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How to Survive 27 Hours by Train in Canada

Check out these survival tips to get the best out of your journey by train in Canada.



Lydia Yang (<https://www.tripzilla.com/author/lydia-yang>)

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Contributed by Lydiascapes (<http://lydiascapes.com/>)

“27 hours?!” was the incredulous remark with horrified faces I got from my new found friends I met at the backpackers I was staying at in Vancouver. 3 Girls – 1 Australian, 1 British and 1 Swiss with a mix of awe, pity and shock as I shared with them that I will be taking a 27 hours on rail in a chair seat from Vancouver to Edmonton the following day.

Also read: [How to Journey the Epic Trans-Siberian Railway on a Budget \(http://magazine.tripzilla.com/trans-siberian-railway-budget-guide/24035\)](http://magazine.tripzilla.com/trans-siberian-railway-budget-guide/24035)

Having just survived a 17 hours flight from Singapore to Vancouver transiting at Beijing, it is no surprise I got such response, given it is going to be a long arduous journey confined to a vehicle space, not to mention..no bed! My excitement turned to slight fear as I neared the timing of my rail adventure.



The journey just had to start off dramatic as my car/ carriage personnel Ryan couldn't find me when they were doing headcount before setting off. I had went to the other tail end of the train to try to detect some railway station Wi-Fi to send a last minute WhatsApp message (how would I know every person still needs to be recounted even after boarding?!). They were hunting for me throughout the train before it set off, so since that incident, I have been labelled 'The Wandering Girl' whenever I bump into any of the train personnel on the 27 hours journey.

The rail company I went with after comparing multiple options was with VIA Rail (<http://www.viarail.ca/>) The Canadian, as it had affordable Tuesday Promo (<http://www.viarail.ca/en/fares-and-packages/special-offers/discount-tuesdays/>) Youth deals (<http://www.viarail.ca/en/fares-and-packages/youth-12-25/>), not to mention I have seen videos (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s80ZvedSSeE>) of the 'Dome' carriage; that turned out to be my favourite corner in my train journey.

Some of the VIA train routes have the on board Wi-Fi, but the route through the Rockies which I took didn't have that nor phone reception for that matter. Hence, all passengers on board are forced to be away from telecommunications for that stretch, which could be a good thing; to just immerse in the scenery.



My assigned seat on board the Canadian, VIA Rail. Watching the world go by.

Lets start off with the scenery you get throughout the journey.

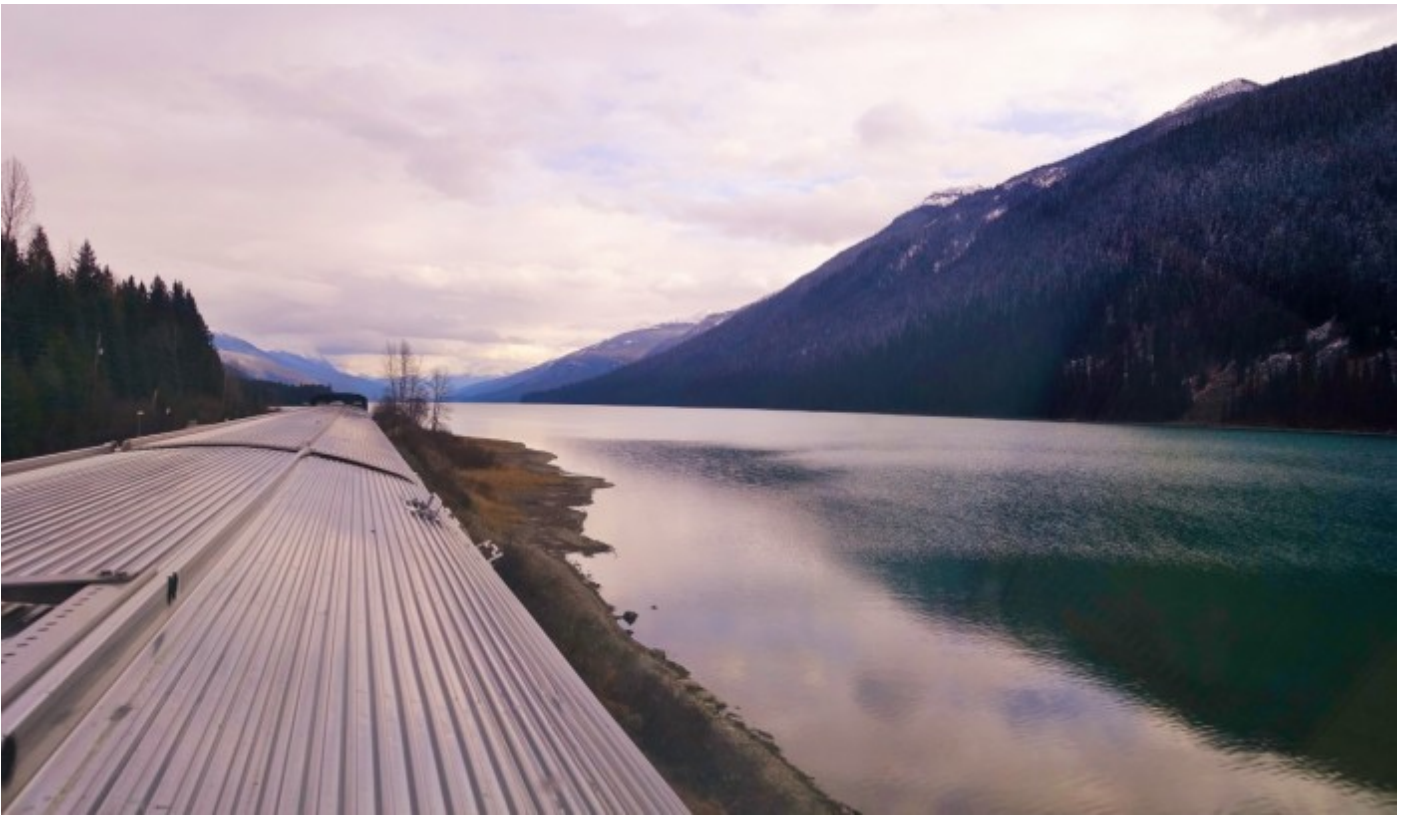
Not labelled one of the world's best rail routes for no reason, the view you get is unbelievable, you get to see a mix of blue lakes and rivers, to acres of green pine trees, to fields of pastures with goats and cows. Then, the scenery can suddenly change to autumn foliage of yellow and red, then to snow cap mountains, from cloudy skies to snow to golden sun rays. It's like travelling through 4 seasons on the train! If you don't believe me, check out the photos.



