

BYWAYS



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Great American Railroads

America's Oldest Continuously Operating Railroad
Railroading in the Tennessee Valley
4 Days Across America by Rail
Traveling Back in Time in Northern Nevada
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By Steve Kirchner, Editor & Publisher



Welcome to Byways annual Great American Railroads issue for 2018. Each year we feature railroad related attractions and museums, and railroad related feature stories

In this issue we begin our journey with the oldest continuously operated railroad in the Western Hemisphere.

The Strasburg Railroad in Pennsylvania Dutch Country was chartered in 1.832, and continues to operate under its original charter and original name.

Strasburg operates five serviceable historic steam locomotives, and is one of the few railroads in the United States that still uses steam engines to haul revenue freight trains. A short line railroad of just 4.5 miles, today it carries passengers on a 45-minute round trip through 2,000 acres in southeastern Lancaster County, PA.

Across the street is the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, exhibiting a collection of more than 100 locomotives and rails cars.

You can relive the Golden Age of railroading at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga, TN. The railroad has been described as a moving museum, offering an interactive, historical experience.

From a 55-minute excursion on the Missionary Ridge Local to the all-day Summerville Steam Special, there is a trip for everyone here. And don't forget the dinner trains, offering a selection of English roast beef topped with Madeira sauce, roasted stuffed breast of chicken, or crusted fillet of salmon with Bearnaise sauce or red pepper butter. The three-course meals are usually served in a restored 1924 dining car.

Join Mary Charlebois as she takes us on a 4-day journey across America by rail. Beginning in Jacksonville, FL, Mary travels Amtrak's Silver Meteor to Washington, DC's Union Station. There's time for a little sightseeing there, and a spectacular view of the U.S. Capitol from outside the station, which is featured on the cover of this issue.

From Washington, Mary boards the Capitol Limited headed to Chicago. At Chicago's Union Station, you can rent bikes or hop on a tour bus. A four-minute walk

across the Chicago River takes you to the Ledge at Sky Deck, atop the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. Glass boxes extend 4.3 feet into the air, giving you a clear view to the bottom!

Then it's back to the station and boarding of Amtrak's California Zephyr for the final leg of the trip to Northern California. With a Viewliner Roomette, Mary had the smallest of the sizes of private sleeping accommodations.

All dining car meals are included with the sleeper car ticket. Reservations are needed for lunch or dinner.

The Zephyr crossed the mountains, deserts, farmland, cities and the Continental Divide. The train made 30 stops, including Denver, Salt Lake City and Reno. When

the train pulled into Emeryville, CA, Mary took the Amtrak bus across the Bay into San Francisco, and her 4-day trip across America ended.

In northern Nevada, we travel to Ely and visit another museum dedicated to preserving historic rail facilities. Here, the entire Nevada Northern Railroad

is preserved just as it was more than 100 years ago. When built, its tracks connected one of the largest copper mines in North America to the transcontinental rail lines to the North.

Today, most trains head southwest, through two tunnels and up real mountain grades toward Ruth Copper Mining District.

Getting to Ely is half the fun, as it is located on what *Life* magazine called the *Loneliest Highway in America*.

The final stop is Georgetown, Colorado, and the Georgetown Loop Railroad. To make the steep grades to the mines, the railroad had to twist and turn 4.5 miles, making 2.5 complete circles and at one point crossing over itself on a 90-foot trestle — the Devil's Gate Bridge. Hence the name, Georgetown Loop Railroad.

In *Whats Happening*, we visit Ohio's Donut Trail. That's right, we've seen wine trails, bourbon trails, music trails, jogging trails and walking trails, but who can turn down a good donut? We visit Butler County, Ohio, near Cincinnati, where 12 donuts shops have created the state's first Donut Trail!

We hope you enjoy this issue of Byways.



Kids favorites Thomas & Percy at the Strasburg Railroad in Lancaster, PA.



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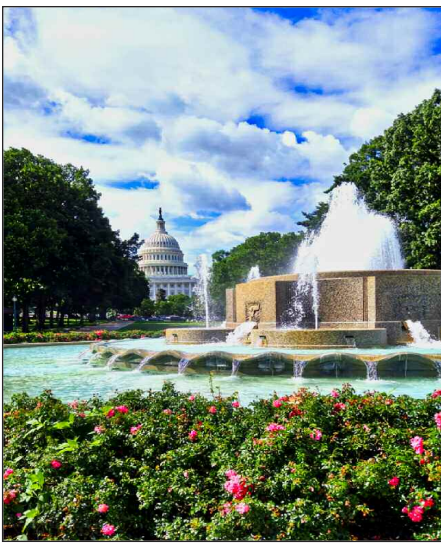
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PHOTO BY MARK NALLY

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- Lincoln Legacy Museum
- Mt. Zion Covered Bridge
- Bourbon Trail
- Holy Land Sites
- Phil Simms Museum
- TransAmerica Bike Trail
- Nesting Bald Eagles
- Paddle Beech Fork River
- Mid-Kentucky Arts
- Central KY Theatre





BYWAYS

Volume 34, Issue No. 6 2017

On the cover. A view of the Nation’s Capitol looking through the fountains at Union Station in Washington, DC. As viewed during a four-day trip by rail across America. For more, turn to page 20. Great American Railroads coverage begins on page 8.

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Coming in future issues of *Byways* Mountains & Valleys, Ocean Views, Rivers & Lakes, Great American Highways and much more!

Next Up: Mountains and Valleys are featured in the next issue of *Byways*. Right, the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. Nestled between the world-famous Adirondack and Catskill Mountains, travelers discover the heart of Central New York.



Great American Railroads

Steam Engine #4501 rolls back into service. This iconic engine leads the way on the Summerville Steam Special round-trip from Chattanooga, TN to Summerville, GA and back. Photo courtesy Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum. See story page 16.





America's Oldest Continuously Operating Railroad





Engine #90 pulls passengers through the Pennsylvania Dutch Country aboard the Strasburg Rail Road. Photo courtesy Strasburg Rail Road.



Engine #475 winds through the trees on its 4.5 mile run.

The Strasburg Rail Road is the oldest continuously operating railroad in the western hemisphere and the oldest public utility in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Chartered in 1832, the Strasburg Rail Road continues to operate under its original charter and original name (Strasburg Rail Road Company).

Located just outside of the town of Strasburg, Pennsylvania, the railroad is a heritage railroad offering excursion trains, hauled by steam locomotives, through the heart of world-famous Pennsylvania Dutch Country.

Rolling Stock

Strasburg has five serviceable historic steam locomotives (Canadian National 7312, Canadian National 89, Great Western 90, N&W 475, and Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal 15 (rebuilt as Thomas the Tank Engine) on its roster and has the nation's largest fleet of historic wooden passenger coaches in operation.

The Strasburg Rail Road is also one of the few railroads in the United States to occasionally use steam locomotives to haul revenue freight trains. It hosts 300,000 visitors per year.

Strasburg Rail Road is a short line railroad whose construction in the 19th century was intended to connect the town of Strasburg with the main line. Today, the original

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Happy Customer

4½-mile line carries passengers on a 45-minute round-trip journey from Strasburg to Leaman Place Junction through nearly 2,000 acres in southeastern Lancaster County.

The train includes the United States' only operational wooden dining car on which visitors may dine while riding. Attractions at the station include the fully operational 15 in gauge Pint-Sized Pufferbelly (Cagney steam-powered rideable miniature railway), a vintage pump car and several c.1930s "cranky cars" along with

ment facilitates the carrying of goods to and from the main line for a number of local and regional clients. In 2016 it was announced that they are expanding their shop an extra 12,000 square feet due to the increase of jobs from other railroads.

All Aboard

When you visit Strasburg Rail Road, the first thing you can expect is an authentic experience of a real steam railroad. The locomotives and passenger cars, (known as



The Henry K. Long Lounge Car. Photos courtesy Strasburg Rail Road.

several gift shops and a cafe.

Across the street is the The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, which exhibits a world-class collection of more than 100 locomotives and rail cars and offers visitors the chance to sit in an engineer's seat, explore a caboose, experience a turn-of-the-century passenger station and partake in special events.

In addition to the excursion train rides, Strasburg Rail Road mechanical and car shops conduct contract work for a wide variety of public and private clients including fellow steam railroads, train museums, and attractions. Strasburg Rail Road's freight depart-



Lee E. Brenner Dining Car



Thomas the Tank Engine. Photo courtesy Joe Osciak and Strasburg Rail Road.

