

GUIDE TO JOURNEYS ON GREAT SOUTHERN RAIL

Great Southern Railway is an Adelaide-based company which operates Australia's iconic transcontinental trains – the east-west “Indian Pacific” Sydney-Adelaide-Perth and v.v., and the north-south “Ghan” Darwin-Adelaide and v.v.

These trains are now almost entirely tourist orientated. Ordinary passengers are rare, although the train do still serve some isolated, outback locations. Accommodation on these trains is either of luxury (designated Gold) or super-luxury class (Platinum), with prices to match. The fares include fine meals, but not the off-train excursions which are extra. These trains may be compared to land-based cruises. These trains operate only once a week, but are both usually of huge length. Accommodation is in upmarket suites. There are dining (Queen Adelaide Restaurant) and lounge cars.

The locomotives, and locomotive crews, are provided by another company on contract, Pacific National, which otherwise is an operator of freight trains.

Great Southern Rail also operates the traditional “Overland” passenger train between Melbourne and Adelaide twice a week.

“INDIAN PACIFIC” EAST-WEST TRANSCONTINENTAL JOURNEY

The train's name refers to the two oceans it connects.

All along the East Coast of Australia, there is a narrow coastal plain, usually heavily populated, then a steep ascent of a mountain range parallel to the coast known as the Great Dividing Range. The descent on the western side of this Range is usually easier. This is followed by rolling hills gradually giving up to the seemingly endless western plains. The NSW Western line and the east-west transcontinental railway are examples of this.

This geography is repeated in reverse, and to a much smaller extent, next to the western coast of Australia.

Place	Km from Sydney	Notes
Sydney Central	0	<p>Sydney Central station is at the southern edge of the central business district. It is a magnificent structure – both architecturally and for railway operating. It is huge – 25 platforms (2 underground). Most are terminating platforms for long distance and middle distance trains. But there are through platforms used by suburban trains.</p> <p>More details at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_railway_station,_Sydney</p> <p>Suburban trains continue by underground lines to the centre of the city. A double track line continues over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Ten tracks a short distance to Illawarra Junction., then six tracks.</p>
		<p>The attractive stone station to the west (right hand side) was the Mortuary Station, where Funeral trains departed until the 1930s.</p>
		<p>Very, very busy suburban line – six tracks. Dense inner suburbs.</p>

Strathfield	12	Major junction for western and northern lines.
Homebush		Four tracks from here.
Lidcombe	17	Olympic Park (for the 2000 Olympics) is very close to the north (but you can't see it).
Granville	21	Junction for the original mainline to the south. Following is the direct triangle connection from west to south.
Parramatta	23	An area of settlement from the earliest days of European settlement in Australia. Now generally regarded as the second most important business centre of Sydney.
Westmead	25	A flyunder converts tracks from up, down, up, down configuration to down, down, up, up.
Seven Hills	32	A flyover takes down Richmond and terminating trains over the mainline.
Blacktown	35	Large six platform station. Continues through the seemingly endless western suburbs.
St Marys	47	Four tracks reduce to two.
Penrith	55	Bridge over the Nepean River. The road bridge alongside was the original railway bridge.
Emu Plains	57	The steep ascent of the Blue Mountains begins. A very pretty section of railway through the wild country of the Glenbrook Gorge replaced the line through a tunnel, which itself was a replacement for the original line which ascended via a zig zag.
Glenbrook	67	This railway is very busy with local electric passenger trains, coal trains and some long distance passenger and freight trains.
Valley Heights	77	Now the ascent of the Blue Mountains becomes really fearsome – a gradient of 1 in 33, or 3%.
Springwood	80	Urban development in the Blue Mountains is in a thin strip following the railway. There are brief glimpses of the valleys below.
Lawson	96	Part of the series of pretty Blue Mountain villages.
Wentworth Falls	103	
Katoomba	110	The major centre of tourism in the Blue Mountains. Stunning scenic attractions and views are nearby.
Blackheath	121	At 1065 metres, the highest station crossing the Mountains.
Mt Victoria	127	Attractive old stone station building.
Newnes Jnc	142	There is now a major deviation, dating from 1910. This comprises a series of ten tunnels in quick succession in very rugged country. This deviation replaced the Great Zig Zag, the original – impressive but inefficient – way the railway descended the western side of the Great Dividing Range. Between the ten tunnels are magnificent, but brief, glimpses into the valley below.
Zig Zag	151	Alongside the tiny platform is the depot of the Zig Zag Railway which is attempting to run heritage trains on the original alignment of the zig zag.
Lithgow	156	Locomotive depot. The end of railway electrification. The site of Australia's first steelworks.

