



125 Main Street
P.O. Box 206
Putney, Vermont 05346

May 20, 2009

Dear Great Railfan: Smoky Mountain Rails Tour Participants;

Our wonderful tour is just a few weeks away. This letter will update the information in our brochure and answer many pre-tour questions.

WHEN AND WHERE TO JOIN THE TOUR

Our tour begins with arrivals into Chattanooga, Tennessee on Sunday, June 21. For those flying into Chattanooga, the airport is located seven miles east of town. **If you call our hotel upon arrival (phone 1/800-872-2529), they will send a complimentary shuttle for you.** Our hotel for the next three nights is the Holiday Inn Chattanooga Choo Choo. If you are driving to Chattanooga, you can obtain a free hotel parking pass from the front desk when you check in.

TICKETS AND VOUCHERS

All vouchers and tickets for this tour will be held by the Tour Manager, Carl Fowler.

BAGGAGE HANDLING/TAGS

Your tour includes the portage of one suitcase per person. You may bring additional hand-carried luggage such as camera bags or tote bags, but you must handle such additional items yourself. Be sure to attach the enclosed Rail Travel Center baggage tag to the suitcase you wish us to handle for you.

PACKING HINTS

For all Rail Travel Center tours we recommend packing lightly and wisely. Bring clothing that can be worn in layers. If it's cool in the evening, you can add a sweater or jacket rather than completely changing clothes. This tour is casual, but **you might want to bring a "dress casual" outfit for our welcome and farewell dinners.** Coats and ties are not required in any case. If you are planning a "dress up" event on your own (such as dinner at a fancy restaurant in Chattanooga or Asheville) you should pack something suitable for that activity.

Be sure to bring light-weight rain gear, **comfortable walking shoes**, a sweater or jacket, sun-screen and sun hat, mosquito repellent, binoculars, and a camera. For this tour, we anticipate daytime high temperatures in the 80s Fahrenheit and the 60s at night. Humidity will be high.

TIPPING



(802) 387-5812

(800) 458-5394

FAX: (802) 387-4350

www.railtravelcenter.com



Rail Travel Center tours include tips for luggage handling and included meals. All other tipping is at the passenger's discretion. Over the years we've had repeated requests for tipping guidelines. We offer the following suggestions as a result of those requests, but we wish to emphasize that these are **guidelines, not mandates**. Tip for service and satisfaction, not out of obligation.

Tour Manager: At least \$35 per person for tours of over 7 days duration.

Step-on Guides: \$1.00-2.00 per person, per day for a local tour escort.

Motorcoach Driver: Typically \$2.00 per day, per person.

Food Servers: In North America, 15-20% of the pre-tax total is generally left as a gratuity.

All tipping suggestions are given **very reluctantly**. We want to reemphasize that these are suggested **guidelines, not mandates**. **No tips are required on a Rail Travel Center tour**. Tip because you got good service and enjoyed your trip. If there are problems tell your Tour Manager right away and tell our office.

INCLUDED MEALS

Included meals are identified in the detailed Tour Itinerary which follows. Other meals are by individual settlement. Meal costs can vary. In North America, we suggest a guideline of \$40 per person per day for three full meals in moderately priced restaurants. Note we have added five included meals to this itinerary since it was advertised.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day One, Sunday, June 21

Independent arrivals into Chattanooga. As noted above, you can contact our hotel to transfer you from the airport. Our hotel for the next three nights is the Holiday Inn Chattanooga Choo Choo, 1400 Market Street, Chattanooga TN 37402, telephone 800/872-2529. **Check in time is 3:00 p.m.**, but if you arrive earlier, ask the desk to hold your bags until your room is ready. The hotel complex is quite large and fun to explore. **The model railroad display and the trolley are open from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. today** if you would like to visit. Our Welcome Dinner is scheduled for tomorrow evening to allow tour participants to relax after arrival, particularly our friends joining us from the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Day Two, Monday, June 22 (B,L,D)

6:30 a.m. Included buffet breakfast begins in Gardens Restaurant. Your ticket is in your key packet. **Breakfast for the three mornings we are at this hotel has been added to the program** as a thank you for selling out this tour.

8:00 a.m. Meet in the lobby by this time. Look for Carl or Dixie Fowler, who will be holding a "Rail Travel Center" sign and standing near the check-in desk, to obtain your nametags, menu selection list, and participant list for the tour.

8:30 a.m. Depart on our chartered motorcoach for the drive up Lookout Mountain.



9:00 – 10:45 a.m. Visit Rock City, where we can view seven states from Lovers Leap, see rock formations, and visit Fairyland Caverns and botanical displays. Walking and steps are necessary on the one-mile long path, so do as much or little as you wish at your own pace.

10:45 a.m. Our motorcoach takes us to the Incline Railway.

