

Travelers Guide to Scenic Passenger Train Journeys in Western North America

By John Burchnall

Western Rail Options

• Amtrak



• Rocky Mountaineer



• VIA Rail



Two additional options shared at the end

Western Routes

	Train	Route	Days	Coach	Sleeper
Amtrak	Empire Builder	Chicago to Seattle or Portland	2	Coach	Roomette, Bedroom, Suite
	California Zephyr	Chicago to Oakland	2	Coach	Roomette, Bedroom, Suite
	Southwest Chief	Chicago to LA	2	Coach	Roomette, Bedroom, Suite
	Coast Starlight	LA to Seattle	1.5	Coach	Roomette, Bedroom, Suite
Rocky Mt.	Journey through the Clouds	Vancouver to Jasper (via Kamloops)	2	GoldLeaf, SilverLeaf	(hotel)
	First Passage to the West	Vancouver to Banff (via Kamloops)	2	GoldLeaf, SilverLeaf	(hotel)
	Rainforest to Gold Rush	Vancouver to Jasper (via Whistler & Quesnel)	3	GoldLeaf, SilverLeaf	(hotel)
	Rockies to the Red Rocks (new 2021)	Denver, CO to Moab, UT (via Glenwood Springs)	2	GoldLeaf, SilverLeaf	(hotel)
VIA	Canadian	Toronto to Vancouver (via Edmonton & Jasper)	4	Coach	Berth, Cabins, Prestige
	Skeena	Jasper to Prince Rupert	1	Coach, Touring	None

Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer & VIA



Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer & VIA



Rocky Mountaineer



Basic Comparisons

Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail
Western USA	Canada & US Rockies	Canada
Government Owned	Private Enterprise	Government Owned
Accessible	Accessible	Accessible
All Bi-Level Superliner Cars	Single or Dual Level Panorama Cars (Only Single in USA)	Single Level Classic Streamliner Cars (multiple domes)
4 Train Routes	4 Train Routes + Connecting Bus Tours	2 Train Routes
2 Day Runs	2-3 Day Runs	1.5 or 4 Day Runs
1X, 3X and 5X Price Ranges	6X and 10X Price Ranges	1X, 2X, 3X, 5X, 13X Price Ranges

Route Attractions

	Train	Scenic Highlights
Amtrak	Empire Builder	Rolling Hills, Wisconsin Dells, Mississippi River Bridge, Rockies, Glacier National Park, Cascades
	California Zephyr	Mississippi River Bridge, Denver, Front Range, Rockies, Sierra Nevada Mountains, Donner Pass
	Southwest Chief	Mississippi River Bridge, Apache/Abo Canyon, Raton Pass, Albuquerque, Desert Bluffs, Cajon Pass
	Sunset Limited	Low Lands, San Antonio, Desert Scenery and Bluffs
Rocky Mt.	Journey through the Clouds	Kamloops, Canadian Rockies, North Thompson River, Frazier River, Jasper
	First Passage to the West	Kamloops, Canadian Rockies, South Thompson River, Frazier River, Banff/Lake Louise
	Rainforest to Gold Rush	Coastal Lakes and Rivers, Whistler, Rainforests, Quesnel, Canadian Rockies
	Rockies to the Red Rocks (USA)	Denver, Front Range, Colorado Rockies, many Gorges and Tunnels, Glenwood Spgs, Thompson River, Arches NP, Moab
VIA	Canadian	Canadian Shield, Lakes and Rivers, Canadian Rockies, Kicking Horse River, North Thompson River, Frazier River
	Skeena	Canadian Rockies, Rolling Hills, Coastal Lakes and Rivers, Port of Prince Rupert

Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer & VIA



Amtrak Out West



Amtrak Out West



Rocky Mountaineer



Rocky Mountaineer



VIA Rail Canadian



VIA Rail Canadian



Equipment Comparisons

Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail
GE P42-DC	GMD GP40-2L	GMD F40PH-2
Pullman Standard / Bombardier	Stadler/Col. Rail Car + Can. Car & Foundry	Budd + Colorado Railcar (Panorama)
Superliner Coaches	1 Level Panorama	Coaches
Superliner Lounge	2 Level Panorama	Panorama Car
Superliner Diner		Skyline <u>Domes</u>
Superliner Sleeper		Diners & Snack Cars
		Sleepers
		Park <u>Dome</u> /Observ.

