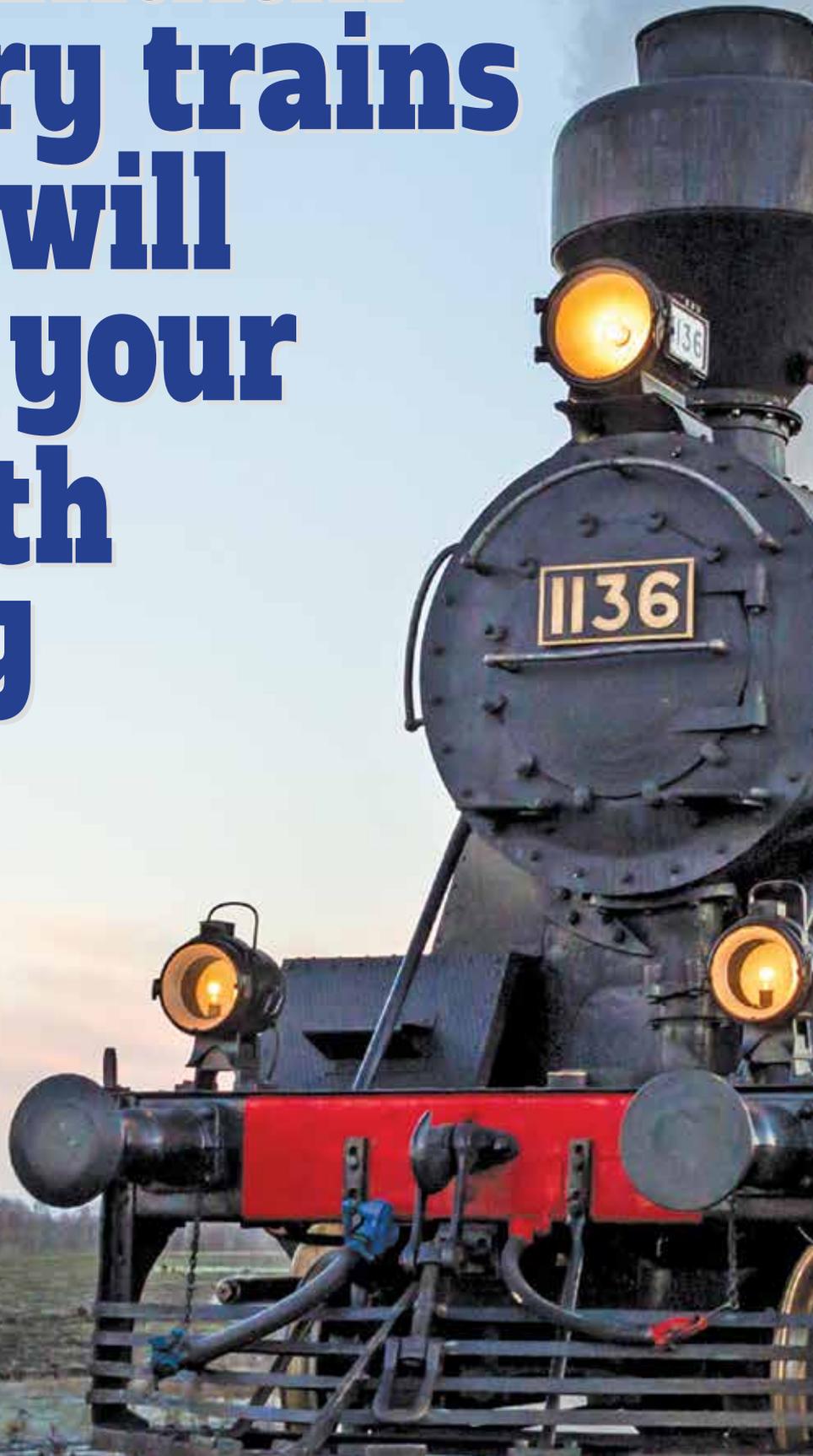


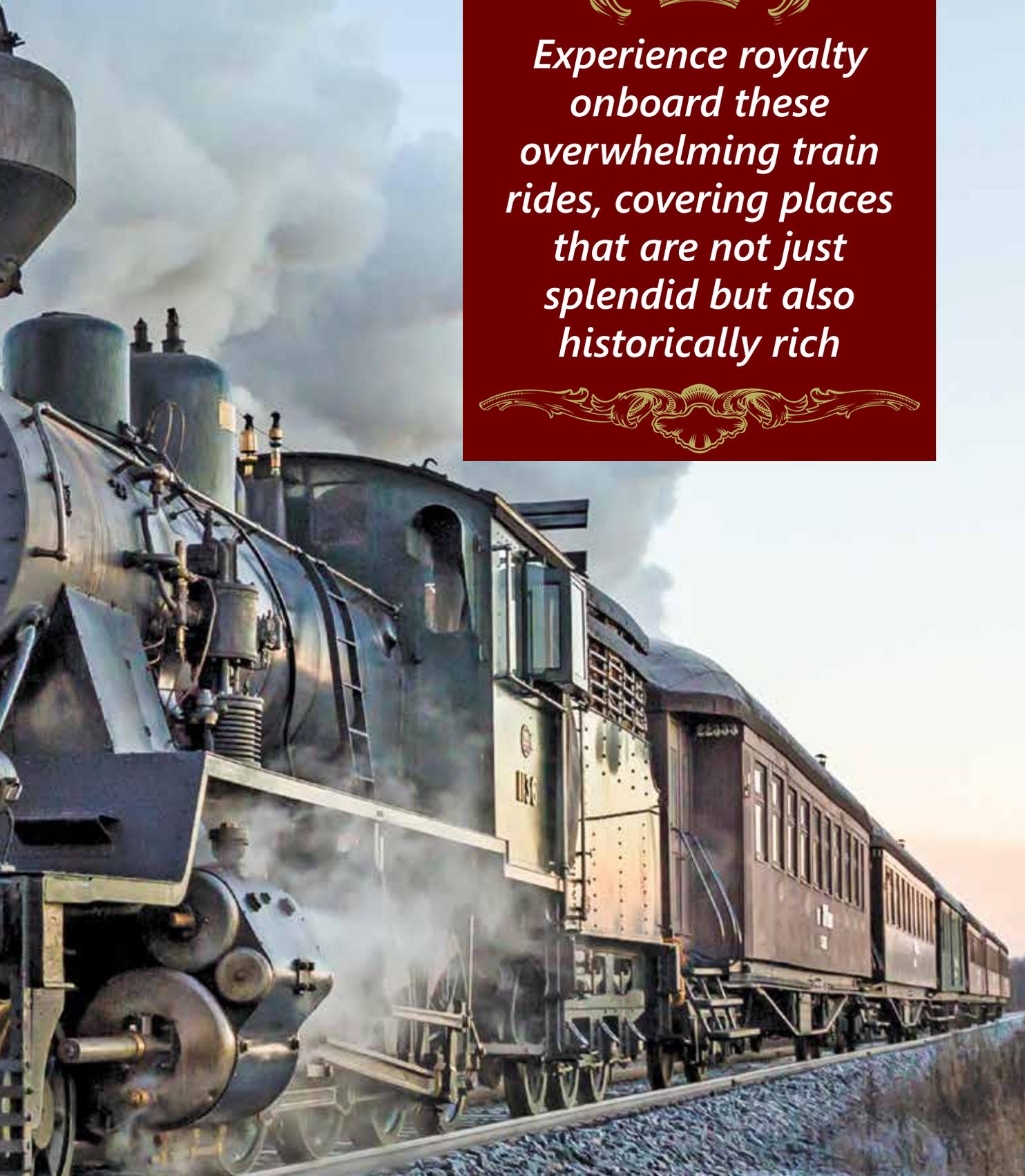
Five Indian luxury trains that will take your breath away



INDULGE



*Experience royalty
onboard these
overwhelming train
rides, covering places
that are not just
splendid but also
historically rich*



■ Neeharika Satyavada

Trains seemed the happiest choice, said Paul Theroux. "You could do anything on a train, you could live your life and go long distances. There was little stress, there was sometimes comfort, and there was something romantic in the notion of boarding a train."

