

Rail away

Hitting the southern hemisphere in style with three luxury train journeys that offer unforgettable experiences

For travellers seeking a unique blend of comfort, culture, and stunning scenery, the Southern Hemisphere offers some of the world's most remarkable rail experiences. Journeying through the Andes, Africa's plains, and Australia's coastline, three luxury trains stand out: the Belmond Andean Explorer, Rovos Rail, and The Great Southern.

THE BELMOND ANDEAN EXPLORER: HIGH-ALTITUDE ELEGANCE

Gliding across the Andes between Cusco, Lake Titicaca and Arequipa, the Belmond Andean Explorer feels less like a train and more like a tranquil mountain retreat

Below: The Andean Explorer in Arequipa, Peru

on wheels. Soft woven textiles, timber accents and colours drawn from the altiplano give the interiors a sense of warmth and serenity, making it ideal for couples seeking a quiet escape, solo guests looking for calm, or families with older teens who favour culture over crowds. From private suites and the open-air observatory car, travellers watch as snow-lined peaks, remote villages and broad plateaus stretch into the distance; all while the light shifts from bright Andean afternoon to the purple hues of evening.

Those who value experiences connected to local culture will appreciate menus shaped around regional produce and excursions that bring Peru's heritage into focus. Sunrise over Lake Titicaca,

the floating Uros Islands and lesser-known archaeological sites all add depth to the journey. Its defining feature, however, is its altitude: as the highest luxury sleeper train in the world reaching elevations above 4,800 meters, it offers views normally reserved for hardy trekkers, delivered instead with calm sophistication and exceptional comfort. belmond.com

ROVOS RAIL: VINTAGE OPULENCE

Starting from Pretoria, South Africa, Rovos Rail offers an elegant travel experience through southern Africa, with popular routes to Cape Town, Victoria Falls, and beyond. The polished wood interiors, vintage ➤





touches and refined dining settings evoke a time when style mattered as much as the destination. The best time to embark is during the dry season, May through October, when the weather is pleasant and wildlife most visible.

As the train rolls through shifting scenery including vineyards, open bushland and historical towns, the landscape becomes part of the narrative. Off-train outings add dimension: private reserves, art galleries, heritage locations or wine estates depending on the route. While the service is polished enough for luxury travellers, it remains warm and personable, a balance that has earned the experience lasting affection. Its uniqueness lies in its atmosphere: one of the few places where evening attire, fine dining and sweeping savannah views coexist, creating a blend of romance and old-world charm that is distinctly South African. rovos.com

Above: Passengers on the Rovos Rail Train from Pretoria to Victoria Falls, Gauteng, South Africa **Above right:** Adelaide to Brisbane Great Southern **Right:** The Rovos Rail Train

THE GREAT SOUTHERN: COASTAL ADVENTURE

Launched in 2017, The Great Southern travels between Adelaide and Brisbane, tracing Australia's eastern and southern coastlines. Autumn and spring, between March and May or September to November, offer the best weather for this trip, with shifting coastal scenes to farmland and rugged inland plains. Leaning towards a lighter, more relaxed mood, this journey is well-suited

to couples wanting a premium yet easygoing getaway, groups of friends who enjoy shared adventures, and solo travellers who appreciate a social, hosted atmosphere. Families with older children often enjoy the diversity of excursions along the way.

The route passes through notable wine regions such as the Barossa Valley, lush rainforests near the Sunshine Coast, and stretches of unspoiled beaches along the Pacific. Stops include

major cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, as well as smaller towns rich in local culture. Onboard, the culinary offering celebrates seasonal Australian produce within modern cabins, calming colours and panoramic windows that celebrate the immediate surrounds. What distinguishes the Great Southern is its east-coast passage, offering contrasting environments in a single flowing itinerary. Its summer-only schedule adds an energetic feel, capturing the outdoorsy spirit of Australia at its peak.

Across these three routes, true luxury goes beyond fine dining and beautifully finished cabins. It lies in the invitation to slow down. In a world shaped by deadlines and efficiency, these journeys offer a rare pause, a chance to watch entire regions reveal themselves gradually. Whether passing llamas grazing on the Peruvian plateau, glimpsing wildlife beneath the South African sun or travelling across Australia's expansive coastal plains, the experience becomes less about extravagance and more about presence. These are the kinds of journeys that linger long after the tracks fade into the distance.

greattrains.com.au ■

