



IT'S THE ORIENT EXPRESS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: WHY YOU SHOULD BUY A TICKET TO RIDE ONE OF THE MOST LUXURIOUS TRAINS IN THE WORLD.
BY MARK A. THOMPSON

8 REASONS TO RIDE ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

DESIGNATED ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRIPS BY *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC*, THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEER has secured its reputation as a life-changing experience with a focus on hospitality and luxury service. Originated in 1990 and now the largest privately-owned passenger rail service in North America, the Rocky Mountaineer traverses historic rail routes to destinations in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada. But when it comes to the Rocky Mountaineer, it's not just where you're going — it's how you're getting there. Here's why you should give it a try...



1. THE OLD-HOLLYWOOD GLAM

THERE'S A ROMANCE TO TRAIN TRAVEL: THE GENTLY rocking railcar, the promise of witnessing something you've never seen in a place you've never been. During its golden era, Hollywood celebrated the romance of rail with such films as *Twentieth Century* (with John Barrymore and Carole Lombard) and *Some Like It Hot*, with Marilyn Monroe cooing "Runnin' Wild" as she rode the rails. There may be over a hundred films about train travel, but even in the ones where not everyone gets out alive — *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Lady Vanishes* or Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* — the train looks like an elegant star.

2. THE FOOD

FOR THOSE TRAVELING IN GOLDLEAF SERVICE CLASS, the Rocky Mountaineer's two-level, glass-domed coach cars feature a dining room on the main floor where three-course meals are accompanied by Okanagan wines. The culinary team of 85 includes eight sous-chefs under the tutelage of Executive Chefs Frederic Couton and Jean Pierre Guerin, who (between the two of them) have cooked for such dignitaries as President Bill Clinton and Princess Diana at five-star hotels and restaurants worldwide.

With two seatings for both breakfast and lunch, Rocky Mountaineer chefs showcase indigenous produce and seafood, such as wild British Columbia sockeye salmon and sautéed tiger prawns. In an effort to foster sustainability, Rocky Mountaineer's

partnerships include the Pacific Salmon Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to rebuilding sustainable Pacific salmon stocks. And for guests interested in trying their hand at recreating signature dishes — like Rocky Mountaineer's breakfast of smoked-salmon scrambled eggs with kelp caviar and lemon-chive crème fraîche — there's the cookbook, *Eat Play Love: Regionally Inspired Cuisine by Rocky Mountaineer*.

3. THE SCENERY

NO MATTER HOW WELL YOU EAT OR DRINK, THE best reason to ride the Rocky Mountaineer is outside the train. The custom-built GoldLeaf Service coaches feature an open-air vestibule on the main floor, and it is here that you'll feel the wind through your hair and the sun on your face as the train travels through some of the most glorious landscapes on the planet.

Rocky Mountaineer's 75 railcars travel only in daylight to insure that you see it all: The soaring peaks and deep river canyons of the Canadian Rockies are punctuated by forests of birch, poplar and conifers. The saw-toothed mountains give way to cascading waterfalls and churning rivers. Keep your camera at hand for shimmering high-altitude lakes, desert landscapes speckled with cactus and, of course, the hoodoos — those tall, thin spires of rock that look like nature's totem poles.

From your fellow rail aficionados there might come a shout: a bear sighting or an osprey nest. Eagles soar and dip in a sky as



cerulean as the legendarily beautiful Lake Louise (not far from Banff). Wildlife fans should keep an eye out for elk and moose, bighorn sheep and mountain goats. You'll also pass through natural wonders such as Hells Gate (the narrowest point of the Fraser River), around the spiral tunnels, and along the Great Continental Divide where the waters flow toward either the Atlantic or the Pacific.

4. THE CRUISES

EACH YEAR, ROCKY MOUNTAINEER'S SIGNATURE blue-and-gold coaches host more than 1.5 million guests from around the world, but in many cases, it's only a portion of their adventure. At least 40% of them book a rail journey in conjunction with an Alaskan cruise. And, truly, what better complement could there be



The Rocky Mountaineer takes its guests from the soaring peaks and valleys of the Rockies to spectacular lakes and seascapes.

to a rail journey through the magnificent Canadian Rockies than a water journey to “the Last Frontier” of the Alaskan wilderness?

5. THE PRIDES

CRUISES AREN'T THE ONLY FUN TO COMBINE WITH a trip on the Rocky Mountaineer. LGBT passengers can book an itinerary that starts with Seattle Pride in June and then take a three-day rail journey from the Emerald City, bound for Vancouver, B.C., and onward through the Canadian Rockies to their final destination, Banff. Similarly, travelers might combine their Rocky Mountaineer rail journey with a trip to Vancouver Pride, which takes place on the first weekend of August, or to Vancouver's Queer Film Festival during the third week of August. And these are just stops along one of Rocky Mountaineer's five unique rail routes (with at least 45 available itineraries), which traverse the U.S. Pacific Northwest, British Columbia and Alberta.

6. THE PRESENTATION

THEY MAY NOT BE MARILYN MONROE, BUT ROCKY Mountaineer's hosts are talented storytellers who, periodically, break into song or dance when the mood hits (or their audience demands), which is in keeping with the convivial atmosphere established on this luxury train. The uniformed staff may serve cocktails with panache and meals on white linens, but the atmosphere is not stuffy.

PHOTOS COURTESY/MIRNY.

7. THE CELEBRITY

ROCKY MOUNTAINEER HAS HOSTED ITS FAIR SHARE of illustrious guests, including Bill and Melinda Gates, Patrick Stewart, Morgan Freeman and

Katarina Witt. It has also served as a locale for popular television programs, including ABC's *The Bachelorette* and Bravo's *Top Chef*. With clientele like that, it's no wonder that Rocky Mountaineer has been voted one of the “Top 5 Trains in the World” by *Condé Nast Traveler*.

8. THE WAVE

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT A TRAIN THAT MAKES people want to wave. It's not the same as with a bus or automobile — where the most you can hope for is usually a sad little wave good-bye. As you ride the Rocky Mountaineer, it's likely you'll pass strangers going about their days in the vicinity of the railroad tracks who will look up and wave at you. And I'm not talking about some little royal flick of the wrist: You're likely to get a full, arm-in-the-air wave and likely a big smile, too. Once you've seen the world from a stylish seat on one of its most luxurious trains, you may just find yourself raising an arm the next time you see one pass, too. Get your ticket at rockymountaineer.com. ■

LA PRIDE
June 6-8
2014

PRIDE

LA

f t

For the most up-to-date info
& advance ticket purchases, visit
lapride.org