“rolling stock”) are not replicas, and staff members are not re-enactors. In addition to its five working steam locomotives, Strasburg Rail Road has 19 operating passenger cars, including the President’s Car, First-Class Parlor Car and Dining Car. All equipment is restored and maintained on-site in the Mechanical Shop.

Tickets include a 45-minute, round-trip ride through the tranquil Amish countryside to Paradise, PA and back (4.5 miles east and 4.5 miles returning west on the same track). The ride features an audio commentary providing interesting facts, history, and information about the railroad and surrounding area.

View from the Train

You will also see more than 1,000 acres of Lancaster County farmland visible from your window, much of which is farmed by the railroad’s Amish neighbors. During the growing season, this land supports livestock as well as crop such as corn, alfalfa, soybeans, and tobacco.

You will have the opportunity to disembark and enjoy old-fashioned fun at Groff’s Grove or Leaman Place Grove, convenient recreation areas along the railroad’s route for

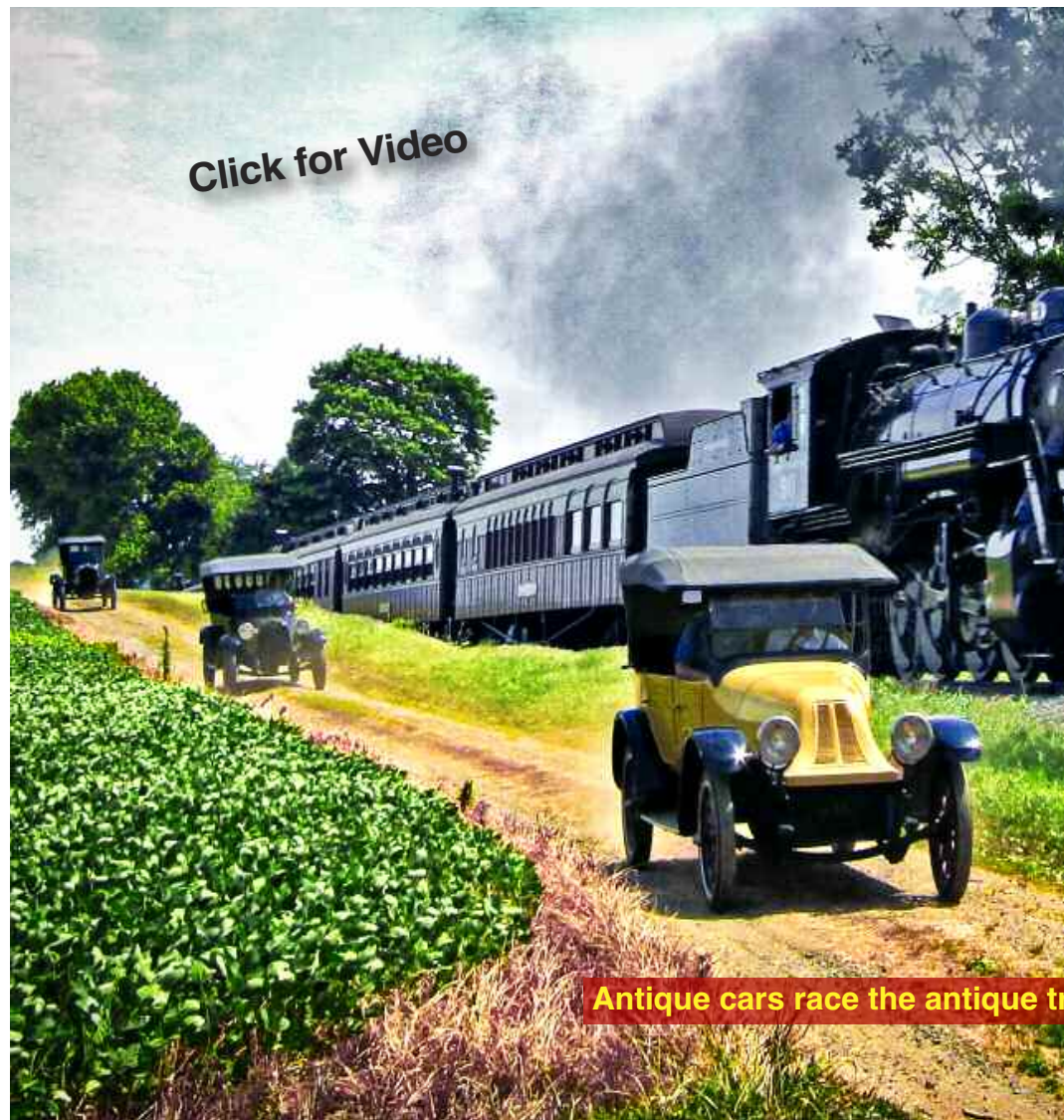
mid-way boarding or unloading.

Pennsylvania Dutch

Travel through some of the most beautiful, peaceful and productive Pennsylvania Dutch Countryside. From this unique vantage point, you’ll see Amish farmers working in their fields, Amish children playing nearby, livestock grazing and farm produce waiting to be harvested.

You’ll also take pride in the fact that a portion of your ticket will help preserve this landscape for centuries.

More than saving land, the Strasburg Rail Road wishes to preserve the beauty, productivity and way of



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Antique cars race the antique train



Amish Village. Photo courtesy Discover Lancaster.com.

life that this land provides for our Amish and English farming neighbors.

The Amish residents of Lancaster County practice a faith tradition that does not allow modern conveniences such as automobiles, televisions and phones in the home.

The two most visible differences of Amish life as compared to the rest of the world are the horse and buggy and the style of dress. The horse and buggy is one of the most obvious examples of restricted technology.

In the minds of the Amish, automobiles, televisions and electricity tied to the power grid are temptations that weaken a close-knit community.

There are approximately 35,000 Amish people in Lancaster County today.

<https://www.strasburgtrainroad.com>



train.



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Railroading in the Tennessee Valley

Relive railroading's golden age aboard the Tennessee Valley Railroad's restored vintage trains. It's a trip into history on a rolling time machine!

The Tennessee Valley Railroad has been described as a moving museum, offering an interactive, historical experience.

Visit Chattanooga to find the only regularly scheduled, full-sized train rides in Tennessee. But it is so much more than just entertainment!

The mission of the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum is to collect for preservation, operation, interpretation, and display, railroad artifacts in an authentic setting to educate the public concerning the role of railroads in the history and development of the region.

