

Head Office, P O Box 2837 Pretoria 0001 Gauteng, South Africa
 Tel: (+27 - 12) 315 8242 Fax: (+27 - 12) 323 0843
 Cape Town Office, P O Box 50241 Waterfront 8002, Cape Town
 Tel: (+27 - 21) 421 4020/421 4021 Fax: (+27 - 21) 421 4022
 Email:reservations@rovos.co.za Website: www.rovos.com

The Most Luxurious Train in the World



ROVOS RAIL

The Most Luxurious Train in the World

Updated 28 March 2011

HISTORY

- In December 1986 permission obtained to operate on S.A. Railways system.
- In April 1989 Rovos Rail operated 1 train with 13 carriages once a month to the Kruger National Park.
- In November 1991 introduced the 48-hour 1600km journey between Pretoria and Cape Town.
- In July 1993 introduced an epic journey into the heart of Africa with a 14 day (6 100km) Edwardian Safari from Cape Town to Dar es Salaam.
- In January 1994 introduced the 55 hour 1600 km journey up to Victoria Falls.
- In 1995 commenced building Classic Train 1 and Classic Train 11.
- In November 1996 introduced the 24-hour 550km journey between Cape Town and George.
- In May 1998 introduced an annual 7 day 3 400 km journey to Swakopmund in Namibia.
- In May 1999 established the station headquarters at Capital Park in Pretoria.
- In March 2000 changed the Victoria Falls route to a 51-hour journey via Polokwane (Pietersburg), with a two-hour historic aircraft flight between Polokwane and Victoria Falls.
- In 2000 introduced the 55-hour Safari between Pretoria and Durban.
- In May 2001 introduced a tri-annual 9-day Golf Safari.
- In June 2001 introduced the 9day African Collage around South Africa.
- In May 2001 added two 1954 Convair 440 aircraft to the Rovos stable.
- In June 2002 added a DC-3 aircraft to Rovos Air.
- In March 2002 introduced the 13/17-day Rail and Air Southern Africa Safari.
- In March 2002 introduced the 13/17-day Rail and Air Central African Safari.
- In May 2004 introduced the 13/17-day Rail and Air African Air Safari.
- In May 2005 commenced building of 15 carriages.
- In Nov 2005 launched the Smoking Lounge and Pullman accommodation.
- In May 2006 launched 14 day Steam Safari.
- In June 2006 re introduced the 1600 km journey between Pretoria and Victoria Falls.
- In January 2007 introduced the 27 or 34 day Cape to Cairo Journey which ran in Jan 2008.
- In Oct 2007 delivered a 5 coach train to Bushtracks – Zambia.
- In Jan 2008 commenced building of 8 coach charter and function train.
- In May 2009 delivered an 8-coach train to the Creighton Municipality in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
- In April 2010 railway accident in Pretoria. Ten coaches destroyed, six damaged.
- In May 2010 new financial offices opened.
- In April 2011 the new museum was completed.

The brainchild of Rohan Vos (thus the name Rovos), the Pride of Africa transports passengers in high Edwardian style on various routes throughout South Africa. Its meticulously restored coaches, outfitted with twenties and thirties style furnishings and mahogany panelling evoke the colonial glamour and elegance of pre-war rail travel.

"I wanted to combine the romance of train travel with accommodation, cuisine and service of the highest standard," says Vos, "Travelling on Rovos Rail is like being in a time warp. We've tried to re-create the ambience of an English country club of the early twentieth century but with attention to modern comforts."

Rohan Vos was involved in the motor spares industry in Witbank. He was very well established in 1985, being involved with 15 small businesses at the time. His first contact with the world of trains was made through an employee of his, Phil Acutt, who enticed him to become involved in a Steam Preservation Society. He became more involved until eventually buying and restoring four carriages and a steam locomotive. The idea was to run this private little train around the countryside for himself and his family which prompted him in December 1986 to secure a contract with the South African Railways that would allow him to travel anywhere in South Africa at a fixed charge per kilometre per carriage. But when he discovered the costs involved in towing this hotel on wheels around the country were beyond his private means, South African Railways suggested that he sell tickets. So Vos, who had no experience with trains or tourism, spent the next few years in his airplane scouring the countryside for old coaches and locomotives, either rescuing them from scrap yards or purchasing them from the railways and from individuals who had converted them into restaurants and residences.

