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My Family Can Never Agree on a Movie. But We Can Always Agree on This Board Game.

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outside the city hoping for a week of hiking and starry skies. What our New England bodies weren't prepared for was seven straight days of 105-degree dry heat.

On our first day, my parents and younger brother, refusing to accept defeat, slathered themselves in SPF and set out for a day of mountain climbing. I, however, as the family member with the weakest constitution, stayed put, choosing instead to open every drawer and cupboard in our Airbnb looking for a book to pass the time. I never found a book; instead, I found the 2004 board game [Ticket to Ride](#).

Top pick

Ticket to Ride

A favorite family-friendly board game

This easy-to-learn strategy game has players crisscrossing the country by train. With a short and sweet play time, it's the perfect after-dinner treat.

\$43 from Amazon

\$44 from Walmart

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as LOS ANGELES TO MIAMI). THE PLAYER WITH THE MOST POINTS AT THE END OF THE game wins.

Its nuance lies in its simplicity: The rules are easy to understand, but the strategies are plentiful. There is no universally correct strategy to take—you can go on the offensive or stay defensive, be sneaky or be blatantly aggressive.



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One game, you could go high-risk-high-reward by focusing on Destination Tickets—racking up more points but risking losing them if you can't complete the full path by the end of the game. (If you are left with an unfulfilled Destination Ticket when the game ends, you subtract that ticket's value from your final score.)

Alternatively, you might focus on securing highly sought-after routes, building your score while blocking your opponents' paths. You can decide to fight for the longest continuous path (worth 10 bonus points) or claim all of the longest individual routes (worth 15 points each). The possibilities are endless, keeping the game unpredictable and entertaining enough to play multiple rounds in a row.

It's because of that variety and ease that Ticket to Ride became a staple in the Rimm household.

I grew up playing board games with my family, and we're especially partial to old-school classics like The Game Of Life, Sorry!, and Monopoly. So when I pulled out Ticket to Ride, my parents and brother, sunstruck from their too-hot adventure, eagerly reached for the bags of colorful trains.

Thanks to the game's simplicity, we learned the rules swiftly, and the ~~gamenlay quickly went from civil to ruthless. We competed for strategic~~

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point journey from Los Angeles to Seattle, and my dad going southbound from Calgary. With one of the two coveted Seattle-to-Portland routes already claimed, tension brewed as the turn shifted to my partner. With a glint in her eye and her trains in the East, she played a single card and placed a train in the remaining Seattle-to-Portland slot—blocking my mom and foiling her plan. My mom let out a shriek of horror and amazement; my partner had outsmarted the smartest person in the room and secured a permanent place at the table. By the following year, we were engaged.



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And then the pandemic hit, and the game went from staple to savior. The five of us (a scientist, an executive coach, a college student, a creative director, and a journalist) piled into my parents' house outside of Boston for what we thought would be a week or two.

Weeks turned to months, days bled into nights, outside was terrifying, inside was all-encompassing. All we had was each other—and Ticket to Ride.

Because of the relatively short length of each round (30 to 60 minutes), it was the perfect transition from workday to evening. Every day around 6 p.m., the first person to finish their day would float from room to room singing The Beatles' classic: "She's got a ticket to ride, she's got a ticket to ri-i-iiide."

People would emerge from their makeshift home offices and take out their headphones, and by 6:15 we were all at the dining room table, passing out trains and setting up cards. We were five different people with 40 years between us, plucked from our daily lives. We could never agree on a movie, but we could always agree on Ticket to Ride.

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TICKETING SERIES—but we love to return to our favorite trains. When it comes to Ticket to Ride, and demolishing my family's transcontinental railroad dreams, I will always be all aboard.

This article was edited by Alexander Aciman and Catherine Kast.

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The Best Strategy Board Games



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The Best Board Games

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Meet your guide



Hannah Rimm



Hannah Rimm is a supervising editor on the discovery team. She has worked as a writer and editor for a decade, covering everything from lipstick to credit cards. Prior to Wirecutter, she was a senior editor at Refinery29 and a writer for Women's Health, Allure, and Bustle. She is particularly passionate about colorful eyeliner, fidget toys, and finding the perfect pair of socks.

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