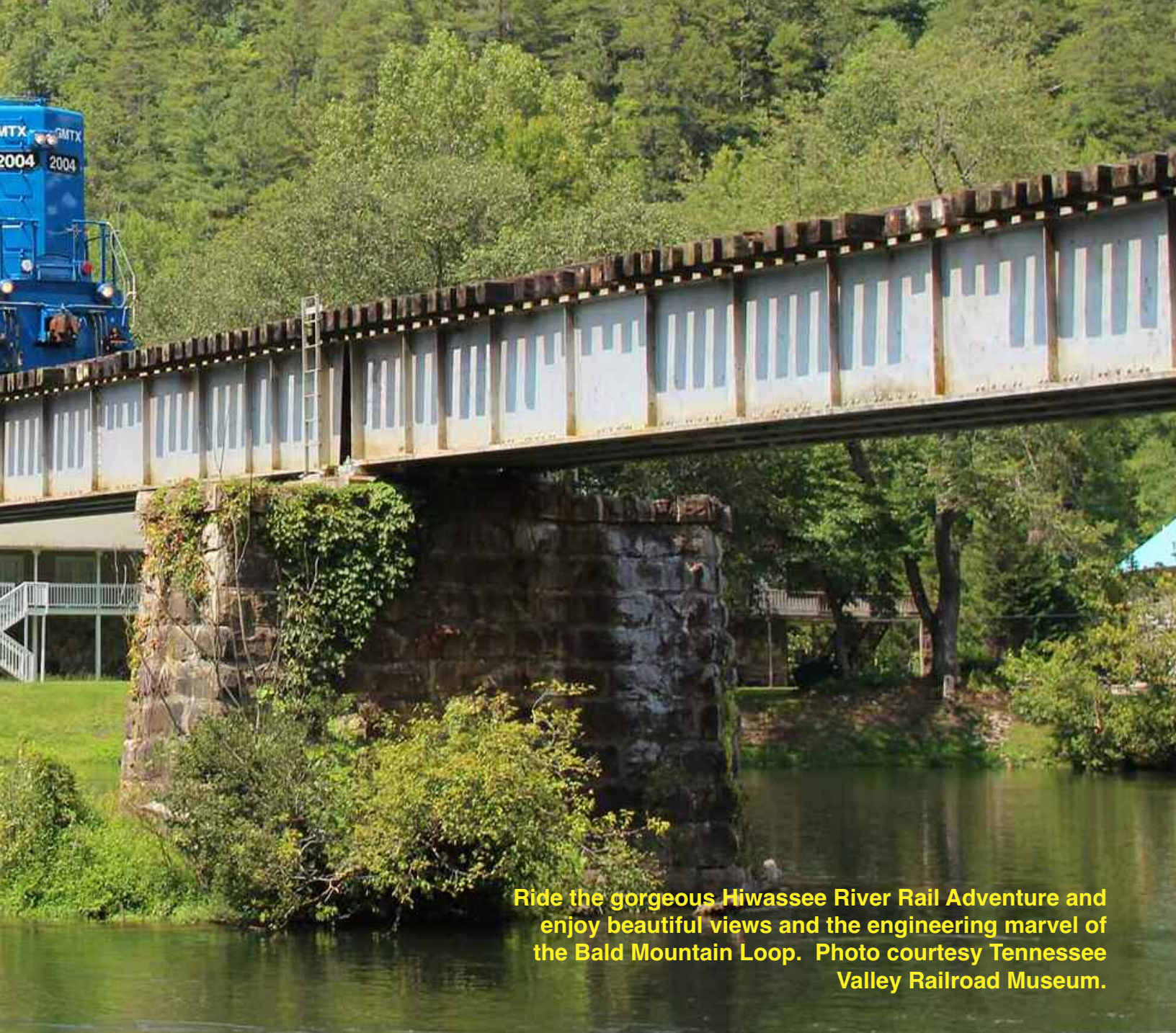
Mission Ridge

The 55-minute experience on the Missionary Ridge Local includes a 6-mile round trip, the most frequent trip on the railroad.

Daily in season, Missionary Ridge Local trips begin at the Grand Junction Station and take passengers along one of the original railroad lines in Chattanooga, crossing four bridges and passing through pre-Civil War Missionary Ridge Tunnel, which was completed in 1858.

The train stops at East Chattanooga, allowing riders to see the locomotive rotating on a turntable and participate in a tour of the railroad restoration shop before re-boarding for the return trip. Round trip time is slightly less than an hour — a great train ride for kids.

The term "Local" refers to short line trains that were at



Ride the gorgeous Hiwassee River Rail Adventure and enjoy beautiful views and the engineering marvel of the Bald Mountain Loop. Photo courtesy Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum.

one time a lifeline to the world from small towns around the nation. As the train rolls to a stop with the ground rumbling under your feet, you feel the mounting anticipation. The conductor calls the long-awaited signal: “All Aboard!” Excitement builds as passengers scurry to their seats. This was a regular occurrence 100 years ago...as it is today.

Mission Ridge schedules runs every month of the year.

Valentine Dinner Train

This train runs with frequent schedules during the first two weeks of February.

Trips include a four-course dining experience on board a restored 1924 dining car. The excursion trains typically depart from the Chattanooga Grand Junction Station (4119 Cromwell Rd, Chattanooga, TN 37421) at 5:30pm

and again at 8:00pm, traveling at a leisurely pace through portions of urban Chattanooga, passing Warner Park Zoo and Chattanooga National Cemetery. The train travels about seven miles from the depot and then returns along the same route, taking about two hours overall.

Passengers are encouraged to choose their entrée as tickets are ordered. Patrons may select their entrée of carved English roast of beef topped with a Madeira sauce, roasted stuffed breast of chicken with a wild mushroom cream sauce or Cumberland sauce, or crusted fillet of salmon with a béarnaise sauce or red pepper butter.

For small groups, Presidential Office Car #98 (the Eden Isle) represents the ultimate in rail travel and is offered for private charter. The cost of \$800 allows a group of up to eight (8) persons to travel in this opulent

[Click for Video](#)

Steam Excursion on the Tennessee Valley Railroad.
Photo courtesy Tennessee Valley Railroad.



car, which boasts a dining room, lounge area, and rear observation platform.

Bunny Train

Hop aboard The Bunny Train during the last two weeks in March. These Easter Bunny Train rides depart from Grand Junction and travel toward East Chattanooga where passengers disembark for special activities. Storytelling, temporary tattoos, coloring pages, an egg hunt...and a chance to meet a big bunny! Bring a camera and take your child's photo with the Easter Bunny.

Copperhill Special

Take an extended day-trip excursion through the lower Hiwassee River Gorge, over the Hiwassee Loop, and on to the joint cities of Copperhill, TN, and McCaysville, GA. It is a total 94-mile round trip, with lunch on your own during the 90-minute layover before returning to Etowah. Departure time is 9:30am. and return is generally around 5:45 pm.

The Copperhill route is the same as for "Loop" trips, but after traversing the river gorge and negotiating the spiral near Farner, the train continues a longer distance through Turtletown and Ducktown to the former mining town of Copperhill. Trains run late March through September.

Hiwassee River Gorge

Enjoy a 50-mile round trip up the beautiful lower Hiwassee River gorge. This 3-1/2 hour trip will take you to the top of the famous Hiwassee Loop where the tracks cross over themselves as they corkscrew up the mountain near Farner, Tennessee.

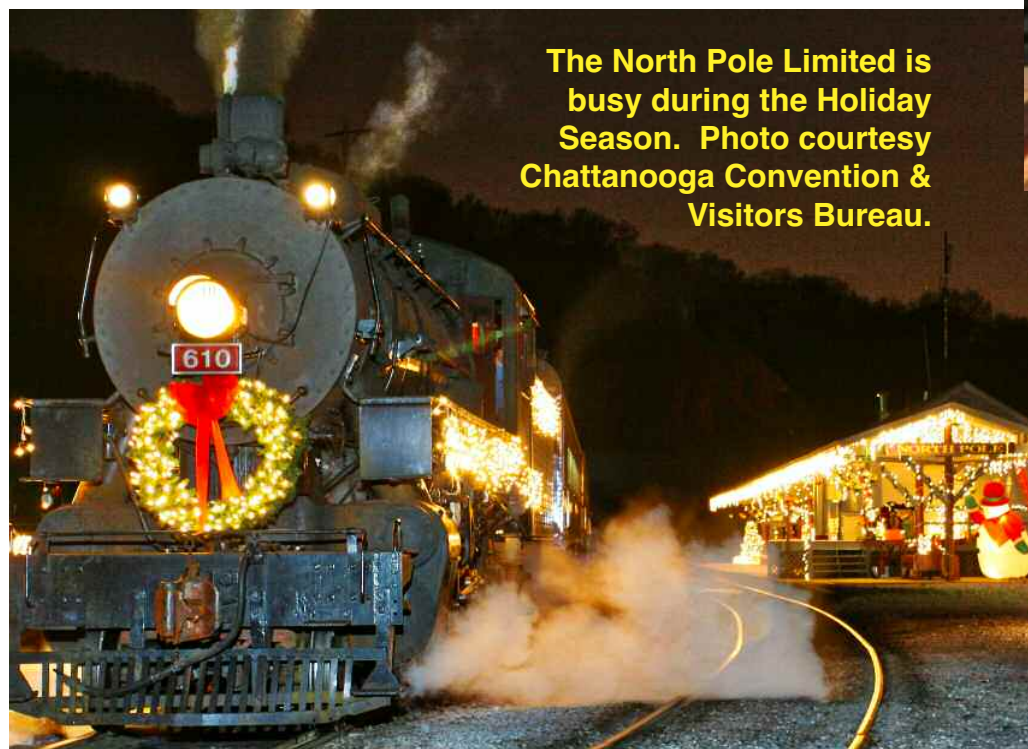
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Special rates available for groups of 25 or more during the "non-peak" season, and charter trips can be arranged for groups of 80 or more. Trains run late March through November.

Chickamauga Turn

This trip lasts approximately 6-1/4 hours and includes a 1-1/4 hour layover in Chickamauga and a half-hour layover at Wilder Tower Monument in Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park during the return trip to Chattanooga.