AMTRAK GE P42-DC (Genesis)



Siemens Charger



EMD F59PHI

Rocky Mt. GP40-2L Diesel-Elec.



VIA GMD F40PH-2 Diesel-Elec.



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		Sleepers
		Park <u>Dome</u> /Observ.

Panorama vs. Dome Cars

- **Dome Cars** have a glass bubble with 360 degrees of viewing, all above the train
 - All VIA Domes have 24 seats (6 rows)
- **Panorama Cars** have vertical walls at front and rear – some with windows, but typically view-blocked by adjacent cars
 - Boxier than Dome Cars
 - Panoramic areas are all full car length

VIA Panorama vs. Dome Cars



Panorama vs. Dome Cars

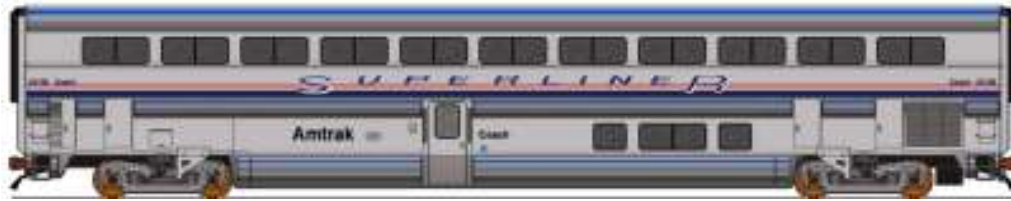


Rolling Stock

Amtrak



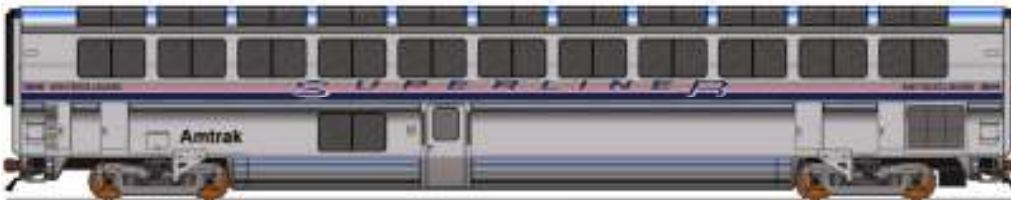
Amtrak Superliner Coach



Amtrak Superliner Coach



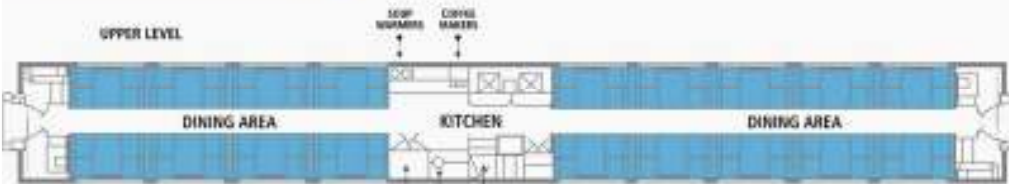
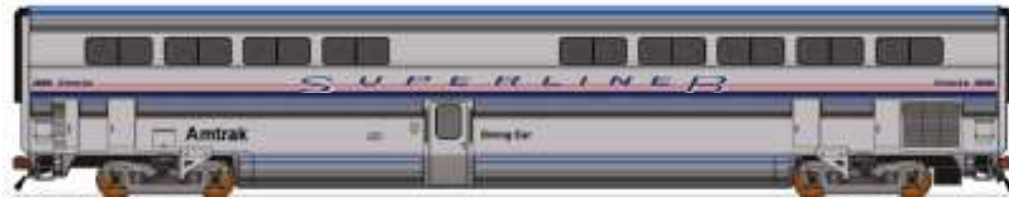
Superliner Sightseer Lounge



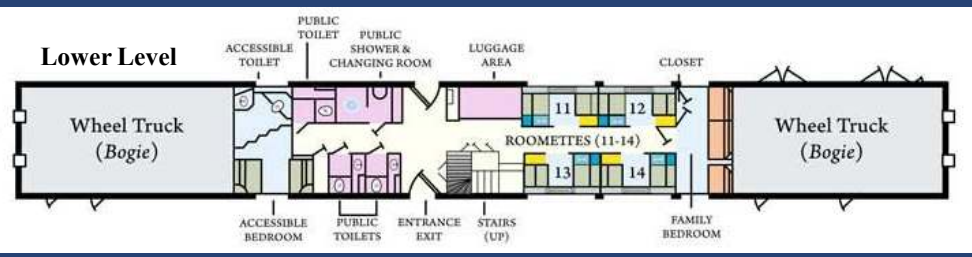
Amtrak Sightseer Lounge Car



Amtrak Superliner Diner



Amtrak Superliner Sleeper



Rolling Stock

Rocky Mountaineer



Rocky Mountaineer Cars



SilverLeaf Class (Single-Level)

