

Peter J. Paeth

A photograph of a passenger train on a scenic railway. The train consists of a blue and red locomotive pulling several passenger cars with large windows and a curved roof. The train is traveling along a track that curves through a lush, green, hilly landscape. The sky is clear and blue.

# RIO GRANDE SCENIC RAILROAD

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The third of four Railroads that we got to ride on during our July 2016 vacation was the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad taking off from the La Veta, CO station traveling to Alamosa, CO.

Above: My lovely bride Sandra poses in front of our engine for this little trip. Our train consisted of a club car the "Mardi Gras" (also pictured above), a couple of open air coaches and multi-level scenic car where we spent most of our time. (Air Conditioning is a must on hot summer days)

Right: The La Veta Station (Elevation 7024 ft.) and the coach car named Lookout Mountain.





The station at La Veta was small and brightly painted aside from the few souvenirs and maps available I took photos of the G-Gauge layout around the top of one of their book cases.

The full scale end of a D&RGW RR Narrow gauge stock car hung on one of the walls.





Below: Our engine is just about to enter one of two tunnels on the route.  
Above: The rest of the train follows suite!



The track was well maintained and the landscape was similar to the other tourist railroads in the State of Colorado.



Right: I rode in the open air car a while and managed to be there as we transitioned the second of two tunnels.





Another interesting detail of this railroad was the many wrecks they had visible off the route.

Our conductor told us that they were not caused by track issues but that a "Maintenance of Way" train was working on the line and a freak thunderstorm with massive "micro burst" winds blew the cars off the track and down the mountain side. He also stated that no-one was injured during the event

He also said that while some were being cleaned up some like the ones way down the hill side might not be removed because it was not cost effective to retrieve them.





One of the more interesting things I discovered about this railroad is that they stored many "other" railcars throughout the route. My guess is they are paid storage fees to help pay the bills. You can see a row of grain hoppers behind our engine as it rounds a bend. This happened multiple times.

They also had some relics to the distant days of steam but it appears that "restoration" is not one of their skills sets.





As with all of the trains in Colorado, the scenic views were fabulous!





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The absolute highlight of this train ride was the traveling cowboy who sang and played the guitar for us.

The legendary “Mardi Gras” car from our train was originally built as a coach but was re-built after World War II into a luxury round end observation club car, bar included. It is believed that Steve Goodman wrote the much-beloved song “City of New Orleans” while aboard this car riding on its namesake train.

Our cowboy played us his version of that song.