Layover time allows passengers to stroll through the quaint downtown area, visit the Chickamauga Depot which houses a regional history museum or walk a block or two to view the Civil War-era Gordon-Lee Mansion and Crawfish Springs City Park. Watch out for the Civil War cannons that stand guard over the main intersection in town!



The North Pole Limited is busy during the Holiday Season. Photo courtesy Chattanooga Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A tour guide usually rides aboard the train to point out areas of interest and relay interesting historical information.

Summerville Steam Special

These vintage trains follow a historic route from Grand Junction Station in Chattanooga to Summerville, Georgia, crossing the state line in Rossville, traveling past Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park and through Chickamauga, Rock Spring, LaFayette, Trion, and into Summerville. Departure for the all-day trip is 9:00am with return approximately 6:00pm.

For Autumn trips, fall colors are usually a highlight outside the train, while a dining car luncheon, complete with china ware, is served inside dining car Travelers

The junior camp is geared toward late elementary and middle school students and will include instruction on all aspects of railroading, riding trains, craft projects, and games.

Dinner Trains

Dinner Trains run on select Saturdays of most months (late March through September.) The trips include a three-course dining experience usually onboard a restored 1924 dining car.

Special themed trains throughout the year include Thomas & Friends in April and May, Halloween Eerie Express in October, North Pole Limited in November and December, Nightcap with St. Nick in December, Santa's Hiwassee Holiday Adventure in December,

Dining in style on the Tennessee Valley Railroad. Photo courtesy Chattanooga Convention & Visitors Bureau.



Fare. Train operates from early March through November.

Summer Camps

Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum is hosting 2018 summer camps for railroaders of many ages. The standard camp is geared towards high school-aged students and will include instruction on all aspects of railroading, including railroad terms, signals, how steam and diesel engines work, and the history of trains.

There will also be a blacksmithing demonstration, field trips, and guest speakers.

Christmas dinner trains in November and December, and the New Year's Eve Dinner Train on December 31.

Special rates available for groups with minimum of 20 persons per group in season for the Missionary Ridge Local. Minimum is 50 per group in the off-season for the Missionary Ridge Local.

Group bookings are also available on other TVRM excursions. Call the group reservation department for additional information. 423.894.8028.

<http://www.tvrail.com>



Location D
Track 25 ▪ Track 26 →

Location D
← Track 25 ▪ Track 26 →

The Capitol Limited prepares to leave Washington's Union Station for Chicago. Photo courtesy Mary Charlebois.

4 Days Across America by Rail

Cross Country on Amtrak, Life On & Off the Rails

Story & Photos by Mary Charlebois





The interior of Washington's Union Station.

The trip of a lifetime, coast to coast by train. Four nights and four days. Jacksonville, Florida to San Francisco, California aboard three remarkable train routes; *Silver Meteor*, *Capitol Limited*, and *California Zephyr*.

The trip was my return home from a week of travel around the historic NE Florida Coast. I flew to Florida, now it was back to California by rail. I arranged my schedule with long layovers in Washington, DC and Chicago. While waiting for my connections, I'd wander about in each city. Once aboard the *California Zephyr*, I'd spend two days and nights writing, resting, and gazing at the passing scenery.

Silver Meteor—Jacksonville to Washington, DC

I dropped my rental car at the airport and took Uber 13-miles to the **JAX Amtrak Station**.

The small depot has a timeless quality. It was spotless and peaceful. I checked in, took a few photos, raided the vending machines, then took a seat. I began people-watching as passengers arrived for boarding.

The *Silver Meteor* arrived on time.

Boarding was quick. I found my **Coach Class** seat where I'd be sleeping in the big, comfy recliner overnight. I'd wake-up in Washington, DC. I plugged-in my devices for charging and watched the miles roll by as we headed north and crossed into Georgia.

After considering the **food options**, I decided to try the dining car. A tall, gracious woman was seated with me in the dining car. Neither of us had a reservation for dinner, but the host found us a seat after a few minutes wait. Our conversation covered "strangers on a train" topics like



Dining menu on the *Silver Meteor*. Photos courtesy Mary Charlebois.

where are you headed, where are you coming from, and of course, what do you do?

My dinner was a splurge of steak with béarnaise sauce and a glass of Zinfandel. The food was fresh, appetizing, and scrumptious. I expected airline style, microwaved food. I was wrong. How the staff manages to prepare and serve the quality and variety of meals in such a tiny space is astounding. The table servers made the dinner special. Their welcoming attitudes were infectious.

Back at my seat after dinner, I connected to onboard Wi-Fi and fell asleep watching a movie. My large and restful coach seat reclined to a nearly flat position. Much better than an airplane seat, even a business-class seat, and no seatbelt lights.

Capitol Limited—DC to Chicago

The station was empty at our 7 o'clock arrival Saturday morning. I took the opportunity to photograph stately **Washington, DC Union Station** before passengers began to fill the gilded marble halls.

Still early morning, I headed to the streets hoping for some photos without crowds of people and cars. My



Union Station, Washington, DC.



**Conductor on the Capitol Limited.
Photos courtesy Mary Charlebois.**

eight-hour layover passed quickly. Within a mile of Union Station are monuments, museums, parks, memorials, the U.S. Capitol, and much more. So much, in fact, I wished for a longer layover.

Across the street from Union Station, I went to the **Postal Museum**. It details the history of the Postal Service in the U.S. with interactive exhibits of interest to all ages. It's part of the **Smithsonian Institution**, a DC collection of 17 museums, galleries, and a zoo. Most are admission free.

I spent some time exploring, shopping and eating lunch. Shopping in the station rivals the best galleries anywhere. You'll find everything from a tuxedo to a toothbrush. I bought a box of fine chocolates to enjoy on the train.

At 3:45, I boarded the Capitol Limited. While urban and industrial landscapes rolled by, we crossed the Mississippi River. I got to know my seatmate, a young man returning home from college. When I asked him how far he was going, he beamed and said, "As far as I can ma'am, as far as I can."



Crossing the Mississippi River in Gulfport, IL. Photos courtesy Mary Charlebois.

California Zephyr—Chicago to San Francisco

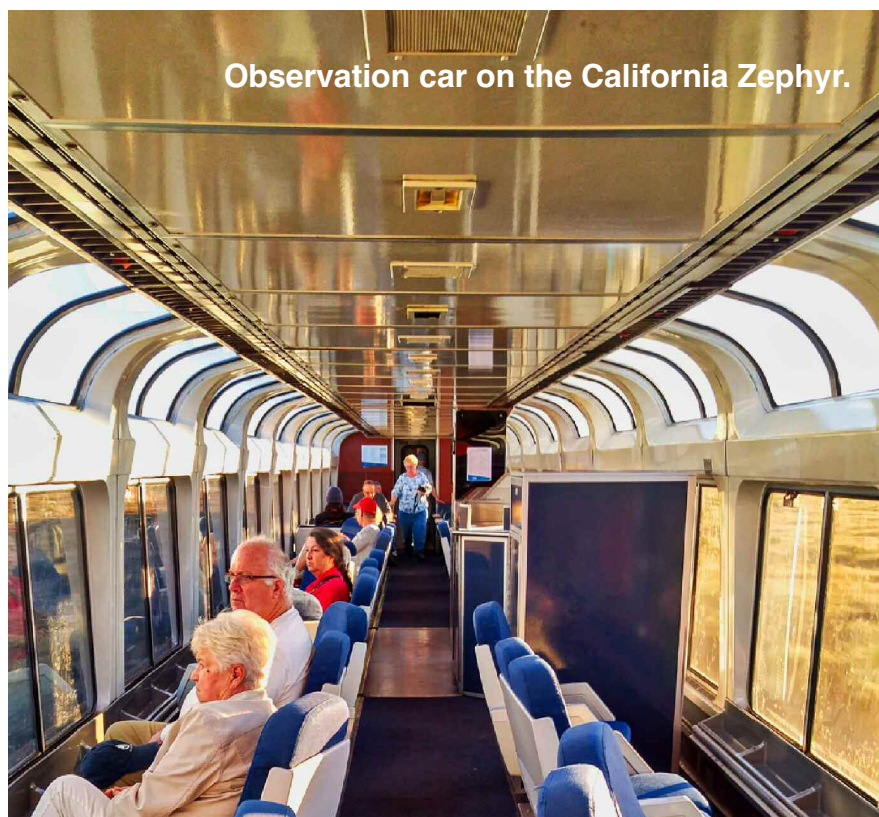
Chicago greeted me at 8:45am. I explored **Chicago Union Station** with camera in hand. The cavernous building is opulent. Crowds began to grow. It was Gay Pride Day in Chicago. Parade goers were arriving by train. Many dressed in costume. Photo ops were everywhere.