Guests Dine in Seats
New: Lounge & Open Platform in adj. Car



GoldLeaf Class (Bi-Level)

Guest Seats Above
Outside Platform
Dining Below

SilverLeaf Service



GoldLeaf Service

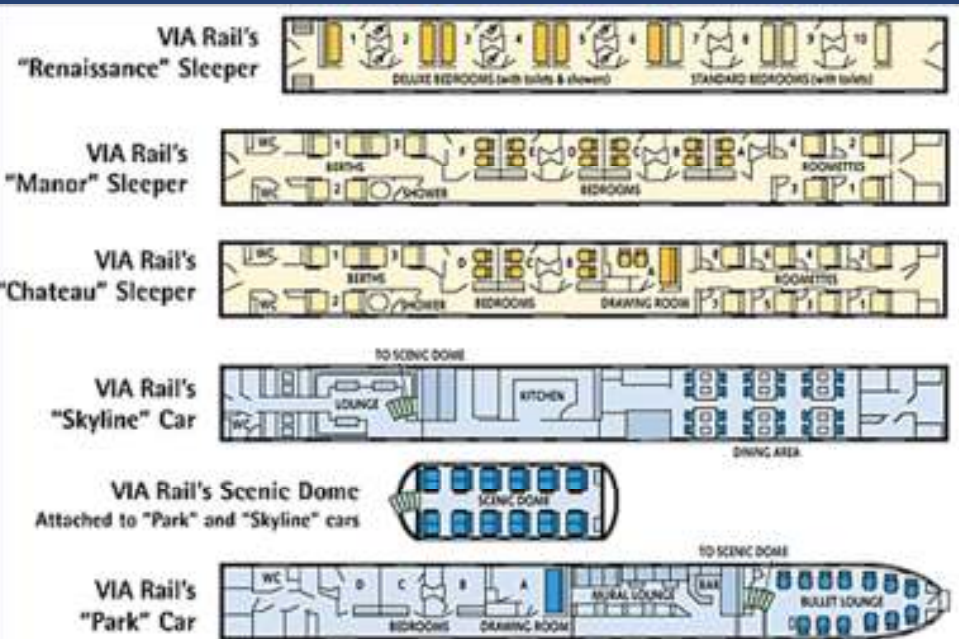


Rolling Stock

VIA Rail



VIA Refurbished Budd Cars



VIA Canadian



VIA Canadian

- 4 dome cars / train (panorama can sub)

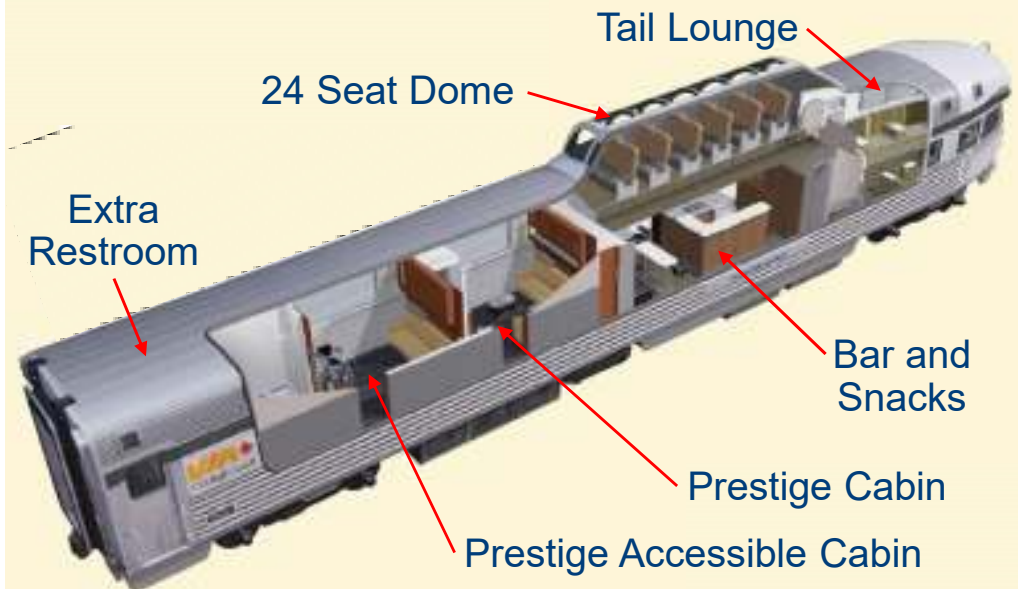


VIA Canadian

- Tail Observation Cars = Park Cars
- Featuring Dome, Lounge, Snack Bar
- Exclusive Use by Prestige Class