By 1989 Vos and a small team of artisans had rebuilt enough coaches to launch his first commercial train. This building trend has continued to this day due to Rovos Rail's rapid growth. Public demand, combined with the company's projection of occupancy, were initiating factors in this intense building programme.

By 1996 Rovos Rail was operating two trains of twenty carriages each, half of which date back to the twenties and thirties. Most were built between 1919 and 1970. They are refurbished at his sheds in Pretoria, rebuilt in a way that blends traditional woods and fixtures with modern conveniences like hidden mini bars and spacious bathrooms. The suites are designed for either double or twin beds and have a small lounge area with two upholstered chairs, a compact refrigerator, a cupboard and two full-length mirrors. The bathroom comes complete with hot shower, hair dryer, bathroom heater and shaver plugs. All suites, the Dining Cars, Club Lounge, Observation and Lounge Cars are fully air-conditioned.

The four Royal suites aboard each train are larger than the Deluxe or Pullman suites (approximately 16 versus 11 and 7 square metres). Outfitted with Victorian claw-foot bathtubs, they bear the names of Vos's wife, Anthea, and Victorian-era South Africans such as Cecil John Rhodes, who founded the De Beers mining company in the historic diamond rush town of Kimberley, the site of an off-train excursion on the Cape Town route.

It's the dining cars, however, that truly transport one to another era. A brass gong announces each meal, beckoning guests to two opulently restored carriages. The more formal carriage, dating back to 1924, displays fluted teak pillars and arches, mahogany tables and tassel tied draperies which combine to create an Edwardian feeling. In the 1935 dining car, a former restaurant in Johannesburg, plush booths, mahogany panelling and square chrome fitted ceiling lights ensconce diners in subtle Art Deco style. Fresh flowers, Rovos Rail china and silverware dress the white-clothed tables. In 2010 more modern steel coaches were converted to period diners.

The observation car has a mahogany bar, lamp-lit booths with leather, cane and rattan furniture that was popular during colonial times. On the open-air observation platform, the buzz of excitement that filled the train as passengers boarded gives way to an aura of peaceful well-being.

The three classic trains consist of thirty-nine suites and can accommodate up to seventy-two passengers. The fourth train is the original Edwardian Train (all wooden coaches) and has a maximum capacity of 42 passengers in 23 suites. This train will be available for charter throughout the year.

REGULAR JOURNEYS

Guests can choose from a series of journeys lasting from 24 hours to a fortnight linking some of Africa's greatest destinations:

A 55-hour 1600km journey between Pretoria and Cape Town, with off-train excursions in Kimberley and Matjiesfontein.

A 55-hour 1600 km journey between Pretoria and Victoria Falls.

A 55-hour Safari between Pretoria and Durban, with game drives in the Nambiti Conservancy and Spionkop Nature Reserve and an excursion to Ardmores Ceramics near Pietermaritzburg.

ANNUAL AND TRI-ANNUAL JOURNEYS

An epic journey into the heart of Africa takes place at various times when Rovos Rail departs on a 14 day (6 100km) Edwardian Safari from Cape Town to Dar Es Salaam, via Kimberley, Pretoria, Mafikeng, Beit Bridge, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Lusaka and through Tanzania to Dar Es Salaam. The journey is characterised by various off-train excursions and is destined to become the most famous train journeys in the world.

An annual 3 400 km journey to Swakopmund in Namibia in May. The train takes 9 days to reach Swakopmund with an off-train excursion in Kimberley, a visit to the Fish River Canyon, a tour of Windhoek, an overnight stay at a game lodge in Etosha National Park with two game drives and an overnight visit to Sossusvlei.

An annual 9-day African Collage and Golf journey between Pretoria and Cape Town in May/June. This most scenic of all trips takes the train via Malelane, Hluhluwe, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, Oudtshoorn, George and on to Cape Town with various off-train excursions.

A 9-day Golf Safari in April, August and December which takes guests to a selection of the finest golf courses in South Africa, combining scenic beauty with renowned game and cultural attractions. This is a round trip with an equally interesting itinerary for non-golfers departing from Pretoria and travelling via Phalaborwa, Durban, Ladysmith, Sun City and back to Pretoria.

