



Carrying on our discussion from last week about trains, we are lucky to have some of the worlds most iconic train journeys here in Australia. I am sure you have all heard of The Indian Pacific – the 4 day /3 night journey between Perth and Sydney. Of course, there is also The Ghan which offers a 3day/2 night journey from Adelaide to Darwin and The Ghan Expedition which travels southbound taking 4 days/3nights. New last year to the portfolio of Journeys Beyond (the company that owns and operates these traverses of Australia) is The Great Southern which travels from Adelaide to Brisbane 3days/2night and the southbound journey 4 days/3 nights. The Great Southern only operates in December and January.

If people have the time (and the funds) I always recommend the longer options on The Ghan and The Great Southern – why? Because they stop more along the way and offer more experiences like Coober Pedy on The Ghan and The Great Ocean Road on The Great Southern.

One year after a wedding in Adelaide some friends and I hopped on The Ghan and headed north to Alice Springs. The experience started as we arrived at the station, greeted by welcoming smiles as the staff made us comfortable on board and showed us around the lounge and dining cars - our home for the next couple of days. While on board all meals, beverages and sightseeing are included.

With this experience and the Indian Pacific from Adelaide to Sydney on another trip, I am happy to recommend these journeys. One of my lasting memories is the sense of Australia's vastness, of the great open spaces, of Big Sky country. We spent time quietly in our compartments or convivially in the lounge car meeting others, reading a book, or hearing about the area we were travelling through. Stops were made enroute and locals would join us to tell us about their lives in these remote areas, to talk about the history and the local environment.

Dining was a wonderful experience with an Australian theme throughout – I can't imagine how the chefs create these gourmet meals while dealing with the rocking of the train. The meals were delicious and the beverages were also local show casing great Australian wines to pair with our lunch and dinner. There is something about enjoying a wonderful meal while seeing vast plains with mobs of kangaroos and emu out the window!

Onboard there were a variety of compartments. Gold single offers the solo traveller a spacious lounge chair that is converted into a comfortable bed by the crew in the evening, these singles cars have showers and loos at the end of the carriage. Twin gold compartments are more spacious with comfortable bench seating during the day magically converting to an upper and lower berth while you are at dinner; there is also a compact, but adequate ensuite bathroom. On a different level are the platinum cabins which are spacious and comfortable with twin or queen sized bed, two lounge chairs and a more spacious ensuite; platinum guests also have access to the platinum lounge and dining car and are offered transfers at beginning and end of the trip.

Pricing is seasonal, however if you book early you can secure the limited number of advance purchase rates that are offered. Often we combine these rail journeys with a stay at either end, hire a car and drive to the Margaret River, take a paddleboat down the Murray, venture to Kangaroo Island – the options are endless in our great southern land. Let Travelling Places help you plan a wonderful experience. Take a journey beyond and immerse yourself in Australia.