Hermitage	157	The point where control of the railway infrastructure changes from Transport for New South Wales, a NSW state government body, to the lessee, John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network.
Wallerawang	171	Attractive old stone station building. From here, to Tarana, the line has been reduced to one track.
Rydal	181	Through attractive hilly country, with heavy earthworks.
Tarana	198	Double track resumes. The alignment of a former branchline to Oberon can be seen climbing steeply up the hill to the south.
Kelso	237	Single track now. Bridge over the Macquarie River.
Bathurst	239	Significant city.
Newbridge	274	Double track resumes for a few km.
Murrobo	287	Double to single track.
Blayney	290	Was a junction for a cross-country line to the south.
Spring Hill	309	Double track resumes.
Orange Fork Junction.	321	Single track now.
Molong	360	The hills are getting smaller as the western plains get closer.
Parkes	446	A significant railway junction. East-west freight trains, having travelled from Sydney via the more easily graded line via Cootamundra, now join this line. This will also be the future junction of the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Freight Railway. At this point, control of the railway infrastructure changes from John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network to the Australian Rail Track Corporation, a Federal Government body.
Condobolin	546	The country is now flat and uninteresting.
Menindee	1007	Bridge over the Darling River. Site of the Menindee Lakes, which fill after good rains and lie empty in drought years.
Broken Hill	1125	A very isolated city. Was once the site of a very rich mineral field – lead, zinc, copper – but now largely worked out. This mineral wealth was the basis of the Broken Hill Billiton Company, now one of the biggest mineral companies in the world. Broken Hill is now largely dependent on tourism.
Cockburn	1174	The border of New South Wales and South Australia. Landscape fairly flat and uninteresting. Remnants of the original narrow gauge line can be glimpsed parallel to the present standard gauge line.
Peterborough	1405	Was once a three gauge interchange station.
Gladstone	1470	Was once a three gauge interchange station.
Crystal Brook	1491	Start of double track
Coonamia	1516	Reversion to single track.
Two Wells	1643	Stop for passengers on Barossa Valley wineries tour.
Salisbury	1666	Parallel to Adelaide Metro broad gauge double-track suburban line. This line is likely to be electrified in the near future.
Dry Creek	1674	Adelaide Metro suburban train depot, followed by freight terminals.
Islington	1678	Railway workshops.

Adelaide	1688	Great Southern Rail's station is in the parklands a few kilometres from the city centre. Adelaide is Australia's fifth biggest city. The city centre is surrounded by a belt of parklands. Adelaide is served by a suburban train network – mainly diesel, but electrification has started.
	Km from Adelaide	The Indian Pacific retraces its route to Coonamia
Islington	9	Railway workshops.
Dry Creek	14	Freight terminals followed by an Adelaide Metro suburban train depot.
Salisbury	22	
Two Wells	45	
Coonamia	197	Start of double track.
Crystal Brook	222	Reversion to single track
Port Augusta	312	At head of deeply indented Spencers Gulf. A junction station. The Indian Pacific now traverses the Trans-Australian Railway, completed in 1917 to link Western Australia by land with the eastern states. This crosses the Nullarbor (no trees) Plain and crosses a vast expanse of barren country.
Pimba	494	Close to former rocket range of Woomera.
Tarcoola	724	Junction for North-South transcontinental railway.
		Many of the stations across the unpopulated Nullarbor Plain are named after former Governors-General, Prime Ministers, Ministers of Transport and World War I and II Generals.
	1017	Start of the longest straight stretch of railway in the world – 478 kilometres (297 miles)
Cook	1111	A desolate, tiny settlement, where the locomotives are refuelled, and passengers can detrain and stretch their legs.
	1273	Cross the border from South Australia to Western Australia.
	1494	End of the long straight.
Rawlinna	1623	On the westbound run, passengers detrain here for an “outback” dinner, and on the eastbound journey for an “outback” breakfast.
Kalgoorlie	2002	A very rich gold mining centre since the 1890s. Still a major centre for mining. Control of track and infrastructure changes here from the Australian Rail Track Corporation to Brookfield Rail Engineering.
Koolyanobbing	2202	Iron ore mines.
		Remnants of the original narrow gauge line can be glimpsed parallel to the present standard gauge line
Merredin	2361	Fertile country returns. Start of wheat growing area.
Northam	2537	Major railway junction with a large yard, mainly for wheat traffic. The next section of line goes through the scenic Darling Ranges via the Avon River valley There is heavy engineering. The line is double track and dual gauge (standard and narrow).

Midland	2643	Start of the Perth suburban area. Local Perth electric trains will be seen. Control of track changes here from Brookfield Rail Engineering to the Public Transport Commission of Western Australia.
Perth Terminal	2657	Total kilometrage from Sydney is 4345. Standard gauge trains terminate at Perth Terminal, which is in the suburbs. The main Perth station is 2.3 kilometres further (three stations via Perth electric suburban trains). Perth is a vibrant and attractive city on the Indian Ocean. It is served by a high-quality suburban, electrified railway network.

“GHAN” SOUTH-NORTH TRANSCONTINENTAL JOURNEY

This is the only north-south transcontinental train in the world. The railway was completed in 2004.