Surrounding Union Station are destinations and activities of all interests. Outside the station, you can rent bikes or board a hop-on-hop-off tour bus. I love to wander and see what I uncover.

A four-minute walk across the Chicago River, take a trip to the top and stand on the Ledge at Sky Deck. The tallest building in the Western Hemisphere has glass boxes that extend 4.3 feet away from the building. Have a thrilling city experience and get birds-eye-view photos of Chicago. This is suited for a group or solo activity for all ages.

I spent about two hours in the **Metropolitan Lounge** at Union Station. What a treat. The quiet and comfortable lounge is available to sleeping car and business class ticket holders. While there, I took a shower in sparkling facilities; made good use of Wi-Fi; munched on snacks; and enjoyed a wine tasting. I had help from an

attendant checking in and stashing my luggage until departure time. At boarding call, we were taken the “back way” to our train, avoiding the reveling crowds coming and going to the day’s festivities. You can buy a day pass for the lounge if you’re not holding a sleeper or business class ticket.



Observation car on the California Zephyr.



Life Aboard the Zephyr

My official address aboard the California Zephyr was Car 0533, Room 009; the end room in the last car of the train. I had a Viewliner Roomette, in a sleeper car. Ideal for one passenger, cozy for two. The Roomette is the smallest of four sizes of private **sleeping accommodations**.

A picture window, two seats, and a fold-down table are the daytime arrangement. At night, the two seats unfold into a single bed. A second single bed drops down from the ceiling. There's space for a couple of carry-on sized suitcases and a tiny closet. There is no in-room sink, shower or toilet. Shared facilities are available in each sleeper car.



Coal Canyon, Colorado viewed from private Roomette.





The Continental Divide as viewed from the California Zephyr.
Photo courtesy Mary Charlebois.



Denver's Union Station.
Photos courtesy Mary Charlebois.

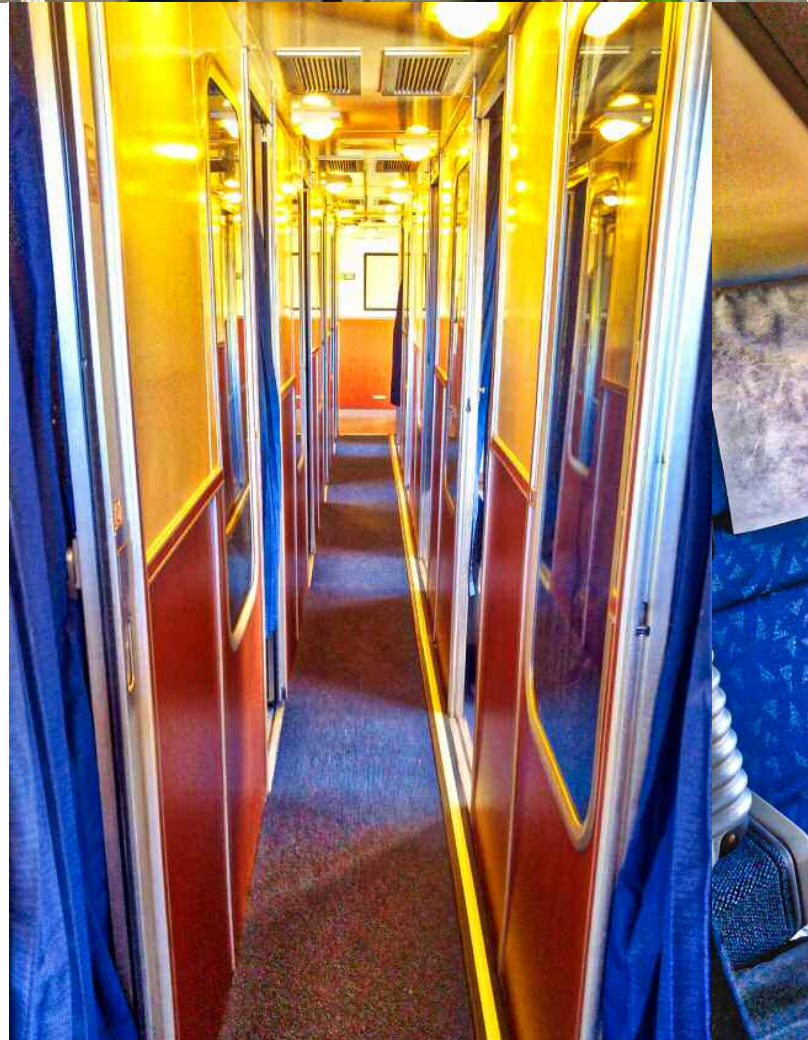
All dining car meals are included with a sleeper car ticket. Reservations are needed for lunch and dinner but are easily made. Your car attendant will circulate a reservation sheet for your convenience. Complimentary morning coffee, tea, and juice are available at the beverage kiosk in each sleeper car. Meals may be ordered and delivered to your room if you like.

The first person I met on the California Zephyr was T, my car attendant. T was a tall, muscular woman. Later I realized strength was essential to her job. Each car has an attendant to assist you. When beds need setting up or down, it takes muscle and practiced technique. T had them both. She loved her job, a passion recognizable in her eyes and voice.

My days and nights took on a routine. I'd wake early, dress, and go to the observation car for sunrise, hot tea, and conversation with fellow passengers. After breakfast in the dining car, I'd return to the observation lounge with my laptop and camera.

Lunch and dinner were shared with random travelers. All dining car table service is shared by four guests. I looked forward to each meal and meeting my table companions. I can tell you for sure, the most interesting people travel by train. Each evening my journal was filled with conversations I'd had. I met a woman that designed a space suit for NASA, a librarian from a small Nevada town, a couple farming cannabis, a dog behaviorist, a fellow travel writer, and other fascinating folks.

We crossed mountains, deserts, farmland, cities, and the Continental Divide. We made 30-something stops in





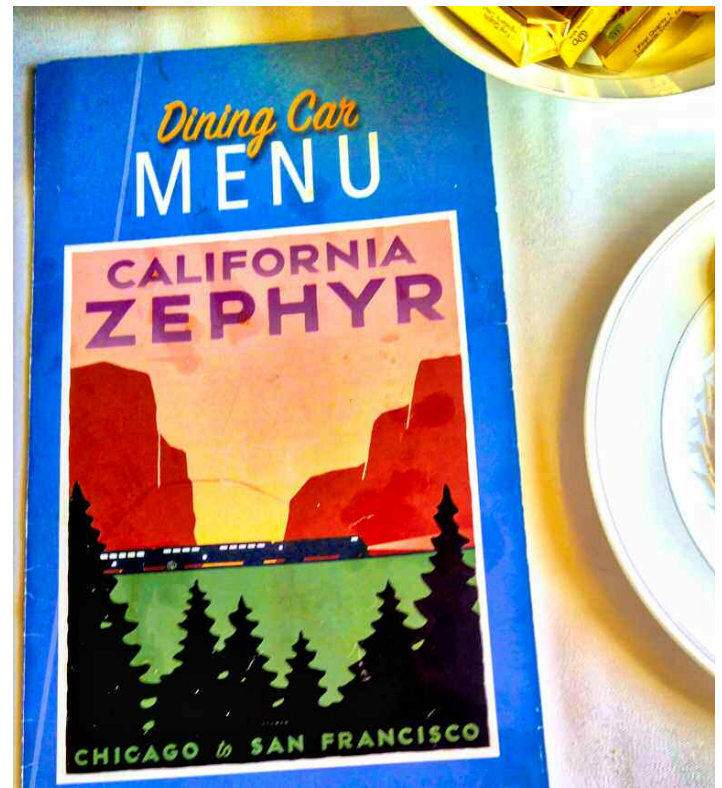
places like Denver, Salt Lake City, and Reno. Most stops allowed no more than 10-minutes to leave the train. In Denver, we had nearly an hour. Denver's handsomely restored **Union Station** has shopping and eateries surrounding a central waiting room. Some cafes have al fresco seating, weather permitting.