11:00-11:30 a.m. Ride the Incline Railway down the mountain. The ride takes about ten minutes, but we probably will need several departures to get the entire group down.

11:30-12:30 p.m. Visit Ruby Falls and take the guided tour into the cavern. The trail is about a mile round-trip and has 35 steps in groups of 4 or 5 at a time. Temperature inside the cavern is about 60 degrees F, but with the humidity, it will feel more like 70 degrees.

12:30-1:00 p.m. Drive to our lunch stop.

1:00-2:30 p.m. Lunch at the Mount Vernon Restaurant. We have pre-selected our entrees.

2:30-3:00 p.m. Drive to the location of the Tennessee Valley Railroad.

3:35-4:45 p.m. Ride the Missionary Ridge Local on a six-mile round trip, including one of the oldest railroad tunnels in Tennessee. At the East Chattanooga Depot, our locomotive may be put on a turntable. We also can visit the shops.

4:45-5:15 p.m. Return to our hotel to freshen up before our Welcome Dinner. This would be a night for the “dress casual” outfit, if you brought one.

6:15 p.m. Meet in the lobby for the motorcoach transfer to our dinner.

7:00-8:30 p.m. Welcome Dinner. We have pre-selected our entrees.

Day Three, Tuesday, June 23 (B, Box lunch, D)

6:30 a.m. Breakfast begins, as above.

8:00-10:30 a.m. Depart on our motorcoach to Blue Ridge, Georgia, where we collect our box lunches and board the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway.

11:00-3:00 p.m. We travel into the beautiful mountains of northern Georgia on this line. As a special treat our friend Bob Ciminell, who volunteers with the BRSC, will ride with us as our docent. When we reach McCaysville, we have about a two-hour layover. The town has about 1000 residents, and we can explore the area, shop, photograph the train movements, or otherwise entertain ourselves. This will be of first of two rides on the highly scenic former Hook and Eye Subdivision of the former Louisville and Nashville (L&N) route from Knoxville to Atlanta.

3:00-5:30 p.m. We return to our hotel.

- 6:00 p.m. Depart for dinner on our motorcoach.
- 7:00-9:30 p.m. Barbeque dinner cruise on the "Southern Belle" riverboat on the Tennessee River.

Day Four, Wednesday, June 24 (B, L, D)

- 6:30 a.m. Breakfast begins, as above.
- 9:00 a.m. Please have bags outside your door at this time.
- 10:00-11:30 a.m. Depart our hotel by motorcoach and drive to Etowah, Tennessee.
- 11:30-12:45 p.m. Included luncheon at the Farm House restaurant, where we order at table.
- 1:00 p.m. Board our train.
- 1:30-5:00 p.m. Ride the Tennessee Valley Railroad on the "Hiwassee Loop" route. Riding on the former Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Hook and Eye Subdivision, we literally make a circle as we ascend the loop, gaining elevation for the crossing of the mountains.
- 5:00-5:30 p.m. Drive to Sweetwater, Tennessee.
- 7:00 p.m. Motorcoach transfer to Bradley's Pit Barbeque for an **added included dinner** as a thank you for booking this tour. The restaurant also serves non-barbeque items, so it should work well for all. We will order from the menu, with Carl paying for the group.

Our hotel tonight is the Quality Inn and Suites, 1116 Highway 68, Sweetwater, TN 37874, phone 423/337-4900. This property has a guest laundry and indoor swimming pool.

Day Five, Thursday, June 25 (B, L, D)

- 6:00 a.m. An included full hot breakfast is served at the hotel, beginning at this time.
- 7:30 a.m. Please have bags out at this time.
- 8:30-10:00 a.m. Drive to Clinton, Tennessee.
- 10:00-12:00 noon Visit the Museum of Appalachia, a wonderful museum depicting the pioneer period in this region of the United States using buildings, gardens, and a variety of displays. They also have a fine gift shop.
- 12:00-1:30 p.m. We enjoy an included country buffet lunch and live bluegrass music.
- 1:30-3:00 p.m. Drive to Rugby, Tennessee.

3:00-5:00 p.m. Visit Rugby, Tennessee, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This piece of Victorian England, transplanted into the Cumberland Mountains, is considered one of the most authentically preserved historic villages in America. There are buildings to tour, walking paths, and a Commissary (gift shop).

5:00-6:00 p.m. Included dinner at the Harrow Road Café in Rugby. The Rugby map shows its location in the village. We have pre-selected our entrees.

6:00-7:00 p.m. Drive to Caryville, Tennessee. Our hotel for two nights is the Hampton Inn Caryville, 4459 Veterans Memorial Highway, Caryville TN 37714, phone 423/562-9888. This property has a coin operated laundry, outdoor swimming pool, and llamas on the property!

