

Veld to Berg Steam Photo Tour

Passionate about Photography and Steam Trains



Three friends, all avid photographers, were sitting enjoying a cold beer after a full day of photographing the narrow gauge steam action at Sandstone Estates. The subject of the lack of recent steam photo tours in South Africa became a topic of discussion.

This led to the decision to look into the possibility of organising such a tour, particularly with our combined knowledge and experience in the field. It was also felt that this would be a sustainable way of helping with funding for the beleaguered steam preservation fraternity in South Africa.

As a result we are happy to present our inaugural tour, and introduce ourselves;

David Benn (FPSSA), a psychiatrist practicing in Johannesburg. He donates time to arranging steam photo opportunities, mainly with Friends of the Rail, the Pretoria based preservation group that runs trains to Cullinan. Having received his first camera at the age of 16, since 1978 David has amassed an impressive collection of steam images from around the world. In 2002 he was awarded the prestigious Fellowship of the Photographic Society of South Africa, for a 36-slide presentation exclusively of steam engines. David's work features on Railpictures.Net.

Aidan McCarthy, from the IT industry, resident in Johannesburg, is closely linked to the Reefsteamers preservation group, having been their treasurer, but now prefers a greasy overall working on the locos at their depot in the old Germiston steam running sheds. He is an experienced rail photographer and avid rail enthusiast, and has acted as photo co-ordinator on a number of photo charters in South Africa during their heyday. Aidan also publishes extensively on Railpictures.Net.

Rod Hering, is a self-employed businessman from Johannesburg, brings knowledge of the travel industry and logistics to the group. He is a passionate wildlife and motorsport photographer in his spare time, and has had images published in numerous publications. As a shareholder in the Pangolin Voyager houseboat on the Chobe River, he has hosted both local and international guests on photo safaris in this iconic wildlife destination.

All three have acted as photo co-ordinators at the annual Sandstone Heritage Trust / Sandstone Estates (PTY) LTD event. Our first tour is scheduled to start on 18th June 2016 to the 28th June 2016, and will encompass steam operations in Gauteng, on the Cullinan branch line, Sandstone Estates in the Eastern Free State and Creighton in KwaZulu Natal.

With extensive knowledge of the local service providers and conditions, the overriding consideration in putting this, our inaugural tour together, was to ensure that the tour delivers on its promise. The team will be auditing each rail service provider, from ensuring operating permits from the Rail Authority, through to specifying the contents of packed breakfasts.



Tour Itinerary

The tour will take place from 18th June to the 27th June 2016. These dates were chosen as it is in the middle of the South African winter, making for early morning steam effects like these possible. The days also tend to be crystal clear, as it is before the burning season starts. It is also low season for tourism, enabling us to negotiate favourable rates.

Day One: 18th June 2016

Participants will meet at a hotel situated within OR Tambo Airport. At around lunchtime we will travel by coach to Cullinan for late afternoon and night time photography on the branch line, with Friends of the Rails Class 24, 2-8-4 tender locomotive, with a typical short mixed consist until sunset. Night photography at Cullinan Station and dinner at the Cockpit Brewhouse, and overnight in Cullinan.

Day Two: 19th June 2016

Early morning photography on Cullinan branch line, with the Class 24, and the same consist. A packed picnic breakfast will be supplied, and lunch will be for own account in Cullinan, which has many options to suit all tastes and budgets. After lunch we will depart for our overnight accommodation in Fouriesburg.

Day Three: 20th June 2016

Will start with pre dawn and early morning photography at Sandstone Estates, between Fouriesburg and Ficksburg, the mecca for narrow gauge steam preservation. Photo locations will be chosen to maximise the scenic splendour of this 26km private rail line on a fully working African farm, along with sessions in the steam sheds while locos are prepared. The collection includes locos from Mozambique, Angola, Rhodesia as well as South Africa. For this day we will have the use of a NG G16 2-6-2+2-6-2 Garratt and a choice of consists. A packed picnic breakfast will be supplied and lunch will be provided by Sandstone Estates. Late afternoon photography with the NG G16 again, and then dinner and overnight at Fouriesburg.

Day Four: 21st June 2016

Once again we will spend the day on the Sandstone system. We will have use of their Class NG15 2-8-2 Kalahari, tender locomotive, and a choice of consists. Once again a packed picnic breakfast and farm style lunch provided by Sandstone Estates. During the course of the day there will be time for photographing the extensive transport heritage collection housed on this farm, as well as landscapes. Late afternoon photography with the NG 15 again, and then dinner and overnight at Fouriesburg.