There sure is romance in a train journey, as the moving train beats rhythmic on the metal tracks and you sit and stare at the rapidly changing scenes outside, lost in thought. Now, if that very train was your mini little palace on wheels, where your personal attendant served you tea in a bed that is adorned in silk and jewels - as you rushed past landscapes dotted with forts, palaces, sand dunes and ancient temples. How rich would that be? Surely an experience of a lifetime or should we just say, a right royal indulgence!

So, here we have put together a list of five Indian Luxury Trains that recreate just that, the romanticism of a bygone era over a week-long journey that promises to be a regal experience. Over the course of the journey, these royal trains traverse through the heart of the country, stopping at both popular and off-the-radar tourist destinations.

Tickets for scheduled journeys for all these trains can be booked online. Each train has its own exclusive website with the train name as the site address.



Picture used for representational purpose only

Palace on Wheels

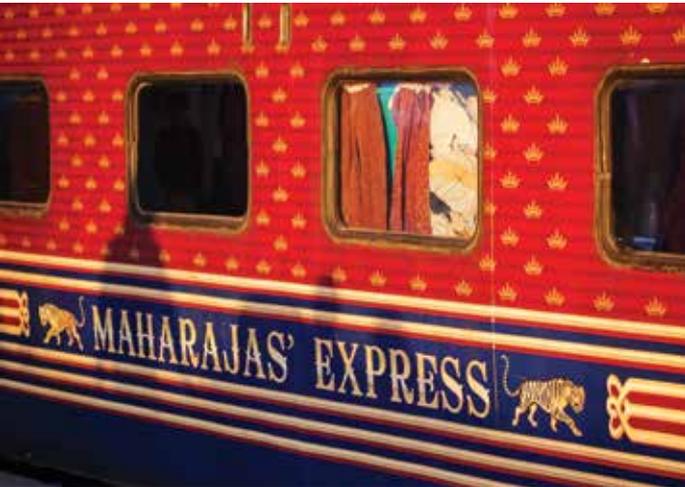
The country's oldest and the first luxury train to have made journeying on a train famous, the Palace on Wheels is unparalleled both in terms of its heritage and fame. The train was launched in 1982 through a collaboration between the Indian Railways and the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation, in a bid to put to use the luxurious personal carriages of the erstwhile Maharajas, Nizams and Viceroys of pre-Independence India.



These finely furnished royal carriages along with the *khidmatgars* (personal attendants) who cater to your every whim while on board the Palace of Wheels make sure you feel like royalty as you travel the golden deserts of Rajasthan.

Still counted amongst the most prestigious luxury trains in the world, the Palace on Wheels was re-done with all the modern amenities and re-launched in 2009. The train departs from the beautiful Safdarjung Station in New Delhi every Wednesday, September through April. A journey on the Palace of Wheels can be booked for around three lakh to seven and a half lakh, depending on the cabin one chooses.

Maharaja's Express



In an effort to increase its domestic clientele while keeping intact the train's aspirational image, Indian Railways has this year introduced shorter itineraries of four days and three nights. Also, expanding on its current itineraries, the Maharaja's Express will soon have six itineraries with some scheduled journeys even to the South.

The Maharaja's Express runs from September to April, starting its journey on the weekend, from Delhi. The ticket for the full journey is priced at five and a half lakh. The shorter itineraries are priced between two to three lakh.

Maharaja's Express, its very name exudes opulence, and rightly so, for this is India's most luxurious train and also priciest. The Maharaja's Express with its rich red carpeted, jewel studded interiors is all grandeur and extravagance.

