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California State Railroad Museum

LOCATION: 125 I Street, Sacramento

PHONE: 916-323-9280

WEBSITE: csrnf.org

E-MAIL: form on website



Jeff Terry

This is among the best interpretive museums about railroading. The museum mixes a magnificent large-artifact collection with plenty of details and a sense of drama that brings them to life. Displays, hands-on exhibits, and human interaction all combine to produce an excellent experience for everyone, from those with a passing interest in railroads to those with a deep appreciation for railroading. And if you want the real thing, the museum operates its Sacramento Southern Railroad, a short train ride.

CHOICES: Made up of several buildings, the museum offers guided tours. The Railroad History Museum, at 100,000 square feet, is the largest exhibit space and contains 21 restored cars and locomotives. Be sure to climb the stairs that take you into the cab of one of the largest preserved steam locomotives, a rare Cab Forward with its crew compartment in front of the boiler.

WHEN TO GO: Weekends, April through September, are when the museum offers its Sacramento Southern train rides behind Granite Rock No. 10, a rebuilt 1943 tank engine. The 40-minute, 6-mile round trip travels over the levees of the Sacramento River. The museum also runs special events and excursions throughout the year.

GOOD TO KNOW: The museum is situated in the Old Sacramento district of the state capital near where the first transcontinental railroad was launched eastward in the 1800s. The district is a 28-acre National Historic Landmark District and state historic park. Over Labor Day weekend, 200 tons of dirt transforms the historic district into a mining camp during Gold Rush Days.

WORTH DOING: The Old Sacramento State Historic Park contains a variety of museums, landmarks, and historical buildings.

DON'T MISS: When you board the Sacramento Southern, take a look at the reconstructed Central Pacific freight depot, where you'll see displays highlighting the freight transportation industry.

GETTING THERE: When driving to Sacramento, take I-80 from San Francisco or I-5 from Reno. If you want the full rail experience, take an Amtrak train. The station is adjacent to Old Sacramento. The museum is at the corner of Second and I Streets.

Fillmore & Western Railway

LOCATION: 364 Main Street, Fillmore

PHONE: 805-524-2546

WEBSITE: fwry.com



David Lustig

Operating over a segment of a former Southern Pacific branch line, the Fillmore & Western Railway is a well-run combination of weekend scenic excursion trains, murder mystery dinner trains, and special trains. It is also one of the premier movie location sets. Billing itself as the “Home of the Movie Trains,” from wrecks to shootouts, Hollywood has used this scenic little Southern California line to represent Washington D.C., Florida, the Pacific Northwest, and just about every place in between.

CHOICES: On some passenger runs, the F&W operates ex-Duluth & Northeastern 2-8-0 steam engine No. 14. On weekend excursion trains, you can ride in an open-air railcar or in restored vintage passenger coaches. The train stops in downtown Santa Paula for an hour, letting you visit the historic Southern Pacific depot, the amazing rotating water ball in Railroad Plaza Park, the Santa Paula Art Museum, the California Oil Museum, or the Ventura County Agriculture Museum.

WHEN TO GO: Excursions run on Saturdays January through March and on Saturdays and Sundays April through September and in November.

GOOD TO KNOW: The railroad hosts several different dinner train options for families including some murder mystery trains.

WORTH DOING: Farther north up the California coast is Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and the Hearst Castle, the ultimate in opulence and home of the man who ran the Hearst newspaper and radio empire.

DON'T MISS: Explore the healthy roster of passenger and freight equipment in various states of repair found on the property.

GETTING THERE: Fillmore is about 60 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and about 25 miles east of Ventura. From Highway 126 in Fillmore, turn on Central Avenue to Main Street.

Illinois Railway Museum

LOCATION: 7000 Olson Road, Union

PHONE: 800-244-7245 or 815-923-4000

WEBSITE: irm.org



Jim Wrinn

Just 90 minutes northwest from downtown Chicago, and about half an hour from Union Pacific's Geneva Subdivision, lies the Illinois Railway Museum. It operates both diesel and steam trains. The museum pays homage to its beginnings as an electric railway museum by operating streetcars and interurban cars.

CHOICES: As an operating museum, there are a variety of trains to ride. You can even ride a trolley or electric bus from one equipment barn to another. When you're not riding trains, explore the 80 acres of land and 400 pieces of equipment, including almost 90 freight cars, plus signals, tools, signage, and other artifacts. Six barns contain rail equipment, and another has bus equipment. Admission includes unlimited rides.