VIA Canadian Park Car



VIA Park Observation Car



Western Train Amenities

Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail
Coach or Sleeper Classes	SilverLeaf (1 level) or GoldLeaf (2 level)	Coach, Touring, Sleeper+ or Prestige
Roomette, Bedroom and Suite Sleepers	No Sleepers (Bus to/from Hotels)	Cabins (for 1,2,3 or 4), Berths, Prestige
Sleeper Meals Included	Meals Included, Except Evenings	Sleeper Meals Included
Can Buy Alcohol	GoldLeaf: Included	Prestige: Incl. 24/7
1 Panorama Lounge	All Panorama Cars	Multiple Domes
No Tail Obs. Car	No Tail Obs. Car	Tail Obs. With Dome
No Outside Viewing	Covered View Porch	No Outside Viewing
Walk Between Cars	Must Stay in Your Car	Walk Between Cars

Sleeping Accommodations

Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail *
Roomette (for 2)	SilverLeaf (bus to/from hotels)	Berth (for 1)
Bedroom (for 2, w/ bath)	GoldLeaf (bus to/from hotels)	Sleeper+ Cabins (for 1, 2, 3 or 4)
Suite (2 Bedrooms)		Prestige Staterooms (for 2, out West only on the Canadian)
Family Bedroom, Accessible Bedroom		Prestige Accessible Stateroom

* Only the Canadian and Ocean have sleepers, not the Skeena

Amtrak Superliner Roomette



Amtrak Superliner Bedroom



Family & Accessible Bedrooms



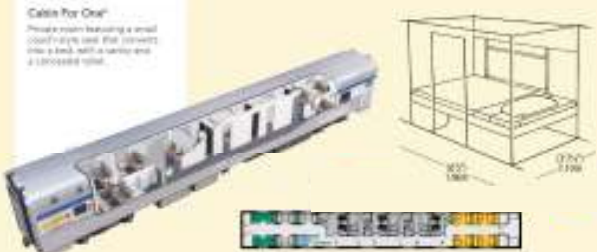
Rocky Mountaineer Sleepers?



Buses to/from Hotels

VIA Sleeping Cars

- Berth
- Cabin for 1
- Cabin for 2



VIA Sleeping Cars

- Suites
- Prestige Cabin

Suites*
Two combined cabins for two (and reversed). The seating area includes two armchair seats and two tables. Sleeper Plus class comes with a private bathroom.

To accommodate up to four persons, please contact us.

Prestige Car Cabin For Two
Officially launched in spring 2015, it provides an unforgettable rail experience.

- Spacious 1600-1800 sqm sleeper berths offer the extra Sleeper Plus benefits, with a large viewing window that is built-in edge.
- Modern L-shaped tables built for the extra 200cm bed for two by 1000.
- Private 100% convertible shower.
- Full center console with table extension.
- 180° table rotation with a selection of beverages.
- Complimentary car service.
- Electric window blinds.
- Premium bedding in this sleeping car.
- Bedside Concierge for assistance throughout the trip.
- In-house pull-down bedding and bathroom table or fold-down sleeping arrangement.

