Europe's Top 5 Scenic Rail Journeys Explored

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Rail travel is all about the journey - as much as the destination! Leading experts in rail holidays, Railbookers, share their top 5 picturesque routes in Europe!

1. Swiss Lakes and Mountains

Switzerland is a veritable treasure trove of scenic rail journeys. In the summer months the verdant pastures roll lusciously from the edge of the tracks into the horizon, in the winter the country unfolds like a veritable Narnia. Travel from Montreux to Interlaken on the Golden Pass Line. Rise up over Lake Geneva, gaze in awe at the Swiss Riviera, plunge through a mountain tunnel and coast through resorts like Gstaad and Châteaux d'Oex. Hit the high point (over 1,274 metres) before Zweisimmen and snake through the Simme Valley. Perhaps stopover in Interlaken and take a trip to Europe's highest railway station at the summit of Jungfraujoch.

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2. Norway in a Nutshell

This is a route with no 'off season': snow-dusted in winter, set ablaze by autumn hues, verdant and sleepy in the spring and sparkling in the summer. Norway in a nutshell combines the Bergen Railway, the Flam railway, the Aurlandsfjord, the Nærøyfjord and the Stalheimskleiva road. Hard to pronounce, easier to enjoy, the route is possible in a day but turning it into a holiday with a night or two in Oslo is well worthwhile. From Oslo it is full steam ahead over the Flam railway, descending deep into the fjord along the world's steepest regular-track railway line. You drop 861 metres in an hour as the panorama shifts from grand mountains to sparkling waterfalls – it's a short journey, but there won't be a second to take your eyes off the window!

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3. London to Fort William

Arrive at Euston after work one evening, doze off after a wee dram of whiskey and wake up the next morning across the border. It is civilised, time-effective and harks back to a different, more romantic era. And then there is the scenery. Fall asleep traversing London's suburbia and wake up seemingly in the middle of nowhere, the sun glinting through the blinds and deer bounding past the window. After exploring Fort William, the real treat begins. Often voted one of the world's most picturesque rail journeys, you will catch glimpses of crofter's cottages, tiny churches, the pristine coastline and deep green mountain panoramas, before crossing the Glenfinnan Viaduct famous for its starring role in the Harry Potter films.

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4. Germany's Rhineland

Catch the train from London to Brussels and change onto a high speed train to Cologne before delving into the German countryside. Board a train winding down the Rhine Valley through luscious greenery to Koblenz, abundant with palaces, churches, fountains and a real 'old world' charm. Cruise down the river or take a daytrip to historic Rudesheim, before heading up the Moselle. The tracks are paved through the heart of the Rhineland-Palatinate and trace the river banks along the Moselle Stretch from Koblenz to Trier – Germany's oldest city – which boasts a UNESCO-listed Cathedral and a picture perfect market square. After you have explored, continue on to the fairytale landscapes of Luxembourg to complete your holiday.

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5. Munich to Verona via the Brenner Pass

Combine some of Europe's most stunning cities with rail travel as scenic as any of Europe has to offer. The Bavarian capital of Munich plays host to every delightful Alpine cliché imaginable, which of course means you will find the finest surrounding mountain passes. There are fast trains that will take you from here to the Austrian skiing capital of Innsbruck, but why sacrifice scenery in favour of time when you are

on holiday? Skirt around the bases of the Alps, meander past glittering lakes and glide through the resort town of Garmsich-Partenkirchen on the regional train instead. Lap up the snow dusted, mountainous views before taking to the tracks once more, this time past the vineyards and mountains of the Brenner pass to Verona.

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