Steam Train Excursions to Roll Again in Guatemala

By Jim Hearne

The much-anticipated arrangement to provide narrow gauge Train Excursions on a weekly basis to Guatemala's growing tourism sector has become a reality. It's a feat that not many could have accomplished. The 52-year-old "Guatemala Choochoo" is not being deterred from running "El Tren Alegria" and even plans to do so daily.

Steam engine 205, a Baldwin 282 steamer built in 1948, was returned to service on 24 January 2001 for weekly and planned daily excursions with passengers in tow.

The old iron horse released a whistle that reverberated for blocks around the Central Station of Zone-1, Guatemala City, announcing the return of narrow gauge steam-train excursions to Guatemala.

"This is the must do experience' for Guatemalteco's and Tourists alike. A ride back in time that will be a true 'experiencia inolvidable (unforgettable experience)," expressed Victor Ruiz of Aventuras de Ferrocarril, the operator of The Guatemala Choochoo over the FERROVIAS rails.

The Baldwin 282 stands ready after being re-commissioned this year for passenger service. The 52-year-old steam train will run the famous Guatemalan "El Tren Alegria" on a daily basis.

The Guatemala Choochoo departs every Wednesday from the Estacion Central in Guatemala City.

Guatemala's newest tourist attraction has the romance of steam rail, great scenery viewed from vintage passenger coaches and a fascinating history. During the approximately 4 1/2 hour roundtrip journey the train meanders from Guatemala City across the continental divide of the Sierra Madres, through numerous barrancas (canyons), across breathtaking trestles and providing photo-op switchbacks to Agua Caliente and its famous hot springs.
Along the way, The Choochoo's bi-lingual staff of guides shares with passengers the history of
the narrow gauge line that began operations in 1907 and was resurrected by FERROVIAS
in 1998.

"In-flight" entertainment is onboard, along with Guatemala's only on-rail espresso-cappuccino
coffee service bar serving gourmet Cafe Capeuleu, the Choochoo's official purveyor. For
kids of all ages, the official ice cream is world famous Blue Bell.

Talk about a train excursion with a difference! Is there anything more fun than riding on a train?
If there is, we don't know what it could be.

Aventuras de Ferrocarril can be contacted by individuals, tour operators and agencies for
schedules and reservations by e-mail at <choochoo5@go2guatemala.com>
or by calling: 1-800-733-3350 (in North America), (+502) 832-5853 (in Guatemala).

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