

5 Unbelievable U.S. Train Routes

Trains are making a comeback and it's easy to see why. Ease of travel, inexpensive rates, and gorgeous scenery makes traveling the rails incredibly attractive. And while European train routes get all the attention, there are a few routes closer to home that you should definitely check out. Skip your next road trip and check out these five unbelievable train routes through the U.S. instead.

Amtrak Coast Starlight Train



Credit: bon9/Shutterstock

This [35-hour ride](#) travels between Seattle and Los Angeles. Traversing down the coast opens with the dramatic snow covered peaks of the Cascade Mountains, as the land flattens, bountiful forests and sprawling seas present themselves through the floor-to-ceiling windows in the [Sightseer Lounge Car](#). This two-day trek is mercifully taken on the country's only sleeper train, complete with the luxuries you'd expect on the Orient Express, including free food, champagne room service, private bathrooms, and a daily turn-down service.

Enjoy three-course meals are served, and in the confined spaces (where the wifi is spotty and the cell service is spottier) strike up conversations with other travelers. You will discover interesting conversation pops up between young adventurers headed to a hiking trip in Oregon and retired nomads breathing in the awe-inspiring views that may have been overlooked in their younger years.

Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad



Credit: Tita77/Shutterstock

The 1879 gold rush birthed the necessity for industrial transportation capable of hauling mounds of precious metal out of California — thus the [Denver and Rio Grande Railway](#). It didn't take long for passengers to spread word that gold wasn't the only precious thing about this railway. Spectacular views of Colorado's luscious peaks and rivers ensured that the train stayed in operation long after the gold veins ran dry. The [Durango & Silverton Narrow Gorge](#) route features steep drop-offs that are so awe-inspiring they have served as a muse to multiple artists, including C.W. McCall, who dedicated an entire song to the Silverton.

"Well now listen to the whistle in the rockwood cut on the high line to Silverton Town

And you're gonna get a shiver when you check out the river

Which is four hundred feet straight down."

Pick up a round-trip ticket for a day of adventure. The 3.5-hour trek to Silverton winds across the river five times before dropping you off to explore Silverton. Grab some lunch and roam around the town before boarding and enjoying a relaxing trip back to Durango.

Cape Cod Central Railroad



Credit: Lil' Digital Shop/Shutterstock

The luxurious [Cape Cod railway](#) offers stunning coastal views and posh upgrade packages. Salt marshes, sand dunes and woodlands are just a few of The Cape's natural wonders that a trip in this cranberry-colored car offers. If you're especially interested in the area's ecosystem, purchase a ticket on the [ecology car](#) for a truly educational experience. If fine dining is your thing, opt for the platinum class dining car, where a five-course meal is served in a vintage dining car. If you prefer unadulterated views of the passing landscape, the diamond class excursion car is for you, featuring panoramic windows in an elevated car.

Grand Canyon Railway



Credit: kravka/Shutterstock

In 1901, the [Grand Canyon Railway](#) began carrying passengers through Arizona's wonder of the world. Cowboys and musicians entertain guests in restored locomotive cars as you wind through prairies, deserts and pine forests. This trip is shorter — 2 hours and 15 minutes — so you can easily make a day trip of it, or extend the experience and stay at the [Grand Canyon Railway Hotel](#). Despite its length, this railway also offers different classes of service depending on your budget and personal preferences. Additionally, they offer different “time period” cars that will transport you to a different decade in the canyon.

We recommend the observation dome for those interested in getting the full effect of the jaw-dropping landscape. This car features a full glass enclosure perched above the other cars, and serves drinks and snacks to boot. The luxury parlor is another great option if the train experience is as interesting to you as the views, enjoy the back deck for some fresh air and cozy lounge seating for optimum relaxation.

Amtrak Empire Builder



Credit: [Loco Steve](#)/Flickr

Following the old trail of Lewis and Clark, the [Empire Builder](#) is a 46-hour journey through the heart of the midwest. Departing from Chicago, take in the gorgeous amber waves of grain, tunnels, deserts and jagged cliffs. Like the Coast Starlight Train, the Empire Builder is run by Amtrak and offers sleeper cars, making the trip infinitely more comfortable. Seeing Minneapolis glow in the night sky is an awe-inspiring juxtaposition to the mountains of [Glacier National Park](#). Make the ride your own by heading on to the Portland or Seattle for an urban ending to the “big sky Montana” leg of your journey, and be sure to send us pics!