Sunrise view at 6.30am in the morning on The Canadian



View from the Dome Carriage as you enter The Rockies Zone



Go past a beautiful lake on your route. The cloudy skies and eerie mountains add to the mystical effect of this segment.

So hoping you have been convinced you will enjoy every aspect of the view in this rail ride, moving on to the list of survival tips to stay sane and happy in that long journey in a seat (specially for all unwilling to pay SGD\$400 for a sleeper carriage bed).

Surviving 27 hours on Rail – Vancouver to Edmonton:

1. Come prepared to survive the cold nights



The New Zealander on The Canadian. Stu, my new friend next door I made on the long ride on the train. Caught in his periodic snooze;) I could tell a blanket would have made it a lot more comfortable.

Bring along a small inflatable pillow and a thin blanket to make that overnight segments more cosy and comfortable. Bring a pillow/ jacket to lean on and cuddle you through the night

2. Food to last the train journey



Come with a stash of goodies to last you through the long hours and hunger pangs

Depending on your budget, you can always get all your hot meals on board. If on a tighter budget, bring some food to survive the night. Not expecting to be eating all my meals at the diner for the whole 27 hour journey, I got a stash of supplies at IGA (<http://www.marketplaceiga.com/>), the local supermarket. My stash consist of a mix of granola bars, juice (Snapple is only SGD\$1.50 here), buns, cup noodles and hot cocoa.



Snapple enjoyment. A bottle costs only CAD\$1.50 here!



Eating area for those who brought their own food. The staircase up leads you to the dome carriage for the 360 degrees view of the surroundings.

One can always get lucky like me, where I was just browsing at the breakfast menu contemplating, when I got forced into being a translator to 2 helpless tourists from China who couldn't read English and communicate their meal options to the restaurant manager. Hence, given I was at the right place at the right time, my half passable Chinese became the life saver of the restaurant manager, who insisted I sit in the subsequent meal in the diner complimentary.



Breakfast served on board The Canadian in the dining car. Nice hot poached eggs with toasts/ tea and juice for a good perk up to the morning. For an economy seat, you would need to pay for the meals on board, and this one here costs about CAD\$12, which is around SGD\$13.



Lovely seafood lunch option on board the VIA Rail. Lunch needs to be reserved beforehand and comes in 2 slots - 11.30am or 1pm.

3. Bring a Book/ Music Playlist



Come prepared with music and entertainment to last the long journey on VIA Rail

Though I foresee that half the journey will be spent sleeping, it is not survivable without some form of entertainment. So bring magazines, a book you've never got to finish reading, some drama series on your tablet and other gadgets to keep yourself busy all the way. However, please use majority of the time to enjoy the view too, it is so much better.

4. Camera/ Phone



Pyramid Falls spotted along the route. Small trickle compared to its furious gushing power in summer.

You WILL regret it if you didn't borrow some half decent camera, as the scenery here is not going to be captured with an ordinary phone camera without an anti shake feature. On the journey, look out for the Pyramid Falls on your right at approximately 15 hours into the train journey. There will be announcements made over the intercom when nearing, so listen out for it. Throughout the day, always make time to go to the Dome carriage to marvel the 180 degrees view of the scenery. Truly beautiful, especially when the golden rays reflects off the river, snow cap mountains, and fall foliage, converting the landscape to a sea of golden trees.

Also read: Train Travel in Europe: One Way Tickets or Rail Passes? (<http://magazine.tripzilla.com/europe-train-travel-one-way-rail-pass/26754>)

Below would be a summary of how to pass the time for the 27 hours:

At 1-10 HOURS (Overnight segment)

Read a book, listen to some soothing music to get yourself ready for bed

At 11 – 18 HOURS

Wake up for the sunrise and catch a nice hot breakfast/ lunch at the meals carriage (enjoy the views outside the window'; the periodic/ erratic sunshine, cloudy skies and light snow)

At 19 – 22 HOURS

Enjoy the remains of the daylight after lunch as the train closes in to Jasper. This stretch is the most breathtaking stretch with the most spectacular lakes and trees and mountains. So stop being glued to your screen and look at the view.

At 23 -27 HOURS

It will start turning dark so there will slowly be nothing much to see. Prepare for another night and a short nap. Squeeze in a hot cocoa and catch up on reading as you close in on Edmonton at 11pm at night. For tourist visiting Canada for the first time, I would strongly suggest to just do the stretch from Vancouver – Jasper, as you will reach before it turns dark, and the bulk of the scenic area is the route around the rockies.

Hence, this concludes my 27 Hours Successful Rail Journey on The Canadian Train #2. A definite must try for those hoping to experience beautiful Canada in a different mode, and be lost in the moment.