

# JOHN BOHRER BALKAN RAILWAYS

3-5  
60m  
14+

## GAME COMPONENTS:

- 1 Game Board
- 155 Railway cubes, 31 for each player
- 5 Railway Locomotives, 1 for each player
- 19 Business Interest Cards
- 1 Build Limit marker
- Paper Money (40 x \$1, 20 x \$5, 20 x \$10, 10 x \$20, 10 x \$50)
- These rules

## SETTING UP THE GAME

Lay out the game board. Place the Build Limit marker on the number 3 box of the Maximum Track Limit track. Lay the 19 Business Interest cards face up around the game board so that all are visible. It is helpful to place the Southeast cards in the Southeast, etc. Each player selects a color for their railway, taking the 31 cubes and the Locomotive. Each player puts a cube in the \$0 box of the Income track. Each player puts a cube in the \$0 box of the Loans & Interest track. Each player puts their Locomotive in the Expand box of the Selected Action track. Randomly determine a Start Player. Play now begins with the Start player.

**Track Costs**

- 1 Track - \$3
- 2 Tracks - \$7
- 3 Tracks - \$12
- 4 Tracks - \$18
- 5 Tracks - \$25
- 6 Tracks - \$33
- 7 Tracks - \$42
- 8 Tracks - \$52

**Additional Track Costs**

- + \$1 Rural Hills
- + \$1 Rural Mountain
- + \$2 Rural Mountain

**Track Limits**

- Only 1 railway in a Rural Mountain hex.
- No railways in Istanbul itself.
- No limit on railways in France.
- 2 railways maximum in all other hexes.

**Hex Income**

- 7 Istanbul
- 5 Major Capital
- 4 Major City
- 3 Major City
- 2 Minor City
- 1 Town
- 0 Trade
- 0 Rural

**Build Limit**

4 5 6 7 8

## ENDING/WINNING THE GAME

The game ENDS when a player has no unused cubes at the end of their turn.  
The player with the most Victory Points WINS the game. Ties are possible.

## SEQUENCE OF PLAY

During their turn, a player must take one of these four actions:

- START a new railway
- EXPAND an existing railway
- MERGE two existing railways
- PURCHASE a Business Interest

The player must select an Action different than the box in which the player's Locomotive resides. At the start of the game, all Locomotives are in the EXPAND box. Given that no player has any railways at the start of the game, they must select either START or PURCHASE. The player moves their Locomotive to the box of the action they have selected. They may not do the same action next turn. The player is not required to perform the Action they select, they may do nothing.

After the player is done with their Action, the player first receives income, then must pay loan interest, then they may pay off one Loan. Play continues with the player to the left.

### The Map & the Cubes

The gameboard is a map of the Balkans, with rural hexes and city hexes. The rural hexes may be level or have hills or have mountains. Urban hexes have different colors:

Black Trieste, Yellow Towns, Purple Minor Cities, Red Major Cities, Blue Major Capitals and 3 White Istanbul Approach hexes in front of Istanbul.

### Building Railway Track

The player uses their unused cubes to build track. A railway's cube in a hex denotes that they have built railway track in that hex. A railway's cube in an adjacent hex means that they are connected by track. A railway may have only one cube in a hex. Every hex may contain a maximum of two cubes, with the sole exception of Trieste, which has no limit to the number of cubes. A player may build into only one Istanbul Approach hex, they may not have more than one of their railways in the Istanbul Approach hexes.

The number of tracks that a railway may build is initially limited to 3, as shown by the Build Limit marker on the 3 space of the Maximum Track Limit track. After a railway builds track, the Build Limit marker is incremented one space, so that the next railway may build up to 4 tracks. The maximum number of tracks built is 8 in this game.

The more track the railway builds during their turn, the more it costs:

1 track costs \$3; 2 tracks \$7; 3 tracks \$12, 4 tracks \$18; 5 tracks \$25; 6 tracks \$33; 7 tracks \$42; 8 tracks \$52.  
It is not possible to build 9 or more track in a turn.

Placing a cube in a hex that already has a cube in it increases the cost by \$1. Placing a cube in a hex with a hill also increases the cost by \$1. Placing a cube in a hex with a mountain increases the cost by \$2. Placing a cube in an Istanbul Approach hex costs nothing, \$0, no matter if another cube is already in that hex.

### Loans & Interest

Players start the game with no money. Whenever a player needs money, they borrow it from the Bank of Switzerland. The player may take multiple loans during their turn. Each loan they take gets them \$5 and their color cube is incremented on the Loans & Interest track one space for each loan of \$5. The number on the Loans & Interest track shows the Interest they must pay during the Pay Loan Interest step. When a player pays off a \$5 loan, their cube is decremented one for each loan they have paid off. The cost to pay off a \$5 loan is \$6. A player may only pay off one loan during their turn, not multiple loans.

EXAMPLE: Pete takes 6 loans and receives \$30. His color cube is incremented 6 times on the Loans & Interest track, from the \$0 box to the \$7 box. Pete must pay \$7 to the bank during the Pay Loan Interest step. If Pete does not have \$7, he requires another loan, takes \$5, increments his cube to the \$8 box and now pays \$8 to the bank for debt service.

