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# THE WEEK

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## This week's dream: by train through the wilds of Canada

Travelling through the "extreme depths" of Canada's western wilderness, the Skeena train plies one of the most spectacular railways in the world, says Monisha Rajesh in *The Guardian*. It runs between Jasper, a small mountain town in the Canadian Rockies, and the port city of Prince Rupert, on the northwest coast of British Columbia – making for a 720-mile, two-day journey. Along the way, you pass "teal-green" lakes, logging towns and old sawmill settlements; there's plenty of wildlife to spot, and staggering views of the "ice-capped crags" of Mount Robson.

The train's name derives from the dialect of the Gitksan First Nations people, and means river of the clouds; it is also known officially as Train Five, and affectionately by the commuters who tend to comprise its passengers as the Rupert Rocket. It used to operate as an overnight service, but in the 1990s it started taking a break in Prince George, a large town at the midpoint of the journey, where



The Skeena makes its way through British Columbia

from Prince Rupert, it's worth visiting the remains of ancient First Nations villages on nearby Pike Island, and taking a whale-watching boat tour. A single journey from Jasper to Prince Rupert costs from £5142 (£83); visit [viatrain.ca](http://viatrain.ca). Around the World in 80 Trains by Monisha Rajesh is published by Bloomsbury at £20.

### Hotel of the week



#### Ashford Castle County Mayo, Ireland

A former residence of the Guinness family, this huge castle has hosted notable guests, from Oscar Wilde to Ronald Reagan – though it's "anything but stiff", says Tatler. Staff are "wonderfully friendly" (some have worked here their whole lives), and there's no end of fun to be had both inside (with a cinema, a Lego butler service for children and an "elegant" spa) and outside (horse and bike rides, zip-lining, fishing trips on the "salmon-stuffed" Lough Corrib and more). Each of the "wildly patterned" rooms is "a winner", and the food is great, including formal dining focused on French and Irish dishes.

Rooms from £710 b&b. 00 353 94 954 6003, [ashford-castle.com](http://ashford-castle.com).

### Getting the flavour of...

#### A palatial escape from New Delhi

A five-hour train journey from the Indian capital, the 18th century palace of Bhainsrorgarh makes for a fascinating and relaxing long-weekend retreat from the city, says Alex Travelli in 1843 magazine. "Breathe a sigh of relief" as the "unhurried" locals and their livestock make way for you on the approach to this fortified royal residence, built in the 1740s on a crook of the Chambal River in the deep south of Rajasthan. It is closed to sightseers, but is open as a hotel, where guests can enjoy "opulent" local cuisine and fine views over the countryside. Paddle down the "unspoilt" Chambal or explore the beautiful 11th century ruins of Baroli (reminiscent of the more famous temples of Khajuraho), and the frescoes and palaces of Bundi, also nearby. Visit [bhainsrorgarh.com](http://bhainsrorgarh.com) for more information.

#### A hiker's paradise in Greece

The second-largest island in the Cyclades, and only two hours by ferry from the port of Rafina, near Athens airport, Andros is far lusier than its neighbours, with rolling green hills, forested peaks and wetlands teeming with wildlife. The hiking on its footpaths (all 200 or so miles of them) is "dramatic" and varied – and there are some 70 beaches, so you can conclude every walk with a swim in "crystal waters", says Rachel Howard in

The Sunday Times. One-third of the island is a nature reserve, and hidden high in the hills are dozens of stone villages, as well as the "magnificent" manor houses of some of Greece's most "illustrious" shipping magnates. Beyond the "genteel" capital, there are some fine places to stay, such as the farmhouses of Kitima Lemones, the "eco-retreat" of Onar, and Melisses, an "antique-filled" guest house running creative retreats and cookery workshops. Visit [visitgreece.gr/en/greek\\_island\\_details/andros.html](http://visitgreece.gr/en/greek_island_details/andros.html).

#### A road trip across the Alentejo

Occupying a third of Portugal's land mass, but home to only 6% of its population, the Alentejo is a beautiful region of vineyards and cork forests, castle-topped villages and golden beaches. To take in a good range of its delights, hire a car and explore widely, says Hannah Summers in The Times. The best of the castles is Marvão, in a medieval hamlet teetering on a granite cliff in the north. In the centre of the region is Évora, the capital, which has 15th century walls, a spectacular Roman temple and an "eerie" 16th century ossuary, the Chapel of Bones. And in the southwest lie glorious beaches, such as Praia do Malhão. Stay nearby in one of the bungalows-on-stilts at the "elegant" Paraiso Escondido guest house. Bungalows from €250 per night; visit [paraisoescondido.pt](http://paraisoescondido.pt).

### Last-minute offers from top travel companies

#### Short break in Bristol

Two nights at the Hilton Garden Inn Bristol City Centre, with views of the Temple Gardens, cost from £110pp b&b (based on two sharing). 01904-717362, [superbreak.com](http://superbreak.com). Arrive 22 March.

#### Beachfront in Bulgaria

Looking to relax? Then spend 3 nights in a 1-bed apartment at the lovely Obzor Beach Resort, from £353pp b&b, including Birmingham flights. 0800-408 0778, [jet2holidays.com](http://jet2holidays.com). Depart 6 May.

#### Mediterranean cruise

This 7-night cruise sets out from Palma, with stops in Livorno, Marseille and Barcelona. From £767pp all-inclusive, including flights from Birmingham. 020-3636 1931, [tui.co.uk](http://tui.co.uk). Depart 9 April.

#### All-inclusive in Cape Verde

Located on the southern coast of Boa Vista island, the Hotel Rio Touareg offers a 7-night stay, all-inclusive, from £723pp with Manchester flights. 0800-408 4048, [haystravel.co.uk](http://haystravel.co.uk). Depart 25 March.