







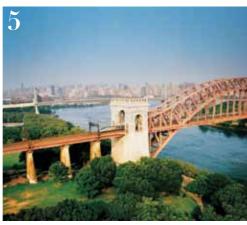


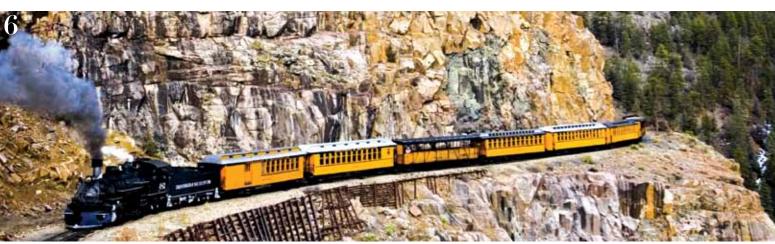
## US RAIL JOURNEYS

Get on track with these trips, says Aby Dunsby

@AbraDunsby







An enticing mixture of showstopping cities and epic natural scenery make the US a quintessential country for exploration - and while road trips still reign supreme, rail is a serious pretender to the crown.

Even if its size means the train isn't the speediest way to get around, for those who value the journey as much as the destination, it offers views you just couldn't get from a plane, and weary drivers can leave the hard work to someone else as they kick back with a glass of wine to soak up the sublime vistas in comfort.

"The demand for USA rail vacations continues to grow as UK travellers seek alternatives to the more traditional fly or drive packages," says Todd Powell, chief executive and co-founder of Vacations by Rail. "We have seen the highest increase in itineraries which combine independent scenic trains journeying into the heart of the national parks with the legendary long-distance coast-to-coast routes."

Whether it's a short jaunt or a cross-country train ride, a rail journey can also provide the perfect opportunity for you to bolt on extra bookings, as clients are often keen to add activities, tours or excursions around a rail journey. From luxe options to cheap-as-chips commuter trains, we pick out a handful of the most interesting rail journeys America has to offer.

MOUNT WASHINGTON COG RAILWAY

Where: Climbs 3,500 feet to the top of Mount Washington, the highest summit in New England.

What: Distance: six miles roundtrip; journey time: three hours.
Operates only at weekends
between April 30 and Memorial
Day (the last Monday in May),
then daily until Columbus Day
(second Monday in October).
Why: It might not be the
longest or most high-profile
of the US's rail journeys, but
this antique train has been
chugging passengers up to New
Hampshire's highest peak since
1852, and taking the route on the

slice of American history.
Passengers have an hour
to spend at the 6,288ft-high
summit, where the view spans
the mountains and valleys of
New Hampshire, Maine and
Vermont, with Canada to the
north and the Atlantic Ocean
to the east. A visit to the Mount
Washington Observatory's
Weather Museum provides some
intriguing stats about Mount
Washington's conditions in
winter, which rival those of Mount
Everest and the Polar regions.

world's first mountain-climbing

cog railway offers clients a real

The views are impressive yearround, but the best time for this train trip has to be September or October, when the colours of autumn blaze across the hills and valleys from the summit, broadening the appeal of this journey beyond just dedicated train-spotters.

Book it: Great Rail Journeys offers a new 10-day New England in the Fall tour for 2017, priced from £2,095. The trip includes a journey on the Mount Washington Cog Railway and a round trip on the North Conway Scenic Railroad, eight nights' accommodation (room-only) and various excursions, valid for departures in September and October 2017. Book by June 3 for a £100 discount.

Where: Chicago to New Orleans.
What: Distance: 926
miles; journey time: 19 hours,
30 minutes. Runs daily, with the first train leaving Chicago at 08.15 and the last train leaving New
Orleans at 19.37.

Why: For fans of folk, blues and jazz, a pilgrimage to America's three most music-rich cities

- Chicago, Memphis and New Orleans - is a must, and taking the sleeper train allows clients to ride in the shadows of American music greats like Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters and Elvis Presley.