## **Insolvency**

If a player has taken out enough loans to reach the \$25 interest box, they are insolvent. They may not purchase any Business Interests and they may not build any track. If the railway's income is less than \$26, they are effectively removed from the game. Remove their locomotive from the Selected Action Track, leave the player's track where it is and let them just sit and watch the game.

## **Income**

Players start the game with no income. Whenever a railway reaches an Urban hex not previously reached by that railway, the income increase is immediately applied, and their cube advanced on the Income Track to reflect their additional income.

Income:

\$1 for Trieste.

\$2 for a Town, \$1 for the second railway reaching the Town.

\$3 for a Minor City, \$2 for the second railway in the Minor City.

\$4 for a Major City, \$3 for the second railway in the Major City.

\$5 for a Major Capital.

\$7 for a white Istanbul Approach hex.

No railway may build track in the inner Istanbul hex.

A railway must start in an Urban hex and it must also build enough track to connect to another Urban hex. The single exception to this is a railway that starts in an Istanbul Approach hex. Apply the income of all newly reached Urban hexes to the railway's income.

EXAMPLE: Rich builds from Beograd to Novi Sad. Since Rich was the first player to build in both locations, his income is 2 for Novi Sad and 4 for Beograd, 6 total. In the very next turn, Dave builds from Beograd into Kragujevac. Since he is the second railway in Beograd, the Beograd income is reduced by one. Dave receives \$5 income.

## **Income over \$20**

If a player's income is over \$20, leave their cube on the 20 space and use another cube to record additional income. If another cube is not available, their income remains at \$20. The same holds true for income over \$40 or \$60.

## **THE ACTIONS**

### **START a new railway**

The new railway must connect at least two Urban hexes in which the player has no existing track. None of the new track may connect to another railway owned by that player. A player starting a railway in one of the white Istanbul Approach hexes may only build the single hex.

Immediately record the increase in income.

### **EXPAND an existing railway**

The player expands an existing railway by extending track to Urban hexes new to that railway. None of the new track may connect to another, different railway owned by that player.

Immediately record the increase in income.

### **MERGE two existing railways**

The player may build track that connects two of that player's railways. In addition to any new Urban hexes connected during the merge (none are required), the railway receives an additional \$1 in income. Immediately record the increase in income.

### **PURCHASE a Business Interest**

The player may purchase one of the Business Interests. The cost is the value listed on the Business Interest. A player with a Business Interest must immediately apply it when the player's railway has built into the Urban hex. When applied for income, the income increase is immediately recorded on the Income Track for that player and the card is turned face down.

## ORIENT EXPRESS BONUS

The player that places track that connects Trieste to Istanbul immediately has one loan forgiven. The track route selected for the connection by the player at this moment may use track from other railways. All of the railways used in the track route selected gain \$5 income.

EXAMPLE: Pete has placed track that completes a railway connection from Trieste to Istanbul. There is much celebration with slivovitz and burek consumed in vast quantities. Pete traces the route he selects. It does not have to be the shortest or fastest route, but it cannot loop - it must be contiguous.

John's Trieste to Rijeka railway  
Pete's Rijeka to Zagreb railway  
Dave's Zagreb to Brod railway  
Joshua's Brod to Beograd railway  
Pete's Beograd to Nis railway  
Richard's Nis to Sofiya railway  
John's Sofiya to Pleven railway  
Pete's Pleven to Bucuresti railway  
Dave's Bucuresti to Istanbul railway

The selected route uses one of Joshua's railways, he receives a \$5 income increase. The selected route uses one of Richard's railways, he receives a \$5 income increase. The selected route uses two of John's railways, he receives a \$10 income increase. The selected route uses two of Dave's railways, he receives a \$10 income increase. The selected route uses three of Pete's railways, he receives a \$15 income increase.

## Victory Point Computation

### Most Income

The player with the highest Income receives 1 Victory Point. Tied players each receive a VP. At this time, start using the Income track to record the players' Victory points.

### Most cash minus unpaid loans

Compute each player's cash minus \$20 for each unpaid loan. The player with the most positive cash receives 2 Victory Points. If two or more players are tied for most cash, they each receive 2 VPs.

If no player has positive cash, no VPs are given.

### Longest Run

The railway with the longest run receives a Victory Point. Tied players each receive a VP.

### Most Towns

The railway with the most towns receives a Victory Point. Tied players each receive a VP.

### Most Minor Cities

The railway with the most minor Cities receives a Victory Point. Tied players each receive a VP.

### Most Major Cities

The railway with the most major Cities receives a Victory Point. Tied players each receive a VP.

### Most Business Interests

The player with the most Business Interests receives a Victory Point. Tied players each receive a VP.

Graphic Design and Illustration: Todd Sanders

Game Design: John Bohrer

Balkan Consultant: Branko Postruznik

Images on hexes have been designed using resources from Freepik.com.

The license for *Balkan Railways* has been kindly granted to Rio Grande Games by Winsome Games.

If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, please write to us at:

Rio Grande Games, PO Box 1033

Placitas, NM 87043, USA

RioGames@aol.com

www.riograndegames.com

©2023 John Bohrer. All rights reserved.