THE LOCOMOTIVES

Although Rovos Rail commenced as a steam-hauled train in 1989, practicality dictated the use of steam, diesel or electric locomotives. Over the past few years it has become increasingly difficult to operate with steam as the coal and water facilities have gradually removed all over the country. It is however still possible to operate steam in and around Pretoria and Rovos Rail endeavours to offer steam on every arrival and departure for which three working locomotives are kept operational at Capital Park in Pretoria.

The company also runs one of the world's oldest commercially operating steam locomotives, built in 1893. Christened Tiffany, it's one of four vintage locomotives named after Vos's children. Nine 1966 5E electric locomotives have been rebuilt and are used when required.

1893 6 Class No 439 TIFFANY: This is one of 40 of this class locomotive manufactured by Dubs & Co in 1893. Rohan Vos saw this petite loco on the platform of Winburg Station in the Eastern Freestate and it was love at first sight. The loco was purchased in 1987 and Dunns Locomotive in Witbank was commissioned to return the 6 Class to running condition. She is named after his youngest daughter.

Class 19D Loco 2702 BIANCA: This locomotive was built by Borsig in 1938. Rovos Rail saved it from extinction by purchasing it from Loewenthal's Scrap Metal in December 1986.

Class 19D Loco 2701 BRENDA: This locomotive was purchased from Chicks Scrap Metal while staged at Volksrust in Natal and restored at the Rovos Rail workshops in Witbank. It is co-incidental that her number is so close to 'Bianca.'

Class 19D 3360 SHAUN: This locomotive was rescued from the scrap line in Witbank in 1986. As with the other three locomotives, the restoration was carried out in Witbank.

Class 25NC Loco 3484 MARJORIE: This locomotive was built in 1954 by North British in Glasgow and is named after Rohan's Mother. Due to the difficulties in running steam locomotives over long distances in South Africa the decision was made to convert this locomotive from coal fired to an oil-fired engine. She can cover a distance of 700kms without needing to stop for oil or water; whereas the coal fired steam locomotives have to stop after 100kms for water and 300kms for coal.

Class 25NC Loco 3442 ANTHEA: This loco is named after Rohan's wife and is also a Class 25NC, built in 1953 by Henschel of Germany. She has been restored to original coal burning condition.

Class 25NC Loco 3533 KING ZOG: named after Rohan's Dalmatian, it has been restored to original coal burning condition.

Class 25NC Loco 3440: the work on this loco's refurbishment commenced in May 2008 and is expected to be complete by December.

THE CLASSIC & EDWARDIAN TRAINS TRAVEL WITH SIX BEAUTIFUL PRE 1940 DINING CARS.

In 1924 **Coach 197 LETABA** and **Coach 205 UMHLALI** were among the first Hendrie Twins put into service. These four dining saloons were characterised by seven pairs of carved roof supporting pillars and arches, a feature which would, in time, represent a Victorian atmosphere much sought after by rail enthusiasts who thrive on living in the past. These cars served all the top trains but after the advent of newer types in the 1930's, they were gradually relegated to lesser trains and eventually withdrawn in 1980 after 55 years or so of faithful service.

By 1937 the Railways introduced the A 28/A-29 series of cars. This saw the advent of fly-up fixed seats. These cars served top-link trains for 20 years, but as with the A 22's, were gradually relegated to lesser duties and completely withdrawn from traffic in 1983.

Coach 231 ZAMBESI was part of the A-33/A-34 series. For almost 50 years she served South Africa's premier trains, even sporting dark green livery as part of the DRAKENSBERG Train. Withdrawn in 1985, ZAMBESI was sold at a public auction and put into use as a restaurant inside a shopping centre. Acquired in 1999, she was extracted with extreme difficulty from the Centre and returned to service in 2000.

Coach 232 UMVOTI was sold in an auction sale to Mr Allen Duff in Natal in 1984 and purchased by Rovos Rail in 1998.

In 2011 a 3rd class sleeper No 5274 which had been converted by the Richards Bay Rotary Club was rebuilt at the Capital Park works. It has the roof profile of the A22 diners but no pillars. Another 3rd class sleeper No 6447 was converted to a 42 seater dining car and launched early in 2011. The windows were made panoramic and a compartment was converted into a bar. A 2nd class sleeper No 3463 launched at the end of 2011 sports a full replica of an A22 diner complete with pillars and fans.

