



Seb's Heart of Africa Railway.

One of the great dilemmas that the Sandstone Narrow Gauge railway faced was the large diversity of locomotives at our disposal. Heavy Garratts fully laden weighing up to nearly eighty tons were sharing the same line as diminutive, little Sugar Cane locomotives weighing not more than two tons each. Because of the safety considerations in relation to pulling these small locomotives on the same line as the big ones, it was decided to build an entirely separate line. It would be a gentler ride behind the little locomotives which would give people the ability to observe in miniature almost what a passenger steam experience was all about. Using our smallest locomotives, like the 1899 Decauville, we used converted Sugar Cane ngollovans (train wagons in Zulu) to make sensible open carriages which allowed the passengers to be at one with their immediate environment. It was originally named after one of the grandsons of a Sandstone Director as Seb's Railway, and travels through the open savannah, across a big dam and through a wonderful moody forest. At this point one could almost be in Germany or Slovakia.



Crossing the dam wall with the single USA style coach

The Railway is a wonderful experience which differs dramatically from the longer train ride behind the big locomotives on the Main Line.

The terminus is situated in Platform 1 of Hoekfontein station on the line that leads to the locomotive depot facing in a south westerly direction. On leaving the station and passing the grain silos we join the workshop line briefly to the right hand points which mark the start of the line. The down gradient here is 1 in 34 around a left hand curve bringing the line to a more southerly direction, then around another left hand curve which brings the line to a north easterly direction on a 1 in 240 gradient and alongside the southern side of the locomotive depot. Here the line steepens to a 1 in 45 climb before swinging right to reverse direction on a 1 in 400 downgrade. At this point we enter the true loop of Seb's Railway as we take the left hand road down a long 1 in 33 gradient and onto an easier downhill 1 in 200 before we swing right and right again onto the 1 in 40 increasing to 1 in 33 descent to the dam wall in a north, north easterly direction. We are now roughly half way through our journey.



Diesel Power is often used, "Springbok" heads a train of the Century City coaches

A short stop takes place on the dam wall to admire the dam on the right and any wildlife that may be in the vicinity. This also allows the crew to attend the fire and water needs of the small engines used on the line before attacking the significant gradients to come on the return to the terminus. From the standing start on the dam wall we attack the constant 1 in 33 climb towards the wooded area before swinging to the right on the same gradient (apart from a very short section of 1 in 80) before we emerge from the trees with the locomotive depot now in front of us on our left hand side. We are now running parallel to the opening section of the line on our left alongside the depot on a level formation in a north easterly direction. Next to the depot we curve south east before joining the section which will return us to the terminus. Again, we reverse our direction onto the short 1 in 400 climb before the descent alongside the workshops at 1 in 45. Two right turns bring us on to the initial 1 in 34 section, now a facing gradient and back to the terminus, a leisurely journey of 2,48km.



O&K "Anna" with the Century City coaches

In late 2024, the railway, underwent a major change and was enclosed within a game camp shared with one of Sandstone's neighbours which has changed the nature of the line. It will still be Seb's Railway but with a twist! The entrance and exit to the camp on the line is now controlled by a security gate and the railway gained a new name, a new name that encompasses the new spirit of the railway! **Seb's Heart of Africa Railway.**



We also upgraded our passenger coaches for the line with three bogie vehicles originally used at Century City in Cape Town. These are enclosed and have full suspension and brakes offering a much smoother ride than the original four wheel cane units. A single USA style coach is used for smaller groups. These new coaches have proved to be a great success and have greatly improved the experience of Seb's Heart of Africa Railway.