We pulled into Emeryville, CA around four. From there I boarded an Amtrak bus and took the short ride across the bay to San Francisco and Fisherman's Wharf. My trip of a lifetime had reached its terminus.

Trains are my favorite way to travel with roomy, comfortable seating, loads of leg room and no baggage fees. I like the time it takes, the ever-changing panorama outside my window, and best of all, my fellow passengers. After all, the most interesting people travel by train.

For a group or solo, visit [Amtrak Vacations](#) for more train travel adventures.

Left, Roomette Corridors. Below, Roomette aboard the California Zephyr.

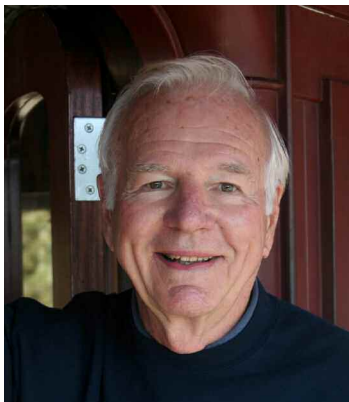


About the Author:

Mary Charlebois, also known as MaryGo, is a freelance writer, photographer, and videographer. Her daily beat is Mendocino County and San Francisco. She lives in Fort Bragg, Mendocino County, California. Mary is a Journalist member of ITWPA.

See her work at <https://wheremarygos.com>.

Traveling the Highways & Byways with Bill Graves



I picked up a worn copy of *The Virginian* the other day, at a used-book store.

Written in 1902 by a Philadelphia lawyer who had spent summers in Wyoming, it was one of America's first true western novels, not to be compared with the pulp, dime novels of the day.

The Virginian was made into a movie several times starting in 1914, and a TV series that ran from 1962 to 1971.

The story begins here in Medicine Bow, which was then on the far shores of civilization. The town came with the railroad and grew into a livestock shipping hub. It covers three and half square miles with a population today of 284. It's 35-miles north of Interstate 80.

In *The Virginian*, author Owen Wister wrote of Medicine Bow: "I have seen and slept in many like it. Scattered wide, they littered the frontier from the Columbia to the Rio Grande, from the Missouri to the Sierras. They lay stark, dotted over the planet of treeless dust, like a solid pack of cards. Each was similar to the next, as one old five-spot of clubs resembles another."

Medicine Bow, Wyoming

In 1911, the town's enterprising mayor built a three-and-a-half story hotel that, at the time, could have put up most of the town for the night. The *Virginian*, was the biggest hotel between Denver and Salt Lake City. It's still in business, but prominent now as a conspicuous landmark in a swell of featureless grassland, but remains the biggest building this side of Laramie, which is 50 miles east.

Highway 287, paralleled by the double tracks of the Union Pacific, runs by the front of the hotel. A dirt road crosses the tracks by the hotel, insignificant in itself, but significant to this story. That road requires every train engineer to start blowing his horn long before he gets to it. And trains go by here every 15 or 20 minutes.

Jerry Young had been mayor here for 14 years when I met him. He was not happy about the trains and their horns.

"We had a few of those train engineers here a time ago," Jerry told me. "I asked them if they knew what a turkey shoot was? Told them that I was going to proclaim a week-long horn shoot – make it a contest. The person who shoots out the most train horns wins a prize. The train guys didn't think much of that. One speculated that it was against the law to shoot a gun in town. True enough, but I told them that I could fix that."

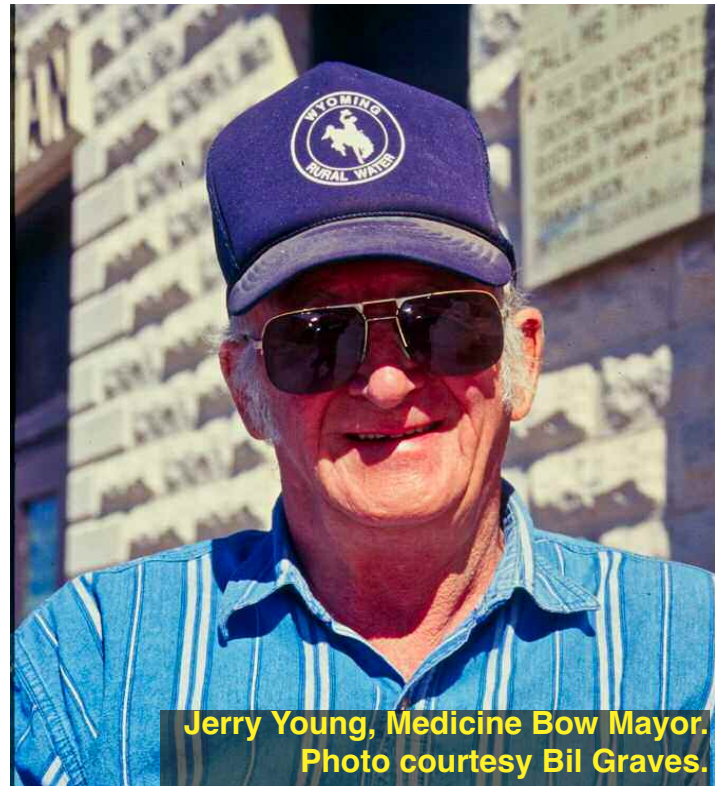
The *Virginian* Hotel in Medicine Bow, Wyoming. Photo courtesy Bill Graves.



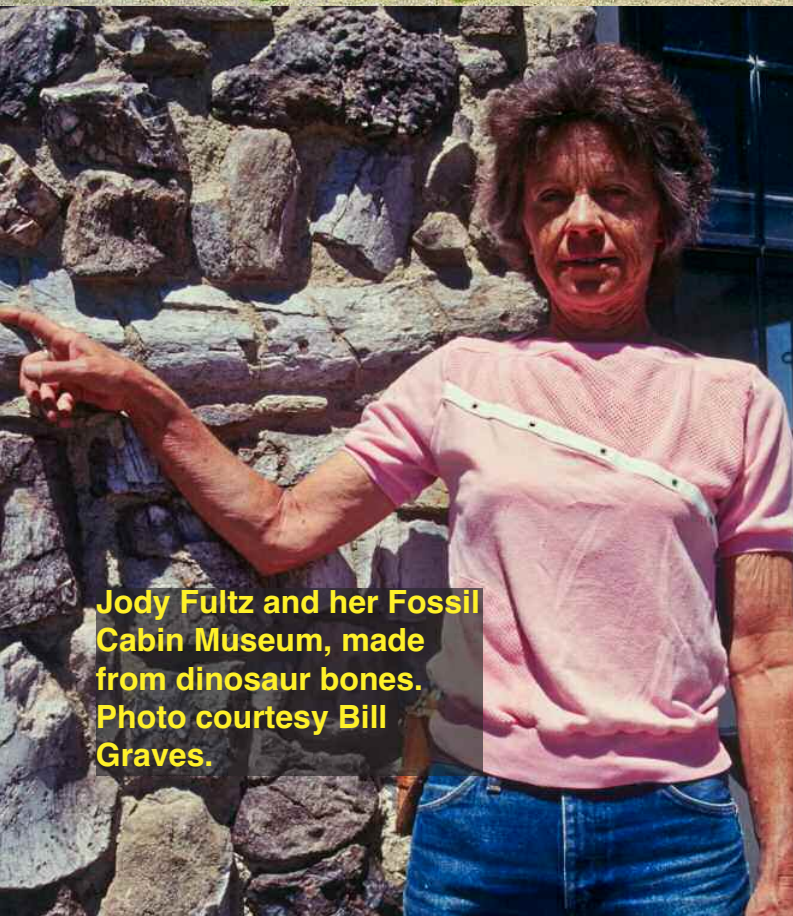
Jerry said the only thing that came of that was that one engineer now hangs on the horn from one end of town to the other.

Jerry said that the town was named by the Arapahoe and Cheyenne tribes who found excellent material for making bows along the banks of the river here. “Anything they found that was good for a purpose, they called good medicine,” he explained. So the river became the Medicine Bow River. And since its headwaters originated in the mountains to the south, they became the Medicine Bow Mountains.