Place	Km	Notes
Adelaide	0	Great Southern Rail’s station is in the parklands a few kilometres from the city centre. Adelaide is Australia’s fifth biggest city. The city centre is surrounded by a belt of parklands. Adelaide is served by a suburban train network – mainly diesel, but electrification has started. As far as Salisbury parallel to Adelaide Metro broad gauge double-track suburban line. This line is likely to be electrified in the near future. The Ghan is on track of the Australian Rail Track Corporation, a Federal Government body.
Islington	9	Railway workshops.
Dry Creek	14	Freight terminals followed by an Adelaide Metro suburban train depot.
Salisbury	22	
Two Wells	45	
Coonamia	197	Start of double track.
Crystal Brook	222	Reversion to single track
Port Augusta	312	At head of deeply indented Spencers Gulf. A junction station. The Ghan now traverses portion of the Trans-Australian Railway, completed in 1917 to link Western Australia by land with the eastern states. This crosses the Nullarbor (no trees) Plain and crosses a vast expanse of barren country.
Pimba	494	Close to former rocket range of Woomera.
Tarcoola	724	Junction for North-South and East-West transcontinental railways. Control of the track changes from the Australian Rail Track Corporation to Genesee and Wyoming Australia, a subsidiary of the American short-lines operator.
Manguri	928	On southbound journeys, passengers detrain here for a bus trip to the Coober Pedy opal mines.
	1289	Cross the border from South Australia to the Northern Territory.

		Heavitree Gap, a gorge, just before -
Alice Springs	1555	The major town of the centre of Australia. There is much Aboriginal culture on display. Passengers have the option of a visit to the Botanical Gardens. Pine Gap, a major US-Australian electronic intelligence interception centre is nearby.
Katherine	2667	Passengers may take a trip to scenic Katherine Gorge. From here the country changes from barren to tropical. There is enormous variation between the dry and wet seasons.
Darwin	2974	The station is a long way from the city. Connecting buses are provided.

“OVERLAND” ADELAIDE TO MELBOURNE

Place	Km as marked	Notes
Melbourne Southern Cross	0	This is a large and distinctive station. It was completely rebuilt from 2002 to 2006. There is one point near the main Spencer/Collins Streets entrance where, without moving, you can watch the regional diesel trains arriving and departing every few minutes, the electric suburban trains passing through every few minutes and the trams outside every few seconds. Alternatively, use the upstairs passage ways – one at each end – as vantage points for the trains. The curvy roof is not only for appearance, but also to disperse the diesel fumes. The portion of the station for interstate and regional trains is controlled by V/Line. The portion for suburban trains is controlled by Metro Trains Melbourne. More details at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Cross_railway_station
		On tracks controlled by the Australian Rail Track Corporation, a Federal Government body.
		The interstate standard gauge line is quite separate from the lines used by suburban and regional trains. Soon after departure it goes over the North Melbourne viaduct spanning all the other tracks. The Regional Rail Link (opened 21 June 2015) then junctions off. The line is controlled by Centralised Traffic Control (CTC) situated at Junee, NSW.
<i>Dynon</i>		Dynon locomotive depot and Dynon freight yards. There are lots of nice areas in Melbourne, but you sure don't see them along this route. There is lots of light industry, rail yards and dreary suburbs.
<i>West Dynon Junction</i>	7	Bridge over Maribyrnong River, followed by short tunnel.
<i>West Footscray Junction</i>		Six running tracks – 2 (broad gauge electrified) belong to Metro Trains Melbourne, 2 (broad gauge) belong to V/Line for regional passenger trains, 2 (standard gauge) belong to the Australian Rail Track Corporation for interstate trains – these

		are the lines the Overland uses. Also the Tottenham Marshalling yard – main freight yard for Melbourne.
Brooklyn		More dreary industrial areas.
Newport	17	Now parallel to the double track, broad gauge electrified suburban line. The suburbs here are the fastest growing area of Australia.
Werribee	33	End of the electrified suburban line alongside. However, very soon after, the double track broad-gauge line is used by frequent V/Line regional trains.
North Shore Geelong	73	The station for Geelong, a major industrial city. Dual gauge (standard and broad) and mainly double track, as far as -
Gheringhap	89	The line junctioning to the north mainly carries wheat trains. The Overland's route is via flat and uninteresting, but fertile, country.
Ararat	271	Junction station. Also served by V/Line passenger trains via a shorter, direct line from Melbourne via Ballarat.
Stawell		Former gold mining town.
Horsham	387	Major town.
	526	Cross the border from Victoria to South Australia.
Bordertown	543	Scrubby, flat country, but wheat is grown.
Tailem Bend.	719	Formerly a major junction station.
Murray Bridge	742	Cross the Murray River, the major river of Australia, but hardly a big river by world standards. The parallel road bridge was the original rail bridge.
Monarto South	757	Now moving into the attractive Adelaide Hills.
Mt Lofty	808	Summit station – 489 metres.
Belair	817	From here suburban diesel trains of Adelaide Metro operate on the parallel broad gauge line. Through the leafy south eastern suburbs.
Adelaide	836	Great Southern Rail's station is in the parklands a few kilometres from the city centre. Adelaide is Australia's fifth biggest city. The city centre is surrounded by a belt of parklands. Adelaide is served by a suburban train network – mainly diesel, but electrification has started.