bram Stoker's vampire novel 'Dracula'.

Over a hundred heritage railways now operate in Great Britain, ranging from the Helston Railway and the Bodmin and Wenford railway in Cornwall to the Strathspey Railway in the far north of Scotland. From their earliest beginnings in the late 18th century and particularly since the start of the 'railway age' around 1830 railways have been part of the landscape in Britain. Today, the heritage railway experience, with its steam and smoke and unforgettable sounds and dedicated people lives on - and long may it continue!

La'al Ratty

An affectionate name simply meaning 'Little Railway' - is a highly popular heritage railway in Cumbria. Running from the village of Ravenglass on the coast up to Dalegarth in the fells, this narrow gauge railway opened on 24 May 1875 to transport hematite iron ore from the mines around Boot to the Furness Railway.

As a result of demand from the residents of the valley for a passenger service, the railway was upgraded to meet passenger minimum standards and the first passenger trains ran in 1876, making La'al Ratty the first public narrow-gauge railway in England.

Today, Ravenglass is a thriving and bustling terminus, with a trip on La'al Ratty attracting well over 100,000 visitors each year. Each is rewarded by spectacular views of the river estuary and surrounding countryside as the train travels to the foot of Cumbria's highest peaks.





'Tornado' at full steam on the Cumbrian Coast Line
22



SCENIC RAIL JOURNEYS IN BRITAIN

Early winter on the West Highland Line

WEST HIGHLAND PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT TO ©DENNIS HARDLEY PHOTOGRAPHY WWW.SCOTPHOTO.COM

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