WHEN TO GO: The museum is open daily Memorial Day through Labor Day and weekends in April, September, and October. If visiting in July or August, remember that not all the cars and none of the barns are air-conditioned. The museum operates numerous special events including Terror on the Railroad, Happy Holiday Railway, Vintage Transport Extravaganza, and two Day Out with Thomas weekends.

GOOD TO KNOW: IRM's signature piece, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy *Nebraska Zephyr*, runs on Diesel Days, Museum Showcase Weekend, and several other times.

WORTH DOING: Union is centrally located between Rockford and suburban Chicago. It also offers tourists Donley's Wild West Town with gunslinger shows, pony rides, and gold panning.

DON'T MISS: Diesel Days in July and Museum Showcase Weekend in September are great times to see a lot of equipment running. Typically, a variety of vintage locomotives are put to work pulling freight and commuter trains on Diesel Days. On Museum Showcase Weekend, the staff operates less-frequently run equipment.

GETTING THERE: If driving from Chicago, take I-90 to Highway 20, the Marengo exit. Drive northwest about 4.5 miles to Union Road and then take Union Road to Coral Road. Turn right on Coral Road and then left on Olson Road.

Monticello Railway Museum

LOCATION: 992 Iron Horse Place, Monticello

PHONE: 877-762-9011 or 217-762-9011

WEBSITE: mrym.org

E-MAIL: info@mrym.org



Dave Crosby

In the midsection of Illinois, this museum offers one of the best collections of rolling stock and a good train ride to boot. All decked out in their original attire, two streamlined diesel locomotives of the 1950s, one from Canadian National and the other from the Wabash Railroad, are among the most popular locomotives.

CHOICES: Although the museum has several steam engines, it has one of the Midwest's premier diesel locomotive collections. The collection features a Milwaukee Road NW2 and a former Illinois Central RS3 as well as more than 80 pieces of rolling stock. You can board the 8-mile round trip over former Illinois Central and Illinois Terminal trackage from two historic depots, one at the museum and the other in downtown Monticello. At either location, you can make a layover for additional exploration and then catch a later return trip.

WHEN TO GO: The museum is open on weekends May through October. Special events, including Railroad Days in September, are scheduled throughout the year for train buffs and families alike.

GOOD TO KNOW: Southern Railway steam engine No. 401 pulls excursions one weekend each month for the museum. On an average excursion day, No. 401 goes through about 300 gallons of oil and 5,000 gallons of water. The Baldwin engine was built in 1907.

WORTH DOING: Just a short drive away, on Allerton Road, is one of the Seven Wonders of Illinois. The Allerton Park and Retreat Center was once a private mansion. And you can now walk through its 14 miles of wooded trails and gardens, which contain 100 sculptures.

DON'T MISS: For a fee, you can operate a locomotive for 30 minutes under the supervision of a regular member of the train crew during spring and fall throttle times.

GETTING THERE: The museum is located between Champaign and Decatur, just off I-72. At Exit 166, take Market Street to Iron Horse Place and follow the frontage road to the end. The town of Monticello is just a few miles away via Highway 105.

National Capital Trolley Museum

LOCATION: 1313 Bonifant Road, Colesville

PHONE: 301-384-6088

WEBSITE: dctrolley.org

E-MAIL: form on website



National Capital Trolley Museum

Inspired by streetcar buildings of the past, the National Capital Trolley Museum's visitor center provides an educational and entertaining look at the history of the region's streetcar systems, complete with an authentic trolley ride.

CHOICES: The museum is divided in three halls. In the Main Hall, you'll learn about the history of local streetcar systems, watch several silent films starring streetcars and actor Harold Lloyd, and see a model electric railway. Conduit Hall contains exhibits that explain how streetcars were powered. In Streetcar Hall, you get a close-up look at a variety of trolleys in the museum's collection. Unlimited trolley rides are included with admission.

WHEN TO GO: The museum is open weekends year-round as well as on select Thursdays and Fridays April through November. In summer, the museum offers special programs for children that include activities such as storytelling and crafts.

GOOD TO KNOW: Opportunities to ride a boat tram from Blackpool, England, occur on most Saturdays in warm, dry weather and during the Calvalcade of Street Cars each April and September. The museum has a new exhibit that tells the story of the 20th century comic strip Toonerville Folks, which was centered on the Toonerville Trolley.

WORTH DOING: Downtown Washington, with its wealth of cultural and historic attractions, is just 14 miles away.