The route is served by the Amtrak national train service, which offers plenty of legroom, complimentary blankets and reclining leather armchairs for as little as \$105 return, making it ideal for those on a tight budget.

Clients needn't ride the whole route: the prettiest leg is out of Memphis, following the Mississippi through mangroves, past plantations and into the buzz of the Big Easy. For clients wishing to really make the most of each city en route, allow a good 10 days with time for overnight stops along the way. Book it: Riviera Travel offers a 14-day Deep South USA Plus Texas tour from £2,299 including return flights to Atlanta, all transfers and a journey on Amtrak's 'City of New Orleans' rail service from Memphis to New Orleans, plus 12 nights' room-only accommodation and excursions. rivieratravel.co.uk

COAST STARLIGHT
Where: Los Angeles

**Where:** Los Angele to Seattle.

What: Distance: 1,377 miles; journey time: 35 hours. Runs daily, with the first train leaving Seattle at 09.00, and the last train from Los Angeles at 21.00 each day.

Why: Clients looking to put a new spin on a classic West Coast trip can take Amtrak's Coast Starlight and get ready to Instagram their journey away thanks to excellent panoramic views of surfer dudeteeming beach towns and the

Cascade Mountains' sloping cliffs.

Suggest that passengers riding the whole route pay the extra cash for the roomette option: a private room for two where seats transform into beds, and

46 travelweekly.co.uk 28 April 2016 28 April 2016







FAR LEFT: Napa Valley

LEFT: Grand Canyon Railway

## FAST FACT

new Denver rail lin from the internationa airport to downtown offers an easy way to transfer for rail itineraries

where the ticket price includes wine tasting and food.

For the best views, which are between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, clients should visit the sightseer lounge car, where all seats face floor-to-ceiling windows.

Book it: 1st Class Holidays offers a nine-day Californian Rail Journey from £1,529,

including a Sonoma & Napa Valley winery tour, and travel on Amtrak's Coast Starlight from San Francisco to Los Angeles and Los Angeles to San Diego. The price includes eight nights' accommodation based on two sharing, excluding flights. 1stclassholidays.com

#### **GRAND CANYON RAILWAY**

Where: Williams, Arizona, to the Grand Canyon.

What: Distance: 65 miles; journey time: two hours, 15 minutes. Runs daily 364 days a year, with the first train departing Williams at 09.30 and the last train departing Grand Canyon at 16.30.

Why: Few sights are as aweinspiring as the Grand Canyon, and there is something impossibly romantic about this feat of nature coming into view as clients board the old-world vintage trains of the Grand Canyon Railway. Most of the five million people who visit the Grand Canyon each year access the South Rim by mule or on a hike, so taking the train offers a more leisurely experience that's ideal for older passengers or those with young children.

Book it: Railbookers' 13-night Route 66 holiday by rail includes a trip on the Grand Canyon railroad, as well as 11 nights hotel accommodation, standardclass rail travel, roomette accommodation with meals on two overnight trains and some meals and tours, from £1,539.

railbookers.com



**ASK THE EXPERT** 

Emily Morrison,

product executive,



**Funway Holidays:** "Amtrak's rail network connects the major cities with unexpected gems along the way. The service is comfortable. efficient and very affordable, with tickets from New York to Washington DC starting at about £30. Rail holidays appeal to clients who want to travel to more than one destination without driving. Customers can also meet other travellers, watch

up in another." funway4agents. co.uk

the passing scenery

over a glass of wine

in the dining car

rather than above

at 30,000ft, and

go to bed in one

region and wake

the clouds



#### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

# HELP US CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF BEING GREAT!



Every week from 29th March for 10 weeks we are giving away 10 pairs of tickets to 10 great UK attractions!

Simply email us a booking reference you have made in the week to

Happy10@attractionworld.com stating which tickets you would choose if you are a winner!

