

Journeys by Railway

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It is well-known that the train is the last word in truth drugs. All the world's airlines have failed to inspire what one choo-choo train has: the dramas of "The Orient Express" and a whole library of railway masterpieces. A rail journey is virtually the only occasion in travel on which complete strangers bare their souls, because the rail passenger - the calmest of travellers - has absolutely nothing to lose. He has more choices than anyone else in motion: unlike the air traveller strapped in his chair like a candidate for electrocution, he can stroll, enjoy the view and sleep in the privacy of a horizontal position - he can travel, as the natives do, the six thousand miles from Nakhodka to Moscow, in his pyjamas; unlike the person on shipboard, he can restore his eyes with landscape, eat whenever he chooses and never know the ghastly jollity of group games - and he can get off whenever he likes. He can remain anonymous, adopt a disguise, or spend the five days from Istanbul to Tehran canoodling in his couchette. The train offers the maximum of opportunity with the minimum of risk. A train journey *is* travel; everything else - planes especially - is *transfer*, your journey beginning when you arrive...