DON'T MISS: Look In Streetcar Hall, look for CTCo 09, one of two remaining specialty cars that swept the snow from streetcar tracks in the nation's capital.

GETTING THERE: The museum is located in Northwest Branch Park, about a 20-minute drive from the Capital Beltway and adjacent to the Inter-County Connector toll highway. Bonifant Road is 5.5 miles north of I-495.

Walkersville Southern Railroad

LOCATION: 34 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Walkersville

PHONE: 877-363-9777 or 301-898-0899

WEBSITE: wsrr.org

E-MAIL: admin@wsrr.org



Dave Crosby

The Walkersville Southern Railroad takes you on a pleasant 8-mile, 70-minute round trip through woods and farmland, past a restored century-old lime kiln, and across the Monocacy River.

CHOICES: Trains depart from the original Pennsylvania Railroad station pulled by one of the railroad's collection of switchers, which includes a 1939 Davenport gas-mechanical, a rare 1942 EMD model 40 four-wheel diesel, a GE side-rod 45-tonner, a 1942 Plymouth gas-mechanical, and two ex-PRR GE 44-tonners. Passengers may ride in former Long Island Rail Road coaches, a covered open-air car, or a caboose. Parks and picnic stands are located at both ends of the line.

WHEN TO GO: From May through October, there are two departures on Saturdays. In October, there are additional trips on Sundays. Dinner trains run on some holidays and on two Saturdays every month May through October. Trains that combine a mystery adventure with dinner run on select dates. Special events are scheduled throughout the year and include Wild West train robberies and ghost trains. For kids, there are bunny trains, teddy bear picnics, and Santa trains. Steam trains are also scheduled on several weekends.

GOOD TO KNOW: The railroad has restored to service an additional 3 miles of track north of Walkersville, which is usually for dinner trains.

WORTH DOING: For Civil War buffs, Gettysburg and Harpers Ferry are about an hour away. The railroad also conducts a Civil War reenactment weekend.

DON'T MISS: The railroad's museum occupies a former ice plant and features rail artifacts from the line and a model railroad.

GETTING THERE: The railroad is 50 miles from Baltimore or Washington, D.C. From Baltimore, take I-70 west to Exit 53B near Frederick. Follow Route 15 north for 6 miles and then turn right onto Biggs Ford Road. Travel about 2 miles and look for a tall grain elevator, which is adjacent to the station.

Tweetsie Railroad

LOCATION: 300 Tweetsie Railroad Lane, Blowing Rock

PHONE: 800-526-5740 or 828-264-9061

WEBSITE: tweetsie.com

E-MAIL: info@tweetsie.com



Dave Crosby

One of the original Wild West theme parks of the 1950s, when TV cowboys were popular, Tweetsie has roots in one of the most famous Southeastern narrow gauge railroads, the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina. The 3-mile train ride gives the historic, coal-fired engines a chance to work and show that they are still the real thing.

CHOICES: The train is pulled by steam locomotive No. 12 or No. 190, the Yukon Queen, which came from Alaska's White Pass & Yukon Railway. The native engine worked for the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ride in a coach close to the engine, so you can hear it work up grade and listen to the whistle echo about the mountains.

WHEN TO GO: The park is open April through November. From Memorial Day weekend through mid-August, it is open daily. An annual railfan weekend is held in September, and a ghost train runs in fall.

GOOD TO KNOW: The East Tennessee & Western North Carolina ran from Elizabeth City, Tenn., to Boone, N.C., for many years. Its whistle sounded a "tweet," and from that, locals nicknamed the railroad *Tweetsie*.

WORTH DOING: Visit the Blowing Rock and learn its legend. Hike or drive through the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains. At Grandfather Mountain, you can cross the Mile High Swinging Bridge, a 228-foot long suspension bridge that spans an 80-foot chasm.

DON'T MISS: Bring the entire family along—there's lots to see and do for kids in the park. Admission to the railroad includes amusement rides, live shows, and other attractions.

GETTING THERE: The railroad is west of Winston-Salem in the Blue Ridge Mountains near the Tennessee border. It is located off Route 321 between Boone and Blowing Rock.

NORTH DAKOTA

Bonanzaville USA

The museum features more than 40 historic buildings and 400,000 artifacts that depict life when bonanza homes dotted the Plains. Rail structures include a vintage Northern Pacific train depot, a water tower, and a train shed. The train shed displays an 1883 NP 4-4-0 steam locomotive, a caboose, and a 1930s Pullman car. It is open May through September.

