

Canada by train

See all the sights while crossing the country by rail

CHRISTINE HELGREN of Farmington Hills is 25, single and looking for a great train vacation.

"Wouldn't it be interesting to travel by a comfortable, classy train with sleeping accommodations, meals, etc. . . stopping at intervals for sightseeing, shopping and museums? An interesting, satisfying, safe trip."

Toni Galeana of Livonia is in her 40s, divorced and exploring trips where she can travel with a group — "not as a swinging single but just as a group with common interests. I really do dislike dining alone and I love to share sightseeing excursions and adventures with others."

These two single travelers are perfect candidates for a spectacular cross-Canada train experience on VIA Rail Canada, the national railway passenger service which offers both regular scheduled service and group tours throughout Canada.

Amtrak offers similar tours in the United States, but with less comfort and service. The reason: Canada has continued to finance and upgrade its railway service, while the United States has allowed its railway service to deteriorate over the last decade.

Amtrak made, and is making, a valiant attempt to restore the golden age of train travel. But the government provides less and less money to work with.

Most Canadians live within 100 miles of the U.S. border, so it is not surprising that Canada was developed by its railroads; they could thread through most of the population by making a single pair of lines across the country.

IT IS SUCH a spectacular trip that I recommend it to every foreign visitor who can take the time and has the serenity to enjoy slow travel.

VIA's 17-day Western Canada Discoverer tour takes you from Montreal or Toronto to Vancouver and back, with a two-day stop in Calgary, tours of the Rocky Mountain area around Banff, a 600-mile trip through the splendors of the three mountain ranges between Banff and Vancouver and two nights in the Pacific coast city of Vancouver, just to whet your appetite.

You will sail to Vancouver Island, in a flurry of seagulls and ocean views, come back by train and bus through the Yellowhead Highway to Jasper Nation-



Iris Jones
contributing travel editor

one-of-a-kind traveler

al Park and the city of Edmonton, and then track on home.

The tour costs \$1,550 Canadian (approximately \$1,240 US) through Sept. 30, less from Oct. 1 to June 1, including transportation, sleeping accommodations, most tours, but not meals. Meals on VIA trains are reasonably priced and beautifully served.

If you don't have time for such a tour, consider taking one of their shorter trips, or simply buy passage to Vancouver on your own, and fly back. The trip takes four nights and three days if you go straight through.

THE COST IS \$187, plus \$131 for a lower berth, Toronto to Vancouver; \$202 from Windsor. I recommend a lower berth rather than a roomette because you have an opportunity to meet the other people in your car.

Here is another alternative: Get off the train and stay in the wonderful hotels built at the turn of the century by the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways for an age of elegant rail travel.

They include the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, the Banff Springs Hotel in Banff and the Empress Hotel in Victoria, with several smaller versions in smaller cities. All are glamorously restored "grand dames" in the very center of cities adjacent to the railway stations. Most are still centers of social life in Canada.

Telephone ViaRail at 963-6037 in Detroit. You can buy tickets through Amtrak if you wish. You can board in Detroit, but train lovers in the know drive across the border and catch the train in Windsor.



MICKY JONES
A young moose grazes beside the Trans-Canada Highway a few miles west of Lake Louise.

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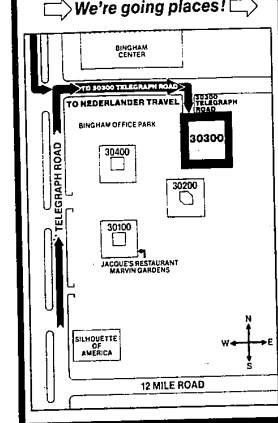
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