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TRAIN TRAVEL IN 2022

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Have you ever wondered what it would be like to actually ride a train up the east coast for a substantial distance? Well ask no more, as I had an opportunity to do it!

You may be asking, Marcus why would you ever do something like that when you could easily get there in few hours on a plane? Well, Renee and I had talked about eventually taking a cross country train trip and this seemed to be a good time for me to experiment with this idea. In other words, for me to “scout it out first.”

Before getting into the details, I would strongly suggest that this mode of travel be reserved for a casual trip. What I mean is that the train is probably not a good way to travel if you have hard deadlines. There are too many variables that are at play with these long trips. For example, for my trip, a CSX train had engine problems and that delayed my arrival into Union Station in DC by more than 3 hours.

With all of that said, I enjoyed my train ride quite a bit. I reserved an Amtrak roomette (the more you spend the more perks you get, as my food was included in my roomette reservation...alcohol was separate I think). This is a step down from a full bedroom suite which can accommodate quite a few passengers. According to the advertisement the roomette seats 2 people. This is true in the sense there are 2 seats in the room, but I would not seat two people in the room if anyone is on the “bigger side” (I’m 6’2 240 lbs) and it was enough room for me by myself...adding another person would be pushing it.

The roomette is nice because it has privacy. As can be seen in the pictures along with my post, there’s a door and privacy curtains. In addition, there’s a sink and bathroom in the room with you (there are shared showers and bathroom areas in the cars if these work better for you). The two seats can fold down into a bed, with the top ceiling dropping down to create a bunk bed with a harness for a second sleeper. Your sleeping car attendant will ask you what time you prefer to have your bed turned up and down.

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Off The Press

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As for dining, due to COVID, things are still a little different. Meals are prepared in plastic and aluminum covering, with plastic utensils. Again, your attendant will come around and get your preferred lunch and dinner times. You can elect to eat in your roomette or the dining car.

The main focus of my trip was to be able to relax and watch the world move around me. This trip allowed me to see the “other parts” of the United States that I typically do not see. From small towns, to bridges and rivers, there is a lot to see when traveling by train.

Before I conclude, I would suggest a few tips if this is something you might see yourself, or your family doing in the future:

- *bring plenty of snacks (water, juice, chips, etc...)
- *if you need to connect to the internet get a hot spot, as there are “no signal areas” throughout the trip and the train WiFi might not be strong enough
- *pack reading materials, game apps, movies (be sure to download movies to your device as this can bypass needed WiFi to play some titles)
- *hand sanitizer and personal spray
- *cash tip for your attendant

In conclusion, from my departure from the Tampa Union Station to Union Station in DC I truly enjoyed my trip. Train travel has made lots of improvements from what we may have seen in past movies and TV shows. As for me, I will travel by train again in the future when I just want to relax and take my time getting to a location.



Off The Press

Back 2 School Giveaway



We are back this year. Please join us along with the crew at More Than Java Cafe in Laurel for our 3rd Back 2 School Giveaway on Saturday, August 20th from 12pm-2pm!

Bring your elementary school children and enjoy a smoothie on us!

More Than Java Cafe: 358 Main St, Laurel, MD 20707

Tips To Try To Beat The Summer Heat

It's hot, but I am not complaining because the cooler/cold weather will be here soon enough. But here are a few tips to help you stay safe during the dog days of summer.

1. Wear loose fitting clothing, especially outdoors.
2. Spend time indoors with air conditioning, if a/c at home is a problem, be sure to visit your local library or enclosed shopping malls.
3. Schedule outdoor activities. Try to avoid being outside doing strenuous activity during the hottest parts of the day.
4. When engaged in outdoor activity, be sure to take breaks and find shade.
5. Wear sunscreen
6. Stay hydrated with water!!!

Six Flags Welcomes Special Needs

Six Flags America in Largo, MD. has become First Certified Autism Center™ Park in DMV and has expanded access to guest with physical disabilities, too.

With the introduction of the Innovative Ride Safety Harness, Six Flags leads the industry as the first theme park company to manufacture and offer a custom restraint harness. The harness offers multiple sizes that are able to accommodate riders with physical disabilities such as a missing limb or appendages starting at 54" tall. Approximately 98 percent of all Six Flags theme park rides are equipped with an individually designed harness. Certain rider restrictions and qualifications will apply.

As an accredited Certified Autism Center™, Six Flags America will provide:

- Trained, helpful, front-line team members equipped to better assist autistic guests and those with other sensory sensitivities to help them enjoy their time at the park;
- A sensory guide for every attraction that provides insight into how the attraction or ride may be affected by each of the five senses to make it easier for individuals and families to plan activities that align with their needs;
- Low sensory areas to allow guests with sensory sensitivities to take a break and relax in a less stimulating environment;
- An updated Accessibility Guide will be available online on the park's accessibility page and Guest Services area; and
- Park-wide implementation of the IBCCES Accessibility Card program. This is a free online program with mobile app option for guests to use when requesting assistance or accommodations at any of the Six Flags parks. To learn more about the program visit [accessibilitycard.org](https://www.sixflags.com/america/six-flags-america-becomes-first-certified-autism-center-park-in-dmv).

August 17th is the next sensory sensitive day.

<https://www.sixflags.com/america/six-flags-america-becomes-first-certified-autism-center-park-in-dmv>

Old Fashioned School Rolls

Just in time for back to school



Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups warm water
- ½ tablespoon white sugar
- ¼ cup and 1 tbsp and 1 tsp white sugar
- 1 ½ (.25 ounce) envelopes active dry yeast
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 egg
- ½ tablespoon salt
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons shortening
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

Directions

- In a large bowl, mix together the warm water and 1 tablespoon sugar. Sprinkle the yeast over the top, and let it stand for about 10 minutes, until the yeast is foamy.
- Mix the milk, eggs and salt into the yeast. Measure the flour into a separate bowl, add 2/3 cup sugar, and crumble the shortening into it using your fingers until it is barely noticeable. Gradually stir the flour into the wet ingredients. Mix using a wooden spoon until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl and starts to form a ball around the spoon. Cover with a hot wet towel that has been wrung out, and set in a warm place to rise until double in bulk. This should take about 45 minutes.
- When the dough has risen, pour the melted butter over it, and knead for about 2 minutes. Let the dough rest for a few minutes, then roll out on a lightly floured surface to 1 inch thick. Use a knife to cut into 2 inch squares. Roll squares into balls, and place into greased round pans, spacing about 1 inch apart. Let rise again until doubled in size. You could also refrigerate the dough, and let it rise overnight for baking the next day.
- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F
- Bake the rolls for about 12 minutes, until golden brown. Brush tops with melted butter when you remove from oven.

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