LOCATION: 1351 W. Main Avenue, West Fargo

PHONE: 701-282-2822

WEBSITE: bonanzaville.org

E-MAIL: form on website

Fort Lincoln Trolley

The trolley car takes you on a 9-mile excursion along the Heart River from Mandan to Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park and back. The park features several reconstructed buildings that would have been found in the original fort.

LOCATION: 2000 Third Street SE, Mandan

PHONE: 701-663-9018

WEBSITE: realnd.com/fortlincolntrolleyindex.htm

Midland Continental Depot Transportation Museum

The restored depot is the only surviving Midland Continental station and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The first floor houses railroad exhibits and the upper floor, once the agent's living quarters, has exhibits honoring singer Peggy Lee, who lived in the depot when her father was the agent. It is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

LOCATION: 401 Railway Street, Wimbledon

PHONE: 701-320-1020 or 701-435-2875

WEBSITE: midlandcontinentaldepot.com

E-MAIL: midlandcontinentaldepot@gmail.com

Texas Rosenberg Railroad Museum

The museum features Tower 17, the last manned interlocking tower in Texas. Inside the fully restored tower, you can work the interlocking machine. Also on display are the *Quebec*, an 1879 business car, diesel switcher No. 2350, and a Missouri Pacific caboose. The museum building, modeled after the city's original depot, contains signaling, station agent, and telegraph artifacts. It is open Wednesdays through Sundays.

LOCATION: 1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg

PHONE: 281-633-2846

WEBSITE: rosenbergrrmuseum.org

E-MAIL: info@rosenbergrrmuseum.org

Texas & Pacific Railway Museum

Located in the Ginocchio National Historic District, the restored 1912 depot still operates as a passenger station, now for Amtrak. The T&P museum is on the second floor, and T&P 2-8-2 Mikado No. 400 and a Union Pacific caboose are displayed on the grounds. It is open Tuesday through Saturday.

LOCATION: 800 N. Washington Avenue, Marshall

PHONE: 903-938-9495

WEBSITE: visitmarshalltexas.org

Texas Transportation Museum

The museum displays automobiles, fire trucks, and carriages, as well as a variety of railroad structures and equipment including two steam locomotives, two diesel engines, and rolling stock. It features a Southern Pacific depot built in 1913 that was moved from Converse. The two-room building contains memorabilia from the railroads that served San Antonio. The museum operates a short train ride on weekends. It is open Friday through Sunday.

LOCATION: 11731 Wetmore Road, San Antonio

PHONE: 210-490-3554

WEBSITE: txtransportationmuseum.org

E-MAIL: form on website

Wichita Falls Railroad Museum

The museum's collection includes a Fort Worth & Denver steam locomotive, a Missouri-Kansas-Texas switch engine, a 1913 Pullman all-steel sleeper, troop sleepers, cabooses, and other cars. Artifacts center on the railroads that served Wichita Falls. The museum is open Saturdays year-round.

LOCATION: 500 Ninth Street, Wichita Falls

PHONE: 940-723-2661

WEBSITE: wfrfm.com

E-MAIL: susieacain@sbcglobal.net

Austin Steam Train

LOCATION: 401 E. Whitestone Boulevard, Cedar Park

PHONE: 512-477-8468

WEBSITE: austinsteamtrain.org

E-MAIL: info@austinsteamtrain.org



Mike Harbour

This tourist line was formed in 1989 to provide weekend service over a portion of a 167-mile route purchased from Southern Pacific. The train operates out of Cedar Park and rolls through the scenic Texas hill country.

CHOICES: The railroad offers two regular excursions. The Hill Country Flyer makes a 66-mile round trip between Cedar Park and Burnet. The trip includes a leisurely layover, allowing you to enjoy lunch, explore the town, and watch a Wild West gunfight. On the 46-mile round trip aboard the Bertram Flyer, you'll leave Cedar Park, cross the South San Gabriel River, and arrive in Bertram. Rolling stock consists of six vintage Pennsylvania P70 coaches, along with three first-class parlor cars. You have a choice of riding coach, excursion coach, or first class (coach or lounge). Coach cars have opening windows, while the other cars are climate-controlled.

WHEN TO GO: Excursions run weekends all year. Many visitors choose to ride during the spring and fall and bypass the summer heat. Some midweek and evening trains run. A variety of specials operate including a Day Out with Thomas, a ghost train, and the North Pole Flyer.

GOOD TO KNOW: Trains are pulled by an Alco RSD15, a unit originally built for Santa Fe, that's been repainted in an SP-inspired "black widow" scheme. Namesake motive power 786, an ex-SP Mikado, is due to be operational again in 2015.