Legend
Prestige cabin for two

VIA Sleeping Cars

Berths with full width heavy curtain

Cabin for One

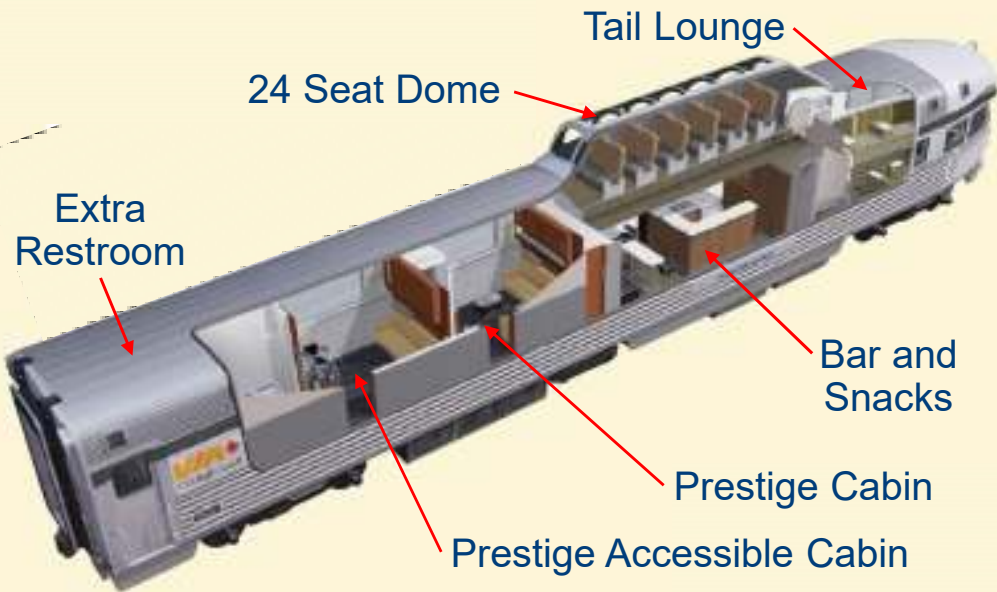
VIA Sleeping Cars

VIA Prestige Cabins

- Own bathroom w/ separate shower
- Meals
- 24/7 snacks/drinks
- Huge picture window
- 24/7 exclusive use of Park observation car

Cabin for Two Suite
Sleeps four in two adjacent normal 'Cabins for Two'

VIA Canadian Park Car



Food and Drinks

Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail
<u>Coach</u> Buy at Dining or Snack Cars	<u>SilverLeaf</u> At Seats, Buy Alcohol	<u>Coach</u> Buy at Dining or Snack Cars
<u>Sleeper</u> Priority Meals in Diner, Buy Alcohol	<u>GoldLeaf</u> Diner, All Inclusive	<u>Touring</u> Included At Seat Meals w/ Wine
	All evening meals on your own in town	<u>Sleeper+</u> Included Meals, Fruit, Cookies, Buy Alcohol
		<u>Prestige</u> Gourmet Dining, 24/7 Snacks, Alcohol

Amtrak Superliner Dining Car



Rocky Mt. GoldLeaf Dining



Rocky Mt. SilverLeaf Dining

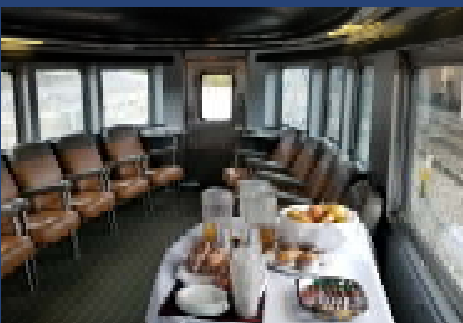


VIA Canadian Dining

- 3 dining cars / train
- Meals cooked on train
- Real plates, glasses and flatware



VIA Prestige Class Service



Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer & VIA



Sounds Awesome, but ...

How much do these cost?

What's the overall comparison?

Any secrets or tips?

Are there other options?

Price Comparisons

<u>Accommodation</u>	Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail
Coach	\$100	-	\$100
Touring (Skeena)	-	-	\$200
SilverLeaf	-	\$600	-
GoldLeaf	-	\$1,000	-
Berth	-	-	\$300
Cabin/Roomette	\$300	-	\$500
Bedroom	\$500	-	\$500
Prestige (Canadian)	-	-	\$1,250

Approximate cost per person per day

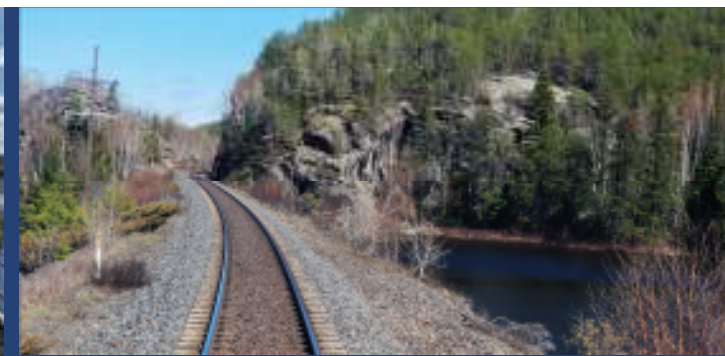
Which is Best Out West?

