

The Railway Top 20!

1. In 1864 railway routes in Victoria totalled 254 miles. This grew to 1199 miles by 1880, then 3120 miles by 1895, and peaked at 4750 miles during WW2.
2. In 1900 the average number of staff employed by railways was 11,956. This grew to average 25,703 by 1930; peaked to 30,202 in 1954 and was still averaging 25,974 by 1975. In 1900 the average number of passengers was 54.7 million. This grew to 164.5 million by 1930, 196.1 million in 1945 at its peak, and 118.5 million by 1975.
3. The first locomotive (No.100, passenger class, 2-4-0 type) built at Victorian Railways Williamstown workshops went into service in 1872
4. In 1883 Wodonga and Albury were linked via a Murray bridge enabling the inauguration of the Sydney-Melbourne service. The break of gauge at Albury remained until 1962.
5. The first sleeping cars ran in Victoria in 1887, used on the Melbourne-Adelaide route. Sleeping cars still run today on the CountryLink XPT services between Melbourne and Sydney and on the Great Southern Railway *Overland* between Melbourne and Adelaide.
6. The Railways operated their own ice works between 1894 and the early 1980s in Melbourne Yard. Their prime role was to supply ice for cooling the insulated van fleet. By the 1920s, ice was also used to chill drinking water in country carriages, and in Railway Refreshment Room and dining car iceboxes.
7. By 1900, the average tonnage of goods and livestock conveyed on the Victorian railways was 3,381,860 tonnes. It was 7,513,606 in 1930, 9,125,140 in 1950 and peaked in 1965 at 12,595,661 tonnes. Some classes of grain wagons currently being operated in Victoria are amongst the largest in Australia, with a gross weight of 100 tonnes when fully loaded.
8. The railways ran a plant nursery on land adjoining the Upfield line near Flemington Bridge railway station from 1909/10 until the late 1960s. It was established to provide the necessary volume of plants and skilled staff to improve the appearance of suburban and country station grounds, as well as railway land adjoining suburban lines.
9. The first automatically operated points and signals in southern hemisphere was installed St Kilda in Oct 1928. Victoria's first automatically-operated boom barriers were used at Toorak Road Tooronga in February 1956.
10. The railways baked the first raisin bread in commercial quantities in Victoria after having established their own bakery at Dudley Street in October 1923. It supplied railway dining cars and station refreshment rooms at low cost and also sold to the general public, thereby promoting Victoria's dried fruit industry. The bakery closed in September 1974.

11. The oldest named train currently running in Victoria is the *Overland* service operated by Great Southern Railway between Melbourne and Adelaide. This train was named in June 1926. The oldest named intrastate train still running is the *Gippslander* between Melbourne and Bairnsdale, named in October 1954. The first train to be named in Victoria was the *Geelong Flyer* on 3 May 1926. This name was dropped in the 1970's.
12. The highest railway bridge in Victoria is on the "goods line" between Albion and Jacana and crosses the Maribyrnong River. It is 179 feet (54.6 metres) above the riverbed at its highest point and was completed in 1929.
13. An underground railway to serve the Melbourne CBD was first recommended in 1929. Further plans were developed in 1946, but serious consideration was deferred until 1956. In 1971 the first sod of the four loop lines was turned and the first station Museum (renamed Melbourne Central in 1997) was opened in 1981.
14. Victoria's first air-conditioned carriage entered service in December 1935, and the first fully air-conditioned train in the South Hemisphere ran between Melbourne and Mildura in July 1937. The single biggest order for passenger rolling stock in Victoria comprised 95 six-car "Comeng" suburban trains (a total of 570 individual carriages) delivered between 1981 and 1989, introducing air-conditioned accommodation to the suburban network. With the completion of the current order for 36 Siemens and 29 X'Trapolis suburban trains, anticipated in December 2005, every suburban train will be air-conditioned.
15. The first diesel locomotives, F class shunting locomotives from England, entered service in Victoria in 1951. Mainline diesels – the B class – started to enter service in 1952.
16. The last steam locomotive to enter service with the Victorian Railways was J class number 559 in December 1954. In 1968, steam was used for the last time on a regularly scheduled broad gauge passenger train between Horsham and Dimboola. The last steam locomotives in revenue service outside a railway workshop were withdrawn in May 1972, but they continued in use for shunting until the mid 1970s.
17. The first consignment of containerised mail was in October 1965. In December came the first consignment of deep frozen vegetables from Tasmania under sea-road-rail scheme.
18. The first female train driver for the Victorian Railways (V/Line) was appointed in 1985. By July 2004 there were three female drivers working for Connex, and six more in training. There are currently no female V/Line drivers.
19. The highest railway station in Victoria is currently Woodend at an altitude of 561.1 metres (1841 feet). The highest location ever served by the Victorian railway system was Shelley at 781 metres (2562 feet) on the now closed Wodonga to Cudgewa line.

20. There are seven railway tunnels currently in use on the Victorian railway system, excluding the Melbourne Underground Rail Loop. They are located between Jolimont and West Richmond (2 tunnels); Heidelberg and Rosanna; Geelong and South Geelong; Malmsbury and Castlemaine (Elphinstone Tunnel); Castlemaine and Bendigo (Big Hill Tunnel) and on the goods line running under Bunbury Street at Footscray. The longest is the tunnel between Geelong and South Geelong at 422 metres (1386 feet).