

The REAL Darjeeling Limited

If you were as enchanted by the film “The Darjeeling Limited” as almost everyone else who has seen it, then you may have headed to your computer and “googled” the train. If you were like those other untold thousands, you also probably pouted with disappointment at reading that it was a totally fictional train route. That means that you will love to hear what we have to tell you in this brief article; which is simply that the Darjeeling Limited itself may be fiction, but the route and gorgeous looks of that train experience can be enjoyed in reality.

Here’s how: the writers of the film were inspired by two separate “entities” in the Indian railways. They liked the famous “toy train” known as the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, but they were also inspired by the famous luxury train known as the “Maharaja Express”. This means that if you liked particular aspects of the film, you will want to book passage on one or both of these trains as well.

The toy train or the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is a narrow gauge train that runs from New Jalpaiguri to Darjeeling, which is a 53 mile journey. Clearly, this is not the lengthy journey that the film depicted, which took many days and nights. Instead it is a daily service that is designed primarily to handle tourist trains from Darjeeling to Ghum. The thing about this seemingly utilitarian trek is that it was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999 for its impressive mountain scenery, unique features, and astonishing charm.

If you are ready for something more akin to what you see in the film, well, it is time to break out your wallet and head to the Maharaja Express. What the Orient Express is to the European continent, this train is to Asia. It is a 23 guest carriage train that offers cabins and suites similar in size to what you see in the movie. Just as the movie also shows, this train makes daily morning stops for lengthy land excursions into nearby attractions, monuments, shops, and more. This is the way to see everything from polo games and temples, to national parks and elephants working logging operations.

If you have a few weeks to spare and the desire to experience the same sights, smells, colors, sounds, and unique settings as depicted in “The Darjeeling Limited,” this is the way to do it!

Why not take a peek at the itinerary of the Maharaja Express at www.rirtl.com.