

CIVILBUZZ

# Top railway Station In The world

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## Top 5 Railway Station

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### **St Pancras International, London**

A magnificent and highly romantic addition to the skyline of Victorian London, St Pancras – named after a 3rd Century Roman martyr – is a glorious concatenation of salmon pink brick and veined marble clock towers, pinnacles, spires and pointed arches. A true cathedral of the early railway age, this great terminus and hotel was designed for the Midland Railway by the daring structural engineer William Barlow and the architect, Sir Gilbert Scott, the latter best known for new Gothic churches, the Albert Memorial and the restoration of many medieval buildings.

Station and hotel opened fully in 1874, and yet its flamboyant design was considered not just old fashioned but vulgar and even outrageous by 1935, when the hotel closed and became scruffy railway offices. Threatened several times with demolition, St Pancras did more than survive: in recent years, it has been cleaned, restored, extended and transformed into the London terminus of 300kph Eurostar trains to continental Europe. The hotel is grand, its restaurants and bars fashionable and the whole 19th Century Gothic-meets-21st Century Modern architectural, design and engineering conflation is much loved and highly efficient. A true wonder of the railway world. (Corbis)



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### York

Who can fail to be thrilled by the sight of an express train coursing its way around and under the great iron and glass sweep of the roof of York station? This majestic, 800-ft long structure is supported by avenues of mighty Corinthian columns, and the feeling here is that passengers are waiting for trains in what must surely be the most important railway station of all. When, in fact, it opened in 1877, York was – if briefly – the world's largest. Set half way between London and Edinburgh, it has always been an important railway junction and served by some of Britain's fastest and most prestigious trains including The Flying Scotsman, The Talisman and The Elizabethan.

The station's designers, Thomas Prosser and William Peachey, and the North Eastern Railway, knew they had to live up to the close-by medieval glory of York Minster, one of England's greatest buildings. Today, you can still ride through York station on board express steam trains – enthusiasts' specials, of course – and experience much the same thrill as 19th Century passengers must have as they rode majestically through a city renowned for its fine architecture. (Alamy)



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**Grand Central Terminal** : Opened in 1903, Grand Central is grand in every way. Big, broad-shouldered, opulent and beautifully built, it is as much a meeting place – a vast urban drawing room – as it a commuter, and occasional long distance, railroad station. It is a truly great place to sit and while away the New York rush hour, cocktail to hand, while watching great shafts of evening sunlight slant through the huge Beaux-Arts windows of its sensationally ambitious concourse as passengers head for the platforms – all forty-four of them hidden on two levels beneath your feet. Look higher again, above the famous four-faced station clock, and there's a glorious ceiling to marvel at, a map no less of the constellations and the signs of the zodiac.

Not for nothing is Grand Central the world's sixth most popular visitor attraction. One upon a time, you could ride from here to points far west on some of the world's greatest trains including the legendary Twentieth Century Limited, overnight in sheer style from Manhattan to Chicago as Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint did in Alfred Hitchcock's impeccably stylish *North by Northwest*. Aircraft did for these superb trains, and today it does seem odd that all this architectural show – put on by the firms Reed and Stern and Warren and Whetmore more than a century ago - is for rather drab trains scuttling along suburban corridors. When the rush hour is over, it's time to eat in the station's beautiful Oyster Bar, and drink a toast to one of the finest railway stations of all



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Helsinki Central : Built from 1857 during the time of the Russian Grand Duchy, Finnish railways were effectively state-owned from their inception. Stations were simple, functional and standardised. And then, half a century later, when the National Romantic movement in the arts caught on, characterised by the stirring music of Jean Sibelius, and a desire for independence from Russia was in the air, Finnish architects let rip with a wave of ambitious and beautifully crafted buildings; on the crest of this wave was Helsinki station.

A fairy tale design, singing of Finland, its stirring granite facades are dominated by stern faced giants bearing huge lanterns in their outsized hands. Once past these guardians, passengers pass into grand vaulted halls. Spotless, delightful, purposeful and comfortable, these add immeasurably to the lustre and magic of this happily idiosyncratic, yet perfectly functional building. Beyond these halls, trains that run religiously to time will take you to the Arctic Circle, east to Russia or west to the enchanting Finnish archipelago jutting into the Baltic Sea. The architect of Helsinki Station, completed in 1914, was Eliel Saarinen, an Arts and Crafts master, who later emigrated to the United States. His city terminus might have been much smaller than New York's Grand Central, yet it packs an equal aesthetic punch



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**Victoria Terminal , Mumbai** : Crafted in yellow sandstone, granite and blue-grey basalt, Victoria Terminus (since renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, although only officials and politicians seem to refer to it by this name) in what was once Bombay, was opened in 1887 coinciding with the Golden Jubilee of the Queen Empress, Victoria. It was completed the following year. It is of course, a younger, imperial sibling of London's St Pancras, although imbued with 'Hindu' details, and equally joyous. Even today, street life around the station, with red double-deck buses and Hindustan Ambassador taxis based on 1950s Morris Oxfords, has a curiously British feel about it.

This glorious architectural medley – or melee – was the work of the architect-engineer Frederick William Stevens for the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. Inside, it displays a wealth of Victorian craftsmanship, with tiles, ironwork and countless inventive details, as well as high vaulted spaces and very long and crowded platforms, some of it made locally and some shipped from Britain. 'VT' as the station is known locally, is India's busiest: statistics tell you this, but your eyes will, too. It is a city within a city, an unforgettable experience crowned with more than memorable architecture.

