



## Autumn rail and outdoor trails

As autumn paints the British landscape in hues of gold and amber, visitors can combine picturesque trails with iconic rail adventures. Whether travelling through rolling hills on a heritage steam train, retracing the tracks of railway pioneers or sampling local beers on a hop-on-hop-off Rail Ale Trail, all are enhanced by the autumnal backdrops.

Outdoors and nature

England

Scotland

Wales

December 2024

*From sustainable routes to discovering some of Britain's most scenic regions, these are the trails to follow.*

Britain is renowned for picturesque rail journeys, like the [West Highland Line](#) and the [Settle-Carlisle Railway](#), which offer panoramic views of rolling countryside, tranquil lakes and historic landmarks. Travellers can enjoy the spectacle of autumn while enjoying fine dining and exploratory experiences, with a diverse array of seasonal rail trails that go beyond the well-known routes. Offering a unique blend of scenic beauty and local culture, these trips provide a sustainable way to experience Britain's autumnal landscapes, regional gastronomy and rich heritage.

Rail enthusiasts have much to look forward to beyond autumn, as 2025 sees the launch of [Railway 200](#). The nationwide year-long set of events will celebrate the impact of rail travel on Britain over the course of two centuries, from the pioneering days of the steam-powered Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825 to the sophisticated networks of today. Visitors can immerse themselves in this rich history, as special events, exhibitions, and heritage tours bring the story of

the railway in Britain to life.

### **Saphos Trains**

For a quintessential autumn experience, blending scenic vistas with the nostalgia of vintage rail travel, [Saphos Trains](#) offer a range of rail journeys through different regions and landscapes. Highlights include tours through the rolling hills of the Cotswolds and along the Kentish coastline, including historic sites and iconic views like the White Cliffs of Dover. With the option to book Pullman fine dining, each tour promises a blend of luxury travel and nostalgia enhanced by the scenic backdrop of changing leaves.

### **Steam Dreams**

For those seeking more than just a scenic ride, visitors can try one of [Steam Dream's](#) luxurious multi-day steam train excursions. Passengers can also opt for Pullman-style fine dining to accompany the scenic views. Highlights include the 'London to Exeter' tour through the lush countryside of Wiltshire and Somerset, alongside routes to Christmas markets in Bath, Chester and York. Bookings have also opened for the Lakes Express, a [four-night holiday to the Lake District](#) in September 2025.

### **Rail Ale Trails, Great Scenic Railways**

Combining rural rail journeys with stops at traditional pubs along the way, Rail Ale Trails provide travellers with a unique mix of vibrant autumn foliage and regional drinks. Traverse through quaint villages and historic towns, all while sampling local ales, in different parts of Britain. [East Lancashire Railway](#) operates Ales of the Rails in the Irwell Valley, while Great Scenic Railways run Rail Ale Trails on various branch lines in [Devon and Cornwall](#). All offer the chance to explore an array of diverse landscapes and brews. Each tour includes a return ticket and various additional offerings, from guided history tours to pub lunches, depending on the train route. A bumper route spanning 12 destinations between [Salisbury and Exeter](#) provides a taste of four counties: Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset and Devon.

### **Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, Cumbria**

The [Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway](#) is a charming heritage train offering panoramic journeys through the Lake District. This narrow-gauge railway runs from the coastal village of Ravenglass to Dalegarth for Boot, close to England's highest range of mountains, covering a seven-mile route across Cumbria. Passengers can enjoy rich autumnal landscapes, including picturesque valleys and historic sites such as the Ravenglass Bath House. The railway also offers special seasonal events – [Halloween](#) presents a rare opportunity to see a 'double header train', featuring a train pulled by two heritage steam engines rather than one, making it a popular outing for families and train enthusiasts.

### **Rail Trail Tours**

For longer, more immersive rail adventures, [Rail Trail](#) offers a variety of different five-day curated itineraries. Rather than travelling on one rail route, the journeys combine scenic train travel on heritage trains with immersive, region-specific experiences that blend luxury travel with deep dives into local culture, history and gastronomy. The tours often include exclusive access to historic sites, private tastings at local vineyards and breweries, and guided walks through historic villages and countryside. Highlights include a tour around [Chester](#) and the surrounding area, taking in the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and the Llangollen Railway, alongside a route through the [Cotswolds, Forest of Dean and Wye Valley](#) encompassing three different heritage railways.

## West Highland Line

[The West Highland Line](#) embarks on an iconic journey through the heart of Scotland. The scenic railway sets off from Glasgow and travels through rugged landscapes, alongside tranquil lochs and over dramatic viaducts, ultimately reaching the picturesque fishing port of Mallaig or the harbour town of Oban, as the line splits at Crianlarich. The journey crosses the Glenfinnan Viaduct, featured in the *Harry Potter* films, and takes in areas rich in natural beauty and historic significance, including Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and the remote wilderness of Rannoch Moor. Passengers can enjoy a variety of activities and sights along the way depending on their chosen route, from exploring the historic town of Oban and its distillery to experiencing the grandeur of Ben Nevis from Fort William.

## Settle-Carlisle Railway

The [Settle-Carlisle Railway](#) is one of Britain's most scenic and historic rail lines, stretching 73 miles (117km) through the landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Eden Valley. Famous for its views, striking engineering such as the Ribbleshead Viaduct, and numerous tunnels carved through rugged countryside, the historic route is part of two lines: Leeds-Settle-Carlisle and Leeds-Bentham-Morecambe. Several providers, including the luxurious [Northern Belle](#), run autumnal steam services along the route, as well as on selected Saturdays throughout 2025.

## Autumn walking trails

Britain's many [picturesque walking](#) trails through autumnal landscapes also provide plenty of opportunities to soak in the spectacle of the season's beauty. Fans of British myths and legends can follow the [Merlin Trail](#) through the south of Scotland, covering more than 30 different sites linked to the Arthurian legend. The trail is made up of four walking routes across the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway that can be explored as part of a 7-day itinerary or split into day trips. [Dalby Forest](#), an 8,500-acre woodland in the heart of the North York Moors National Park, offers numerous trails for walking, cycling and running. Thrill-seekers can marvel at the autumn foliage from lofty heights on a Treetop Challenge Course at [Go Ape Dalby Forest](#). For coastal views and a crisp autumn breeze, the [Pembrokeshire Coast Path](#) in South Wales provides 186-miles (299 km) of walking trails. Stretching from St Dogmaels, near Cardigan, to Amroth in the south, the trail is part of the Wales Coast Path and passes through ancient fishing villages and past Iron Age forts and Celtic chapels. The route is split into manageable [sections](#), with rich autumnal hues framing the coastal waters and Pembrokeshire's sandy beaches.