Guns are popular here, all over Wyoming actually — like a pickup, most everyone has one. They compare it to owning a wrench or a fishing rod or anything else you keep around for occasional use. Carrying one is legal, as



Jerry Young, Medicine Bow Mayor.
Photo courtesy Bil Graves.



Jody Fultz and her Fossil Cabin Museum, made from dinosaur bones.
Photo courtesy Bill Graves.

long as it's visible.

Jody Fultz wears her 38 on her hip. It's loaded with rattlesnake shot. She showed me the holster — tan leather with her name and her retired deputy-marshall badge engraved on it. Her husband made it. He was town Marshall here for 17 years.

A petite widow, I met Jody through Jerry. She drove me out to her “Fossil Cabin,” seven miles east of town on Highway 30. She has fitted it out as a one-room fossil museum. It is built entirely of bones excavated from the nearby “dinosaur graveyard” of Como Bluff. With the dinosaur graveyard nearby, their bones were probably more accessible than rocks when someone built this place in the early 1900s.

Obviously, it could not happen today. We now treat dinosaur bones with meticulous care. I have watched them being removed from their earthen resting-places with kid gloves, and then only after they have been meditated over and attended to with dental tools and vacuum brushes.

“If you consider the building material, this has got to be the oldest building in the country,” Jody said.

Welcome to America's Outback.

About the author: After seeing much of the world as a career naval officer, Bill Graves decided, after he retired, to take a closer look at the United States. He has been roaming the country for 20 years, much of it in a motorhome with his dog Rusty. He lives in Rancho Palos Verdes, California and is the author of *On the Back Roads, Discovering Small Towns of America*. He can be reached at Roadscribe@aol.com.

Traveling Back in Time in Northern Nevada



Historic passenger railroad featuring trains pulled by century-old steam engines are available at the Nevada Northern Railway Museum in Ely, Nevada. Photos courtesy Sydney Martinez and TravelNevada.





Engine #40 at the rail yard in Ely. Photo courtesy Sydney Martinez and TravelNevada.

Welcome to the Nevada Northern Railroad Museum in Ely, Nevada, a registered National Historic Landmark. The museum is preserving rail facilities that served the historic copper mining region of Central Nevada for over a century.

A Trip Through Time

If touring the average museum offers visitors a glimpse into the past, a visit to the Nevada Northern Railway Museum is more like a trip through time.

The one-of-a-kind museum is dedicated to restoring, preserving, interpreting and operating its historic facilities, yards and rail collection, and offers visitors the opportunity to experience an actual working railroad straight from the past.

Track for the Nevada Northern Railway was laid over a century ago, connecting one of the largest copper mines in North America to the Transcontinental routes to the North.

In 1905, the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company built a 150-mile rail line to haul ore from the mines west of Ely. The section of track

that runs from Ely to the tiny town of McGill is still in operation, ridden by the original steam and diesel engines that are painstakingly maintained by the Nevada Northern Railway Museum.

Both the #40 and #93 steam engines are still in service as part of the historic working railway museum.

These large standard-gauge steam locomotives were ordered and delivered new to the railroad over a century ago yet are still in operation today.



#Engines #40 and #93 at the Ely depot. Photo courtesy NNRy.



The Nevada Northern Railway is the best-preserved example of a standard-gauge short line left in North America.

East Ely Departure

You depart from the East Ely, NV depot, as its trains have done for a century. Most trips head southwest, through two tunnels and up real mountain grades toward the Ruth Copper Mining District.

Several trains each month, those specifically marked LAVON on the calendar of events, run north, out the Steptoe Valley, on the hi-line toward McGill.

Each trip takes about 90 minutes. Trains feature on-board restroom, wheelchair accessibility, and snacks and beverages available for purchase. All trains operate on-time regardless of the weather, as they have for over a century now, so be at the depot ready for boarding 30 minutes before the departure time.

The Nevada Northern Railway is probably nowhere near your hometown. Chances are that if it had been located any closer to civilization, the entire railroad would have been torn down and sold for scrap years ago. Because Ely is so remote this railroad has the good fortune of being so well-preserved.

The Bunkhouse

Have an unforgettable lodging experience at the Nevada Northern Railway's bunkhouse! Originally built in 1906, the building has been retrofitted for train enthusiasts to spend a night at the museum. Formerly serving as the engineer's living quarters, guests can enjoy mem-



Nevada Northern Railroad caboose. Photo courtesy Sydney Martinez and TravelNevada.



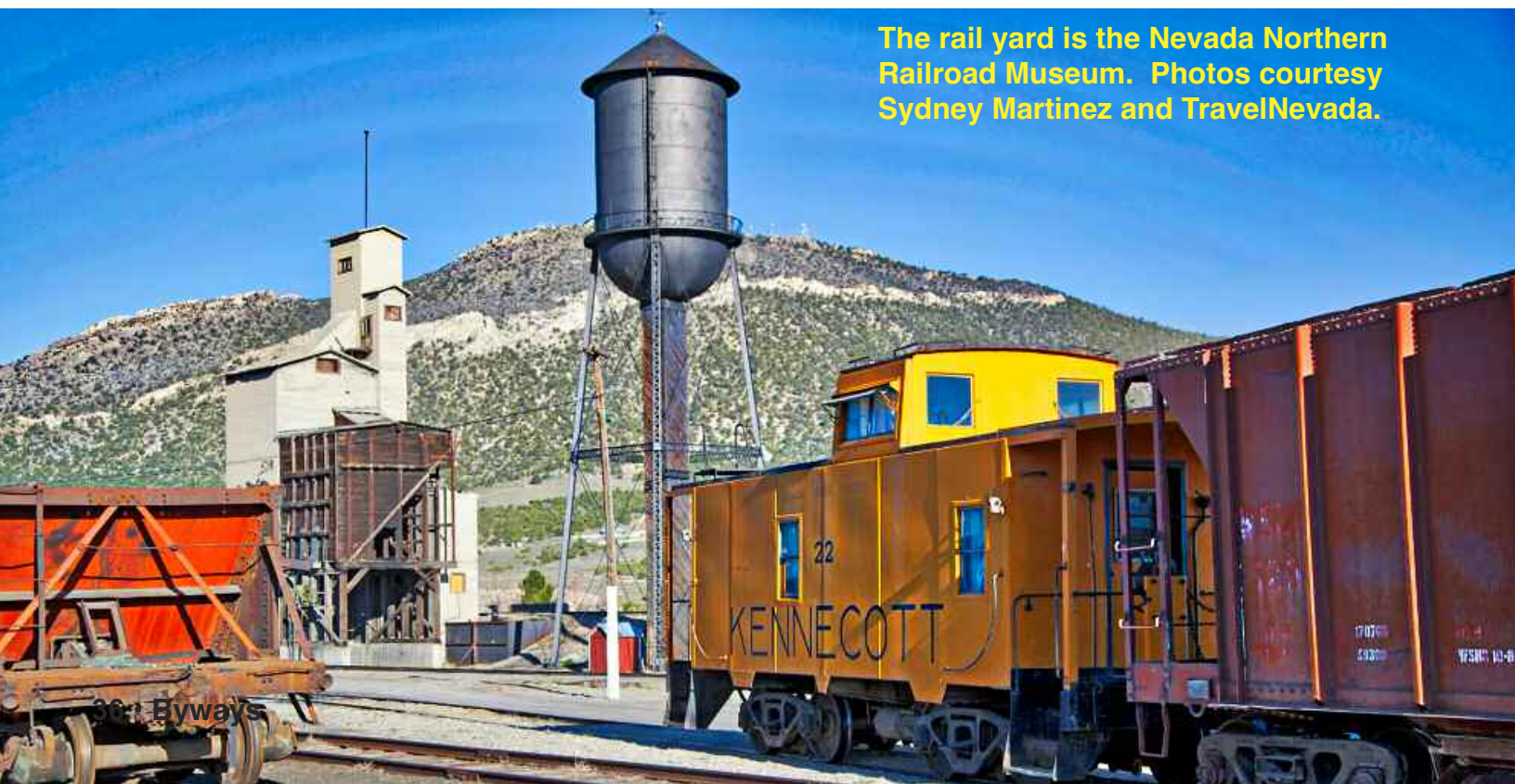
Engine #40 arrives in Ely.

orable authenticity like an original safe in one of the rooms, and trains rolling right by your window in the early morning hours.

