



White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad Guide

One of Alaska's Most Scenic and Historic Rail Adventures



The **White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad** is widely considered one of the most spectacular rail journeys in North America. Built during the legendary **Klondike Gold Rush**, this historic narrow-gauge railroad climbs from the cruise port of Skagway into the rugged mountains that once challenged thousands of hopeful prospectors on their journey to the Yukon.

Today, instead of hauling miners and supplies, beautifully restored vintage railcars carry visitors through breathtaking mountain scenery filled with waterfalls, deep gorges, towering cliffs, glaciers, alpine lakes, and panoramic vistas.

For many Alaska cruise travelers, this is the **#1 shore excursion in Skagway** and often one of the highlights of the entire cruise.



A Journey Through Gold Rush History



The railroad was completed in **1900** after an incredible engineering effort during the Klondike Gold Rush.

Workers faced:

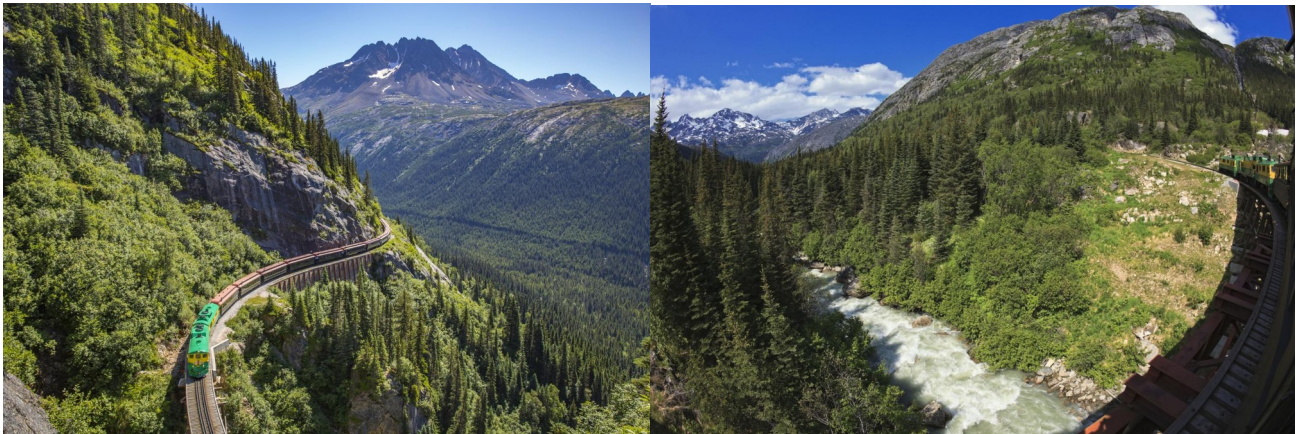
- Steep mountain terrain

- Harsh weather
- Sheer cliffs
- Explosives and hand tools
- Dangerous working conditions

Despite these obstacles, they completed nearly **110 miles** of railway in just over two years—an extraordinary achievement that earned it the nickname "**The Railway Built of Gold.**"



What You'll See



As the train climbs nearly **3,000 feet** in elevation, you'll enjoy incredible scenery including:

- Towering mountains
- Waterfalls
- Deep gorges
- Glacier-carved valleys
- Historic bridges
- Alpine lakes
- Snow-capped peaks (often even in summer)

Every turn reveals another postcard-worthy view.



Engineering Marvels



The White Pass & Yukon Route is famous for its remarkable engineering.

Highlights include:

- Narrow mountain ledges
- Steel trestle bridges
- Sharp curves
- High mountain passes
- Historic tunnels and rock cuts

It's amazing to imagine these tracks being built more than a century ago with the technology available at the time.



Excursion Options



Several excursion options are available.

Popular choices include:

Round-Trip Railroad

Travel up the mountain and return by train.

Rail & Bus Combination

Ride the train one way and return by motorcoach while visiting scenic viewpoints.

Yukon Adventure

Continue farther into Canada's Yukon Territory, with stops at locations such as:

- Emerald Lake
- Carcross
- Yukon Suspension Bridge (on select tours)

Some excursions include a passport-required crossing into Canada, so be sure to bring the proper travel documents.



Wildlife Along the Route



Wildlife sightings are always a possibility.

Keep an eye out for:

- Mountain Goats
- Black Bears
- Brown Bears (occasionally)
- Bald Eagles
- Marmots
- Dall Sheep (rare)

While sightings aren't guaranteed, the scenery alone makes the journey worthwhile.

Photography Tips



For the best photos:

- Sit on the side of the train recommended by your guide (views vary by direction of travel).
- Keep your camera ready as scenery changes quickly.
- Watch for waterfalls around every curve.
- Photograph both the landscape and the train itself.
- Step onto the outdoor viewing platform between cars if it's open and conditions allow.

What Should You Wear?

Bring:

- ✓ Light jacket
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Comfortable shoes
- ✓ Sunglasses

Temperatures at the summit can be significantly cooler than in Skagway.



Why Cruise Travelers Love This Excursion

The White Pass Railroad is especially popular because:

- The station is just steps from most cruise ships.
- It's suitable for nearly all ages.
- No strenuous walking is required.
- The scenery is spectacular from beginning to end.

- Rich history is combined with unforgettable mountain views.

It's one of the easiest and most rewarding excursions in Alaska.

Premium Travel Group Tip

Book the White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad as early as possible, especially if you're cruising in June, July, or August. It's consistently one of the most popular excursions in Skagway and often sells out well before sailing. If you're deciding between several excursions, this is one that rarely disappoints.



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 - Klondike Gold Rush Guide (*future guide*)
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Fun Facts

- The railroad climbs nearly **3,000 feet** in just **20 miles**, making it one of the steepest rail journeys in North America.
 - Construction was completed in **1900**, during the height of the Klondike Gold Rush.
 - The track is **narrow gauge**, measuring only **3 feet wide**, allowing it to navigate tight mountain curves.
 - Portions of the route cross the **U.S.–Canada border**, depending on the excursion you choose.
 - The railroad is designated an **International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark**, one of only a handful in the world.
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Why the White Pass Railroad is a Must-Do Experience

The White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad is more than just a train ride—it's a journey through history and one of the most scenic rail adventures you'll ever experience. From dramatic mountain passes and roaring waterfalls to stories of determined Gold Rush pioneers, every mile offers something unforgettable. It's the perfect combination of breathtaking scenery, fascinating history, and comfortable sightseeing, making it one of Alaska's signature experiences.



Joe's Logbook

If someone asked me to recommend just one excursion in Skagway, the White Pass Railroad would be right at the top of my list.

What makes it so special isn't just the scenery—although that's incredible—it's knowing the history behind it. As you're riding comfortably through the mountains, it's hard to imagine the determination it took to build this railroad over 125 years ago.

One thing I always enjoy is stepping onto the outdoor platform between the train cars. Feeling the cool mountain air while the train winds along cliffs and crosses towering trestles makes you feel like you've stepped back into the days of the Gold Rush.

If you're looking for an excursion that's scenic, relaxing, and filled with history, this one checks every box. It's the kind of experience that perfectly captures the spirit of Alaska and leaves you with memories you'll be talking about long after your cruise ends.