WORTH DOING: Both Cedar Park and Burnet have numerous lodging and dining options for visitors, while Austin is famous for its museums, entertainment, scenic drives, and area lakes.

DON'T MISS: The most-recent car to enter service is the Rippling Stream, an adults-only, first-class lounge car. The 1949 Budd car served on the New York Central.

GETTING THERE: Cedar Park is 20 miles north of Austin. You can reach the station by exiting I-35 at Exit 256. Follow RM 1431, which turns into Whitestone Boulevard, for 8 miles. The station is in the Cedar Park Shopping Center.

Alberta Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions

LOCATION: 4611 47th Avenue, Stettler

PHONE: 800-282-3994 or 403-742-2811

WEBSITE: absteamtrain.com

E-MAIL: info@absteamtrain.com



Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions

A trip aboard the Alberta Prairie conjures up visions of what a central Alberta wheat line must have been like 100 years ago. Traveling from the well-developed community of Stettler, it passes through forests and fields before reaching Big Valley, where the ruins of a roundhouse and a restored depot remain.

CHOICES: The railroad offers an extensive schedule of excursions and specials throughout the year. All excursions include a buffet meal, which is served in Big Valley or Stettler, onboard entertainment, and possibly a train robbery. Specially themed rides include murder mystery, Christmas, family, and teddy bear trains. During winter, fine-dining trains provide a five-course meal and entertainment. The trains are pulled by Baldwin 2-8-0 steam engine No. 41 or by General Motors diesel No. 1259. Several times a year, usually for special events, such as on Canada Day, historic steam engine No. 6060 is in operation.

WHEN TO GO: Summer excursions begin in May and continue until mid-October each year.

GOOD TO KNOW: The railway was once part of a vast grain railroad network belonging to the Canadian Northern. Be sure to chat with the train crew. Many of the veteran railroaders on this line have great stories. And if you get the right conductor, he might just sing you a song or recite a poem for you en route.

WORTH DOING: In Big Valley, the restored station and several railcars display railroad and local history artifacts. You can take a self-guided tour of the five-stall roundhouse remains and former rail yards, view a wooden grain elevator, and visit the Jimmy Jock Boardwalk, which is modeled after a frontier town's street.

DON'T MISS: For an added prairie experience, you can take a 20-mile covered wagon trip along historic rail rights-of-way.

GETTING THERE: Stettler is about 3 hours northeast of Calgary on Highway 12.

Heritage Park

LOCATION: 1900 Heritage Drive SW, Calgary

PHONE: 403-268-8500

WEBSITE: heritagepark.ca

E-MAIL: info@heritagepark.ca



Heritage Park

Discover what life was like in the Canadian West between 1864 and 1914 by visiting this re-created village framed by the Rockies. More than 150 exhibits, including many buildings transplanted from Calgary and other locations throughout Alberta, bring the past to the present.

CHOICES: The park includes a roundhouse and turntable along with more than 20 locomotives and cars. A train ride is an excellent way to see the park. Make a day of your visit and wander from building to building, paying particular attention to the transplanted railway stations, rolling stock, and re-created carbarn. If it's too hot, take a cruise on the water aboard the replica sternwheeler *SS Moyie*. Heritage Town Square represents a street scene from the 1930s to '50s, complete with an automobile museum and a replica train station.

WHEN TO GO: All of Heritage Park is open daily from mid-May until September. Historical Village is open weekends during September through mid-October. Then over the winter, Gasoline Alley Museum and the Heritage Town Square are open daily.

GOOD TO KNOW: A short streetcar line connects the outer parking area to the main entrance. It's well worth it to park out there, view ex-CPR 2-10-4 No. 5931 and S2 No. 7019, and then ride over to the gate in a replica Calgary or Winnipeg trolley.

WORTH DOING: Calgary's 10-day annual Stampede, which can draw more than one million people, is the world's largest rodeo. The event also features chuck wagon racing, agricultural exhibits, entertainment, and a parade.

DON'T MISS: During Railway Days in September, the park celebrates Canadian railways and rolls out much of its collection. Steam doubleheaders often operate for this event, and ex-CP Car 76, present at the driving of the last spike on the CPR in Craigellachie in 1885, may be rolled out.

GETTING THERE: Heritage Park is approximately a 20-minute drive southwest from downtown Calgary. A shuttle service operates during park hours from the Heritage light rail stop.