For more on the Nevada Northern Railroad, visit <http://www.nnry.com/index.php>

Getting to Ely, The Loneliest Highway in America

Getting to Ely can be a great journey. The mountains of Central Nevada are a place that not many people ever visit.



The rail yard is the Nevada Northern Railroad Museum. Photos courtesy Sydney Martinez and TravelNevada.

The “Loneliest Highway in America,” U.S. Route 50, passes right through Ely. It was named by a *Life Magazine* editor in the 50s to make the point that this area may look lonely on a map, but it is a great place to visit.

Ely, NV has a unique frontier personality since it is the only watering hole for an area the size of several New England states.

Hotel Nevada

For many decades following its opening in 1929, the Hotel Nevada was a favorite stop-over for the rich and famous of Hollywood as they traveled between California and Sun Valley, Idaho. A dozen rooms at the hotel reflect the luxury and glamor of this bygone era. Ask to stay in the Gary Cooper or Mickey Rooney room! There are also rooms dedicated to Charlie Rich, Jimmy Stewart, Wayne Newton, Ann Rutherford, and others.

The six-story hotel was the tallest building in Nevada when it opened, surpassing The Mizpah in Tonopah. Today that means you’ll enjoy some of the best views Ely has to offer.

Most Remote Town in Lower 48

Ely is the most remote town in the lower 48 states, and the jumping-off point for Great Basin National Park, including the spectacular underground caverns of Lehman Caves and the 13,000 ft peaks of Mt. Wheeler.

Ely is more than a mile high in elevation, so it has a climate more like Denver or Salt Lake rather than Las Vegas or Phoenix.

Daytime summer temperatures are usually in the 80s. Even summer evenings can be cool here. Expect a nice little afternoon rain shower every few days in the summer, and look for snow in the winter. Oh, and take a moment to look up to the heavens at night and see the incredibly clear, dark skies.

<https://www.elynevada.net>

Click for Video





Colorado's Georgetown Loop Railroad

Engine #111 during a blow
down (cleaning out the
boiler) on the Mine Bridge.
Photo courtesy Georgetown
Loop Railroad.



[Click for Video](#)

[Trains passing over the Devil's Gate Bridge on the Georgetown Loop Railroad.](#)

The Georgetown Loop Railroad is a reconstruction of one of Colorado's most famous railroads. The original railroad reached Georgetown in 1877 and builders intended to continue it to the rich mining town of Leadville. That line was never completed, but it was decided to push the railroad up the valley another two miles to the neighboring mining camp of Silver Plume.

The problem was that Silver Plume was 600 feet higher in elevation. To gain that much altitude that fast, the railroad had to twist and turn four and a half miles, making two and a half complete circles and at one point crossing over itself on a 90-foot-high trestle — the Devil's Gate Bridge.

With the collapse of the mining industry and the coming of the automobile, the railroad was closed and in 1939 the bridge and rails were torn up for scrap metal. For 35 years the grade lay undisturbed, but then the Colorado Historical Society began to buy the land to reconstruct and operate the railroad. Steam returned to the valley in 1975, and in 1984 the Devil's Gate Bridge was reopened.

Steam engines were the foundation of the Industrial Revolution. For nearly 120 years, steam-powered locomotives were the backbone of commerce, hauling passengers as well as cargo throughout the United States.

Today, two of these "iron horses" are preserved, maintained, and operated in Georgetown and Silver Plume,





Two steam engines of the Georgetown Loop Railroad. Photos courtesy Georgetown Loop Railroad.



Colorado. History Colorado and Historic Rail Adventures share these train treasures with the public and welcomes support in their preservation efforts.

Engine #9 is a three-truck Shay type locomotive built by Lima Locomotive Works, Lima, Ohio, in 1923. The #9 originally operated on the West Side Lumber Company in Tuolumne, California. The West Side was the last steam-powered narrow gauge logging railroad in the United States.

Engine #111 was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1926. Upon completion, it was delivered to the International Railway of Central America in El Salvador. It was subsequently returned to the U.S. After sitting on display in Breckenridge, it was then moved to the Silver Plume station for rebuilding. It began service on the Georgetown Loop in 2016.

Rocky Mountain Steel Mills of Pueblo donated the #21, a 1940s-era, 44-ton General Electric diesel/electric locomotive to the Colorado Historical Society to use for backup operations and maintenance at the park. The railroad industry nicknamed this particular type of locomotive “Critter” or “Big Critter.”

Georgetown

Tourism in the West developed around railroad excursions. In the late 1880s, Georgetown and the Georgetown Loop become a tourist center for those who



Operating on a snowy day in May. Photo courtesy Georgetown Loop Railroad.

Downtown Georgetown. Photo courtesy Denise Chambers/Miles & Colorado Tourism Office.



ventured West to encounter wild ruggedness and romance.

With seven trains a day running out of Denver at the height of its popularity, the Georgetown Loop was Colorado's scenic "must see" and a deal at only \$3 round-trip. Guidebooks, pamphlets and postcards helped send the images of the steep canyons and mountain peaks accessible by train across the nation.

The former silver mining camp along Clear Creek in the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains was established in 1859 during the Pike's Peak Gold Rush.

The federally designated Georgetown-Silver Plume National Historic District comprises Georgetown, the neighboring Town of Silver Plume, and the Georgetown Loop Historic Mining & Railroad Park between the two towns. The town population was 1,088 at the U.S. Census in 2000.

The town sits at an elevation of 8,530 feet, nestled in the mountains near the upper end of the valley of Clear Creek in the mountains west of Denver along Interstate 70.

Although a small town today, the town was a historic center of the mining industry in Colorado during the late 19th century, earning the nickname the Silver Queen of Colorado.

Today it is again a lively historical summer tourist center with many preserved structures from the heyday of the Colorado Silver Boom.

And steam-powered locomotives again

make the climb up the valley from late April through the end of September. The train may be boarded in Georgetown or Silver Plume and offers panoramic views, particularly when crossing the bridge. From the open air viewing cars it is possible to see big horn sheep and other wildlife, and the sound of the train whistle echoing down the valley is unforgettable, just as it was more than 140 years ago.

<https://www.georgetownlooprr.com>



Photo courtesy Phil Johnson and Georgetown Loop Railroad.



Ohio's Donut Trail

In 35 years of publishing we have been introduced to many types of trails, including wine trails, bourbon trails, horse riding trails, music trails, walking trails, jogging trails, and more.

But when we learned of Ohio's first and only donut trail, it got our attention. Because as much as we like wine and bourbon, and love to sing, ride, jog and walk, well, there can't be anything better than eating donuts!

And who would ever think of a donut trail?

The answer lies in Butler County, just north of Cincinnati on I-75.

The first and only Donut Trail in Ohio now features 12 family-owned businesses with a combined 372 years of donut-making experience. With participants located throughout the county, the trail is a great way to explore the region, while exercising your taste buds.

Since its founding in 2016, more than 9,000 people have visited the trail, including visitors from nine different countries and 44 states (including Alaska and Hawaii).

Offering unique flavors like s'mores, tiger tails, raspberry cheesecake and



Click for Video



The winning design was created by Alice Jacobs of Hamilton, Ohio and depicts the Donut Trail as a “well-rounded adventure.”

Anyone who completes the trail will receive this complimentary t-shirt.

Note that some donut shops close when they sell out. Some shops on the trail have been known to sell out and close by 10am. So plan an early start to enjoy the delicious Donut Trail.

What's Happening

<http://www.gettothebc.com/donut-trail>

Reese's Cup, everyone from school groups to bachelorette parties to family reunions have partaken in the trail and shared their experiences on social media via @DonutTrail.

The trail also has brought in over \$1 million annually in economic impact to the region., giving other local businesses a boost as visitors pour in to explore the trail.

To commemorate the second anniversary of the trail, Butler County Visitors Bureau has created a new t-shirt for 2018. The Butler County Visitors Bureau held a contest where local residents could submit designs for the t-shirt.





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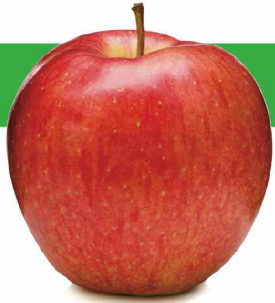
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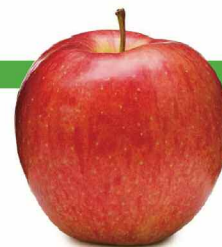
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