Day Five: 22nd June 2016

Early morning silhouette shots with one of the two Lawley 4-4-0 tender locomotives at Sandstone on the line to Grootdraai, with its views across to the Maluti mountains. These little engines were used on the Beira - Umtali leg of the then Rhodesian railways. After breakfast we will depart for our accommodation in Bulwer, situated in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains. Alan Paton's world.

Day Six: 23rd June 2016

Early morning photographic return trip from Creighton to Riverside with Eshayamoya Express Class GMAM 4-8-2+2-8-4 Garratt. Once again a packed picnic breakfast will be provided. Lunch will be provided by the Creighton farming community. A repeat return trip from Creighton to Riverside in the late afternoon will be undertaken to maximise photo opportunities with the different position of the sun. We will return to Bulwer for dinner and overnight.

Day Seven: 24th June 2016

Early morning photographic return trip from Creighton to Riverside with Eshayamoya Express Class 19D 4-8-2 tender loco. Once again a packed picnic breakfast will be provided. Lunch will be provided by the Creighton farming community. A repeat return trip from Creighton to Riverside in the late afternoon will be undertaken to maximise photo opportunities with the different position of the sun. We will return to Bulwer for dinner and overnight. The town of Creighton is in a spectacular natural setting and should provide for interesting photography other than rail.

Day Eight: 25th June 2016

After breakfast at our hotel in Bulwer we will depart on our road transfer to Cullinan, with a bit of landscape photography on the way. Lunch will be en-route, and along with dinner in Cullinan it will be for own account. We will overnight in Cullinan.

Day Nine: 26th June 2016

After collecting our packed breakfasts we will proceed onto the branch line for early morning photography of Reefsteamers Class 15CA 4-8-2 tender loco with a short passenger consist that was typical of when the town had a passenger service. Lunch at the participant's choice and cost, and time to tour the diamond mine and other sights in the town. We will repeat the morning trip

again in the afternoon with the same loco and consist. Night photography in Cullinan Station. Dinner free choice, and for own account.

Day Ten: 27th June 2016

After collecting our packed breakfasts we will proceed onto the branch line for early morning photography of Reefsteamers Class 15CA 4-8-2 tender loco with a short passenger consist.

After a farewell lunch in Cullinan, those who are departing will be transferred by coach to OR Tambo Airport in time for the evening departure of international flights.

We will be offering additional options for a wildlife photo safari, either on the Pangolin Voyager houseboat, or at a game lodge with a photo hide in a water hole. Keep an eye on our news page for announcements.

Notes: In Cullinan we have left the choice of lunch and dinners to your individual taste and budget. Typically a light lunch will cost about GBP 15.00. A three-course dinner will be on average GBP 40. A good South African bottle of wine GBP 10 to 15. Beers, under 1 Pound.

Bulwer has a couple of pubs and restaurants, but we have elected to have the hotel cater for us.

Creighton has no real pubs or restaurants or hotel, therefore we are relying on the hotel in Bulwer, where we are staying for catering.



Prices (Terms & Conditions)

SADC Residents R39,950.00 inc.

GBP 2350.00

Euro 3110.00

This price includes all lodging, and all meals, except for where indicated in the itinerary. Where there are multiple options of restaurants we have given guests the freedom to choose according to their own taste and budget.

All transport is on an air-conditioned tour bus.

Travel on the trains as per the itinerary, and access to all the photo opportunities.

The services of three experienced photo hosts with extensive local knowledge to provide tuition and advice.

Excluded are items of a personal nature, gratuities, alcohol and refreshments.

To secure your booking, the organisers require a 50% deposit.

In order for the tour to proceed we require 20 participants who have paid deposits. The decision date will be the 31st March 2016. Should the tour not proceed, all deposits will be returned on the 4th April 2016, without deduction.

Once the decision is made to proceed with the tour the remaining 50% balance will be due and payable.

Should a participant have to cancel due to unforeseen circumstances prior to 18th May 2016, a refund of 50% of any payments made will be given. Cancellation after 18th May 2016 will regretfully not be subject to a refund.

There will be a maximum of 40 participants, to ensure adequate space at photo opportunities and for the hosts to provide personal attention.

