



Traversing the Red Centre



The Indian Pacific



Gold Kangaroo dining car



# Making Tracks Across Australia

Travelling on Australia's great railway lines is an evocative way of watching magnificent and diverse landscapes slip seamlessly by while crossing the continent over the course of a few days. The 1,850-mile Ghan railway follows in the tracks of the men who laid telegraph lines with the help of their Afghan 'cameleers' – hence 'The Ghan' – and runs north-south between humid Darwin and temperate Adelaide. Similarly grand in scale and running from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, the 2,720-mile Indian Pacific line crosses three states and includes the world's longest straight stretch of railway.

The Ghan's journey south starts in Darwin, so you can take a few days beforehand to venture into stunning Kakadu National Park and Arnhem Land with their wonderful variety of wetland wildlife, waterfalls and little-visited Aboriginal rock art sites. Once underway, the first stop is at Katherine with time to explore the stunning orange-walled gorges of the Nitmiluk National Park by boat cruise or by scenic flight. Next day, the train arrives at Alice Springs where you can break the journey to explore Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon as well as taking in the fascinating Desert Wildlife Park (a favourite of David Attenborough, by all accounts). On the journey from Alice most guests choose to spend the night on the train and arrive at Adelaide the next day, but a little known stop is available on a request basis only. Disembarking at Manguri, you will be met by the side of the tracks at sunset and driven to the opal-mining town of Coober Pedy. The town takes its name from the Aboriginal "Kupa Piti", meaning "white man's hole in the ground" – the climate here is so harsh that the homes, churches and even hotels are built underground to avoid the heat. Guests can explore this troglodyte community and stay in the Desert Caves Hotel with a day at leisure before the same train passes again, giving time to explore the Painted Desert with its enigmatic mountainous mesas of colourful sands. Once the train journey

terminates at Adelaide, you are positively spoiled for choice, with the charming Barossa Valley and its wineries, Kangaroo Island's wildlife, and the Great Ocean Road all within easy reach.

The Indian Pacific travels from Perth to gold-rich Kalgoorlie, across the huge treeless Nullarbor Plain to Adelaide, then trundles cross-country to historic Broken Hill and on to the Blue Mountains before arriving in Sydney. The journey is epic in scale and can be enjoyed in two separate classes of travel. I would recommend the premium Gold Kangaroo Service and its en suite sleeper cabins, which are small yet comfortable private lounges during the day that your attendant private convert to bunk beds while you dine. All meals in the swish restaurant car are included and there is also an exclusive Gold Kangaroo communal lounge car where guests mingle over a glass of wine while trying to spot emus and red kangaroos. Some people will stay on the train for the full journey, but The Indian Pacific and The Ghan offer flexible fares allowing passengers to break their journey or join part way along in order to explore places in more depth.

Both of these comfortable trains offer the chance to relax with nothing to do but read a book in your private cabin, talk with your fellow passengers in the lounge car, look forward to the next delicious meal and watch the truly splendid Australian scenery drift by. This is a fine illustration of the old saying that the journey is as important as the destination. I can't think of a better way to spend a few days.

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## WEB PLUS

[www.audley.co.uk/features/ausrail](http://www.audley.co.uk/features/ausrail)  
For information on The Ghan and The Indian Pacific



Red kangaroo



On board fine dining



The Indian Pacific

## FACT FILE

A two night trip on The Ghan, travelling from Darwin to Adelaide, costs from £795 per person. A three night trip on The Indian Pacific in Gold Kangaroo service, travelling from Perth to Sydney, costs from £710 per person. Please call our Australia specialists on 01869 276 345 for details.