Amtrak	Rocky Mountaineer	VIA Rail
Great Scenery	Great Scenery	Great Scenery
Miss Scenery at Night	Don't Miss Scenery	Miss Scenery at Night
Aging Superliners	Nice Modern Cars	Classic Streamliners
Some Rough Track	Smooth Track	Smooth Track
Hit or Miss Attendants	Great Attendants	Great Attendants
Some Smelly Toilets	Great Restrooms	Great Restrooms
Often Huge Delays	"Always" On Time	Can Have Delays
1 Panorama Car	All Panorama Cars	4 Domes, incldg Obs.
Most Food Pre-cooked	Gold Leaf: Gourmet	Sleepers: Gourmet
Rm Toilets in Shower	No Sleepers	Separate Showers
No Outside Areas	Outside Viewing Porch	No Outside Areas
Walk Between Cars	Stay in Your Car(s)	Walk Between Cars

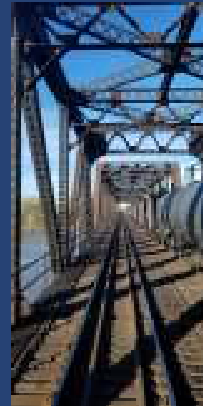
So, whether you ride Amtrak ...



... or Rocky Mountaineer ...



... or VIA Rail



Traveler Secrets

- **Book many months in advance for the best selection**
- **Cabins and seats near the middle of each car have the smoothest ride**
- **Fly via Seattle, not Vancouver, and ride Cascades between (scenic, cheap, easy)**
- **Pack Tiny Bag for Sleepers, Check Rest**
- **Consider extended stays in Vancouver, Toronto, Canadian Rockies and Colorado**

Traveler Secrets

- **1 Prestige Sleeping Cabin in the Park Observation Car (+ an Accessible Cabin)**
- **Ride on north side of car for better photos and views since not looking into the sun**
- **Ride during the longest days (May-July)**
- **Ride Sleepers during the Full Moon**
- **Some scenery during daylight is directional dependent – use schedules to determine which way you wish to go**

Consider an Amtrak Circle Tour ...



... or a Rocky Mt'r Circle Tour



Other Options to Consider

• Private Rail Cars



- Nice, but very expensive and Amtrak now limits them on their trains

• Alaska Railroad (AR)



- Highly scenic, highly recommended
- Panorama cars very nice and inexpensive
- AR is a full service travel agency – nice hotels, rental cars, side excursions

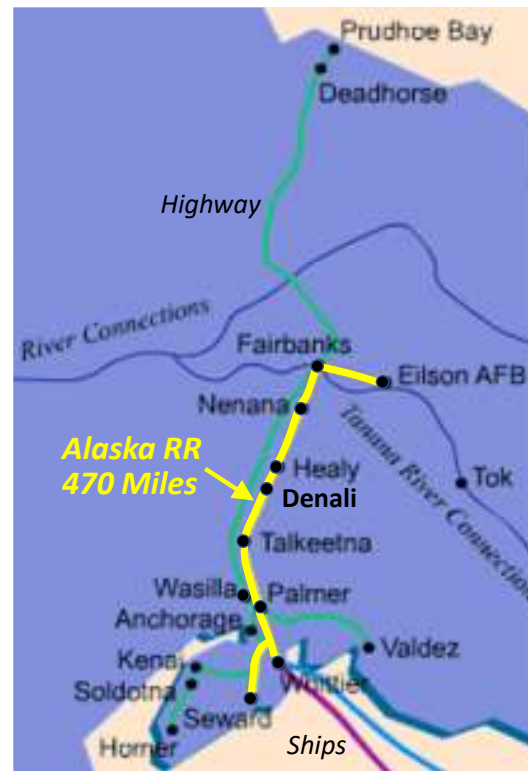
Private Varnish



Alaska Railroad



Alaska RR



Parting Words of Wisdom

Book now before VIA's services deteriorate, like Amtrak's did ...

... or before Rocky Mountaineer is discontinued, like others have ...

... or before Amtrak replaces Superliners with new single level cars

... be sure to try the Alaska Railroad!

Have a Wonderful Trip!