This train is fitted with spacious cabins that come with their own attached baths. Much like a five-star hotel, these cabins come with a television, movie player, a personal electronic safe and round-the-clock butler service. This is one train ride that is true indulgence and totally worth the hefty price tag.

Taking you through India's Golden Triangle, Delhi - Agra - Jaipur and also off-beat stops like Balasinor - where guests are treated to an exclusive lunch hosted by the Royal Family of Balasinor - the Maharaja's Express occupies pride of place in this list.



Deccan Odyssey

As the name suggests, Deccan Odyssey runs through the Deccan Plateau of India traversing through Maharashtra, Telangana, the Sahayadris and beyond. Its best itinerary though is the Hidden Treasures of Gujarat - this train ride takes you to little known but stunning destinations like Palitana.

Though launched by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation in conjunction with the Indian Railway Ministry and the Taj Group of Hotels, the Deccan Odyssey is now run by a private company and is the only luxury train on this list that is not run by IRCTC. Which does translate in a way, into how the train is appointed. For instance, only half the coaches hold guest cabins. The rest of the coaches are set aside for the usual dining, lounge and spa cars, but what's different about this train is that it even has a conference car which comes with private rooms and secretarial services. What stays same though, is the attempt to recreate the past extravagance of Indian royalty, for each of these coaches of the Deccan Odyssey take inspiration for their design from the different dynasties that once ruled Maharashtra.



The Deccan Odyssey leaves every Saturday from Mumbai, December through May. A ticket for a journey on the Deccan Odyssey costs around four and a half lakh. There is also a presidential suite onboard this train that comes at a price tag of nine lakh twenty five thousand rupees.



The Golden Chariot

Till recently, the Golden Chariot was South India's only luxury train, but with the other trains starting to journey down South, this is no longer true. It still does have the most interesting itinerary though, for those wishing to explore the rich architectural heritage of South India. Even the dining cars on this train - a joint venture between the State Government of Karnataka and the Ministry of Railways - are inspired by the architecture of Hampi and Halebidu, the renowned ancient ruins of the state. And, in true South style, The Golden Chariot offers Ayurvedic massages in its onboard spa, even making a quick stop in Kerala. The only luxury train to do so.



The Golden Chariot begins its journey from Bangalore, usually on a Monday. It runs from October to March. A journey on the Golden Chariot costs around two and a half lakh.



Mahaparinirvan Express



Though not a royal train, the Mahaparinirvan Express is modern luxury. What brings this semi-luxurious train to this list, is that it is one-of-its-kind. Every winter, Buddhists from across the world take this train to follow in the footsteps of the Buddha.

The Mahaparinirvan Express journeys from Delhi through Bodh Gaya, Sravasti, Nalanda, Kushinagar even going as far as Gorakhpur to get to Lumbini in Nepal. The first class coupes, personal security, knowledgeable guides complete with a mini library onboard make it quite a luxurious train journey, as you stop at every place that was of significance to the Buddha.

The Mahaparinirvan Express or the Buddhist Train as it is also known, leaves from Delhi Safdarjung Station every Saturday, September through March. An AC coupe on the Buddhist train costs a lakh of rupees.

▼

Journey details of 5 Royal Trains

Train	Departure Station	Departure Day & Months	Primary Destinations	Price of The Ticket
Palace on Wheels	New Delhi	Wednesdays, September to April	Rajasthan	INR 3,00,000 to 7,50,000
Maharaja's Express	New Delhi	Saturdays / Sundays, September to April	Rajasthan	INR 2,00,000 to 5,50,000
Deccan Odyssey	Mumbai	Saturdays, December to May	Maharashtra, Karnataka & Telangana	INR 4,50,000
The Golden Chariot	Bangalore	Mondays, October to March	Karnataka	INR 2,50,000
Mahaparinirvan Express	New Delhi	Saturdays, September to March	Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal	INR 1,00,000