Day Six, Friday, June 26 (B, L, D)

6:00 a.m. A hot buffet breakfast is included at the hotel, beginning at this time.

9:30-10:30 a.m. Drive to Stearns, Kentucky.

11:00-2:30 p.m. Ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway with a "Coal Miner's lunch" included. We have a 1-1/2 hour layover at the Blue Heron Mining Camp. This ride follows the former Kentucky and Tennessee RR and includes steep grades as we descend into the magnificent canyon of the Cumberland River.

2:30-3:30 p.m. Visit the McCreary County Museum (across from the depot) upon our return to Stearns.

3:30-4:30 p.m. Return by motorcoach to Caryville.

6:15 p.m. Depart by motorcoach for **another added included dinner** at Rickard Ridge Barbeque, located in Cove Lake State Park. We will order from the menu, with Carl paying for the group. The restaurant serves seafood and steaks in addition to its barbeque. Please note because we are in a state park, **the restaurant has no liquor license.**

Day Seven, Saturday, June 27 (B, Box Lunch, D)

6:00 a.m. Hot buffet breakfast, as noted above.

8:30 a.m. Please have bags out at this time.

9:15-10:00 a.m. Drive to Knoxville.

10:30-12:00 p.m. Ride the "Three Rivers Rambler" with an included box lunch. We ride the Gulf and Ohio RR line from downtown Knoxville. This is an added ride, which replaces the previously scheduled New River RR, which is no longer open.

12:15-6:00 p.m. Scenic drive to Dillsboro, North Carolina with photo stops en route. We cross Great Smoky Mountains National Park and (weather permitting) stop to view the vast

panorama from the summit of Klingman's Dome. Enroute to Dillsboro, we also plan to traverse a bit of the Blue Ridge Parkway if weather, time and traffic cooperate.

6:00 p.m. Check in at our hotel for tonight, the Best Western River Escape Inn, 248 WBI Drive, Dillsboro NC, phone 828/586-6060. Our hotel overlooks the Tuckaseegee River.

7:00-8:30 p.m. Included dinner at the Jarrett House in Dillsboro. This replaces our planned meal on the Great Smoky Mountains RR dinner train, which is not operating at present. We have pre-selected our entrees.

Day Eight, Sunday, June 28 (CB, L)

6:00 a.m. A continental breakfast is served at our hotel, beginning at this time.

8:00 a.m. Please have bags out at this time.

8:15-10:00 a.m. Drive to Bryson City NC; visit the Smoky Mt. Train Museum, which includes a collection of Lionel toy trains.

10:30-3:00 p.m. Ride the Great Smoky Mountains RR on the "Nantahala Gorge" route in Club Car class. En route we experience the Horseshoe Curve, Fontana Lake Trestle, Little Tennessee River and Nantahala River Gorge. Lunch is in the Iron Horse Grill on the train.

3:00-6:00 p.m. We drive to Asheville via the famous Blue Ridge Parkway, with photo stops en route. We reach elevations of over 6,000 feet on the Parkway this afternoon. Our hotel for the last two nights is the Holiday Inn Biltmore East, 1450 Tunnel Road, Asheville, North Carolina 28805, phone 828/298-5611. This is a full-service hotel. Sonny's Bistro adjacent to the lobby serves breakfast and dinner, specializing in northern Italian cuisine. If you prefer a different dining experience, there are a number of restaurants within 5 minutes of the hotel.

Day Nine, Monday, June 29 (L, D)

8:00-8:30 a.m. Drive to Biltmore House & Gardens, largest private residence in America.

9:00-12:15 p.m. We have a self-guided tour of the home and gardens. We meet our motorcoach for the lunch transfer at 12:15 p.m.

12:30-2:00 p.m. Included buffet lunch at Deerpark Restaurant.

2:00-4:30 p.m. Drive up onto the Blue Ridge Parkway and visit the Folk Art Center, home of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. This is an opportunity to explore Appalachian culture and crafts (and maybe shop)!

4:30-5:00 p.m. Return to our hotel to freshen up. The "dress code" for tonight is "resort casual". This means collared shirts and long pants for the gentlemen (**not** coat and tie). They request there be no tee shirts, tank tops, shorts, pool attire or exercise wear in the dining room.

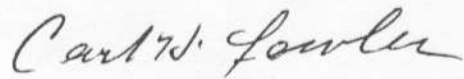
6:00-8:30 p.m. Travel to the beautiful Grove Park Inn and enjoy our Farewell Dinner. We have pre-selected our entrees.

Day Ten, Tuesday, June 30

Our tour ends with independent departures from our hotel this morning.

Dixie and I look forward to traveling with you on this beautiful tour. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl H. Fowler".

Carl H. Fowler
Vice-President/General Manager