#### ATTRACTIONWORLD.COM

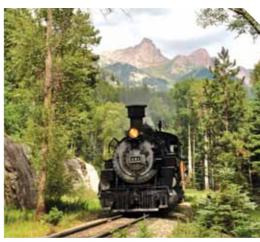
we give you the world



RIGHT:

FAR RIGHT:
Durango
& Silverton
Narrow
Gauge
Railroad





Where: New York to
Boston.
What: Distance: 231 miles;
journey time: four hours. Departs
05.04 from Boston and arrives in
New York at 08.44 each day.
Why: "The East Coast is Travel 2's
most popular destination in the

US for rail journeys, which is due

to the number of key locations and major cities that clients can see in one trip," says Ross Sinclair, senior product manager for the USA at Travel 2.

Travellers who fancy tagging Boston on to a New York break can do so by jumping on an Amtrak train, a convenient way of seeing the two cities and a chance to buy back some time if they plan to go on and explore more of New England. This speedy commuter service isn't the best way to sightsee, but it's well worth knowing about for time-pressed travellers keen to squeeze in as much of the East Coast as they can.

After a trip to Boston, home of

the American Revolution and the Red Sox baseball team, clients who take the train will arrive into the Big Apple's Pennsylvania Station, which is just a block away from shoppers' magnet Macy's and two blocks from the Empire State Building.

**Book it:** Travel 2 offers a sevenday Boston and New York by

Rail tour, including a journey on Amtrak's Boston to New York train, plus return flights from London, from £1,039, for travel in February 2017.

travel2.com

#### DURANGO & SILVERTON NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD

Where: Silverton to Durango, Colorado. What: Distance: 45 miles each way during the summer season from May 7 to October 29, and 26 miles each way from November 25 to May 6. Journey time is nine hours round-trip in summer and five hours in winter. Why: For devotees of Wild West history, a journey on board the legendary Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is an unforgettable one, riding on the same tracks as miners, cowboys and settlers of the Old West took

more than a century ago.

The historic train has been rolling since 1882, when it transported silver and gold out of the San Juan Mountains. Today, the steam-powered tourist train winds through canyons in the remote wilderness of the San Juan National Forest, climbs towards Colorado's snowsprinkled peaks, and finally stops in Durango, a town born in the Gold Rush era and located near Mesa Verde National Park. Book it: Cosmos Tours & Cruises has introduced an 11-day Historic Trains of the Old West tour. It includes rail journeys on the Durango & Silverton Railroad through the San Juan National Forest, as well as the Pikes Peak Cog Railway to the summit of Pikes Peak. Prices are from £2,745 based on a twin-share departing September 17, 2017, including return flights and nine nights' bed and breakfast. cosmostoursandcruises.co.uk TV

### Best of the rest

The Alaska Railroad
Whether clients want wildlife, craggy-faced mountains, bustling ports or urban escapes, the Alaska Railroad's got it by the bucket load. Collette's Alaska and The Yukon tour includes a journey on the Alaska Railroad.

The California Zephyr
One of the most scenic routes
in the US, the California Zephyr
(pictured) goes from Chicago to
San Francisco via the Rockies and
Sierras. Vacations by Rail has a
California Zephyr experience
that includes this Amtrak route.







# Why Alamo's the No.1 for USA car hire:

- Up to 30% off fully inclusive packages for Travel Industry professionals
- On-airport locations & award-winning customer service
- No hidden extras or credit card fees
- No cancellation charge

non stamo esculo?ivanstinueddy



Terms & Conditions: Travel Industry Staff ID will be required at time of rental to qualify for the discount and the rental does not qualify for frequent flyer programmes or coshback schemes. Examples of Travel Industry ID include Company ID card, business card, letter of employment or payalip. Standard rental terms and conditions apply. Full T&Cs found at www.alamo.co.uk/travelweekly (0/2016 Alamo Rent A Car. All rights reserved 16-UR015



#### 17 Award Winning Escorted Tours





Book online: www.newmarket.travel/agent | Reservations: 0330 160 7999 Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 9am-7pm | Sat: 9am-4pm | Sun: 11am-4pm

Online Training: www.training.newmarketholidays.co.uk | Enquiries: travelagents@newmarketholidays.co.uk

50 travelweekly.co.uk 28 April 2016 28 April 2016