THE PRIDE OF AFRICA RUNS WITH THREE OBSERVATION CARS AND THREE LOUNGE CARS

The Observation Cars were originally A-28 type dining cars built to drawings by Mr W A J Day. Permission was sought and granted by South African Railways to run our Observation Cars at the back of the Trains, enabling enlargement of the windows and the construction of unique open-air balconies. Coaches 225 NILE, 226 MODDER and 235 NYANZA entered service in 1937 and served top-link trains for over twenty years. From 1959 they were gradually replaced by more modern coaches and were withdrawn from service by 1983. MODDER and NILE were sold on public auction to Mr S Krok of Johannesburg in 1983 along with 220 KEI to become the nucleus of a novel restaurant. **Coach 235 NYANZA** was originally sold to The Film Company in Cape Town but was subsequently resold and transferred to the Franschoek Wynkelders, and acquired by Rovos Rail in 1992.

Coach 237 MAZOE is an example of the A-31 type, the most modern wooden bodied dining Cars of the SAR. Built in 1942, it has a semi-elliptical roof, which is not only stronger than the clerestory type of the earlier types but was also cheaper to produce. Withdrawn from service in 1985 it was sold to a cement company in Port Elizabeth where it was used as a training room/restaurant. Purchased by Rovos rail in 2005 it was retrieved with a great deal of effort and expense and sent to Capital Park for overhaul and restoration. It re-entered service in May 2007 on the steam safari trip to Victoria Falls.

MODDER had its fly-up seats and fixed tables removed and replaced with comfortable sofas and chairs, while NYANZA, NILE and MAZOE retained their fly-up seats and fixed tables down the left side with wingback chairs and sofas replacing the removed seats and tables.

Expansion plans in 1995 saw the Classic Trains move from 42 to 72 guests, making a second lounge car a necessity. Coaches 3215, 8337 and 3297 were originally modern steel-sided sleeper cars. They were completely stripped and refurbished to create comfortable non Smoking Lounge cars, which are placed in the middle of the trains.

In January 2011 a 1960 3rd class sleeper No 6320 was rebuilt as an observation car with panoramic windows and a 4 metre balcony. This is the first C36 round roofed observation car in Rovos service.

CAPITAL PARK

In 1988 a lease was negotiated over the run down Victoria Hotel opposite the Pretoria Station. Five years of patient restoration was undertaken to bring the building up to standard and it then served as an effective head office for the company for 10 years.

Rovos Rail secured a long-term lease over the Capital Park Loco Shed in Pretoria in November 1997. Capital Park Loco had a variety of locomotive classes stationed there since it's opening in 1943, and maintained a relatively large fleet of steam locomotives at any given time. On average, 138 Steam engines were stabled in the loco sheds at the height of its active life. This activity sadly declined during the 1970's with the shed closing in 1990.

The company utilised these sheds during 1998 even though Capital Park had essentially closed down. Our Class 6, the 19D's, and latterly, the Class 25NC's continued to provide a steam presence in the deserted depot. The hustle and bustle of the 1950's has gone but due to our presence, steam is back with a vengeance at Capital Park Loco.

All our rolling stock of 90 carriages and 16 operating locomotives as well as our administrative operations and workshops are now based at Capital Park. As a railway company, we could indeed not have wished for a better location especially as Capital Park has played such an important part in South African railway history and thus provides the perfect home for our trains. The site covers 60 acres and boasts 15 lines totalling a distance of 12kms, of which a one hundred metre section is under roof. The site also has a coal stage with 40 loading chutes.

We have rebuilt the site to a world beating standard, and also transformed it into a working railway museum. Our new headquarters caters for steam enthusiasts, tourists and local visitors alike. With daily guided tours we aim to interest and educate the public, especially those who have had no previous exposure to the world of trains.

ROVOS AIR

We are also pleased to introduce our Dakota, a 1944 DC-3 which has been rebuilt with 21 business class seats and a very plush interior. Called 'Delaney' after a child who was born on board in October 1975 the aircraft has a fascinating history which can be found on our website.

The aircraft will be used for our Southern African Air Charter and will also be available for charter anywhere in Southern Africa.