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TRAVEL

Romance on the rails

5 train trips to take with your sweetie

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The flicker of flames in a fireplace on a chilly night. Waves lapping onto a sun-kissed beach. There's something sensual about the sights and sounds of repetitive motion, calming and lulling us into a romantic mood.

So it is with a railway journey. As scenery slips by windows, we move closer to our loved one, maybe resting a head on a welcoming shoulder and listening to the clickety-clack of wheels as the train gently rolls along.

Five multiday rail journeys with romance in mind:

Belmond Royal Scotsman: Pack your kilt for a ride through the Scottish countryside, gliding through Highland glens viewed from an open-air veranda or cuddled up on a comfy sofa in the observation car. The luxury train accommodates just 36 guests who sleep in en-suite cabins while the train parks in a quiet spot for the night. Dinner in the mahogany-paneled dining car is a dress-up affair with formal attire — cocktail dress, tux or that kilt — on alternating nights. The chef makes the most of Scottish ingredients: wild game, Aberdeen Angus beef, seafood and salmon. Three-to-eight-day itineraries revolve around themes, such as golf, fishing, clay pigeon shooting, food and heritage. Excursions might include visits to a castle or whisky distillery. Go in summer for long hours of daylight and less rain. The four-night Classic Journey, April through October, is priced around \$6,174 a person; belmond.com/royal-scotsman-train.

Rocky Mountaineer: Unplug and spend quality time together without the distraction of TVs, mobile phones or internet — all limited in the wilds of the Canadian Rockies. Take in scenery accessible only by feats of railway engineering through canyons, past waterfalls and roaring rivers. See who's first to spot a bear, moose, bald eagle or bighorn sheep. Bilevel GoldLeaf cars have an observation deck above and dining room below, while meals are served at your seat in one-level SilverLeaf cars. Chefs trained in Michelin-star restaurants prepare a special dessert for newlyweds. There are no sleeping cars, so you'll be down in hotels along the route. Trains run April to October, but choose June for springtime in the Rockies with snow on mountains and wildflowers blooming in valleys. The seven-night Coastal Passage Canadian Rockies



The Rocky Mountaineer winds its way through western Canada's spectacular scenery. The newest route connects Seattle with the Canadian Rockies.



KYUSHU RAILWAY

Passengers enjoy live musical performances in the Blue Moon lounge on the Seven Stars in Kyushu.

Highlights in June between Seattle and Calgary, Alberta, starts at about \$3,559 per person and includes visits to national parks, helicopter sightseeing and mountain gondola rides; rockymountaineer.com.

Seven Stars in Kyushu: Demand for Japan's first luxury sleeper train is so high that tickets are sold only a few times a year with passengers chosen by lottery, giving preference to international guests. The train travels around the southern Japanese island of Kyushu on one- and three-night itineraries. Choose the longer one, and you can

get romantic one night in a ryokan, a traditional inn with in-room hot spring. Back on board, you'll glide past tropical scenery, islands and a volcano while you get cozy in one of just 14 standard and deluxe suites, each a different fusion of Western, and Japanese styles from designer Eiji Mitooka. Sway to the sounds of live music in the Blue Moon lounge car, and feast on Japanese and French cuisine in the dining car as the sun sets over the East China Sea. Spring and autumn are best; fall colors appear in November. A three-night circuit starts around \$5,472



BELMOND ROYAL SCOTSMAN

Passengers on the Belmond Royal Scotsman can view the Scottish Highlands from the train's open-air veranda.

a person; www.cruisetrain-sevenstars.com.

Alaska Railroad: Celebrating an anniversary? Mark yours with a visit to

Denali National Park and Preserve, which turns 100 this year. GoldStar Service bilevel cars have glass dome ceilings and an outdoor viewing platform where you can keep each other warm while taking in spectacular mountain and coastal scenery. Meals and drinks in the lower level dining room are included. Adventure Class cars have reserved seats, open-seat dome cars and meals for sale in a cafe, as well as seated dining service. The trains have no sleeping cars, so book your own rail tickets, lodging and excursions, or let the railroad reservations team quote a package price. Peak season is summer, but fall colors in Denali make the last summer departures special. The six-night Alaska's National Parks by Rail, early June through late August, involves rafting among icebergs, a glacier and wildlife cruise in Kenai Fjords National Park and a bus tour on the restricted

Denali Park Road along North America's tallest peak, from \$2,095 per person. Call 800-544-0552 for a customized quote; alaskarailroad.com.

Pullman Rail Journeys/Uncommon Journeys: Relive the golden age of rail travel on restored Pullman cars while exploring the American West. Uncommon Journeys partners with Pullman Rail Journeys to offer vacation packages pairing overnights on vintage rail cars with hotel stays and excursions. Pullman sleeping cars were once considered the height of elegant rail travel; refurbished cars retain their midcentury touches while adding modern amenities like Wi-Fi. Enjoy yourselves in the dining car at tables draped in white linen and graced with red roses. Spring and fall are good times to go, but May in Yosemite National Park means raging waterfalls and fewer crowds. The Great Western Explorer, round-trip Chicago May 13-26 and Oct. 21-Nov. 3, includes four nights on the train, nine in hotels, ex-

Day trips

No time for a long train journey? Build a day trip into your vacation.

Belmond Hiram Bingham: Travel to Machu Picchu in style aboard refurbished 1920s Pullman carriages bound for Peru's Sacred Valley; belmond.com/hiram-bingham-train

Napa Valley Wine Train: Toast one another on restored Pullman rail cars as you pass through the heart of California's famous wine region, enjoying a gourmet meal along the way; winetrain.com

Glacier Express: Hold each other tight as you cross 291 bridges and roll through 91 tunnels between Switzerland's holiday resort St. Moritz and Zermatt at the foot of the Matterhorn; glacierepress.ch/en

Essex Clipper Dinner Train: A 1940s locomotive pulls vintage dining cars on a 2½-hour round-trip ride from Essex, Conn., through the Connecticut River Valley May through October; essexsteamin.com/the-dinner-train

Verde Canyon Railroad: About 20 weddings a year — and a good many marriage proposals — take place during four-hour round trips from Clarkdale, Ariz., through Sedona-area landscape; verdecanyonrr.com

ursions in Reno/Lake Tahoe, Sacramento, Yosemite, Los Angeles and Santa Fe, a tour of Hearst Castle and a cruise to Catalina Island, from \$4,595 per person; uncommonjourneys.com.

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