



Imagine you are five years old. As your family arrives at the train station, your hand slips free of your Mom's and you dash over to the tracks. Looking left, then right, your eager eyes scan the horizon, searching for *your* train.

Then you hear it. The quiet chugging of the locomotive. The clicking and clacking of the wheels gliding over the rails. The sound of happy families enjoying their ride as they arrive at the station

The engine pulls to a stop; the steam escaping. You run to the first car, eager to board and ride behind the engineer. But this is no ordinary train. This engine is just your size! The cars have seats built just for you! Even still, these cars are large enough for your Mom and Dad to come along for the ride.

With the toot of the horn, the engineer gently pulls the throttle and the little engine slowly starts inching forward. The cylinders pump and the steam chuffs and before long, the engine is chugging along. As you round the first curve, you look back and see the trusty red caboose tootling along, bringing up the rear.



Bright, cheery smiles are every where! Children cry out with glee as the train winds through the tunnel and into the day light. Parents look on with joy and contentment as they reflect on their own precious memories and those that are being made now. You and your parents never want this moment to end.

WHOLESOME & EDUCATIONAL FAMILY FUN

Railroading is in the blood of thousands of Americans. And, even though steam engines may have disappeared from full size rails across the nation, they are still running strong in miniature railroads. What is it about trains that appeals to children and adults alike? Is it the freedom of travel? The sound of the whistle? The simplicity of design? The life-like sounds of a chuffing steam engine? Or the smile on the face of a tired, yet friendly engineer?

There is no one answer but one thing is for certain: children of all ages, love trains! Look at the phenomenal success of Thomas the Tank engine properties! But it doesn't stop with wood Thomas engines or electric HO train sets. No, this affection seems to grow into something much bigger. . . trains that are large enough to ride in, whether you are 3 or 93. There is no mistaking the attraction of trains to folks of all ages.

And even if you have never ridden aboard an Amtrak train, you may have fond memories of miniature, or Grand Scale, trains found at your local park or drive-in theater when you were young. Maybe you were one of the children who have fond memories of riding behind the diesel at Kiddieland in Chicago or in one of the department store displays of the time. Or perhaps you have heard stories of the famous steam engines running at Coney Island. Fairs, amusement parks, local parks, pumpkin farms, roadside attractions and others have all housed miniature trains at one time. Literally millions of people have had the joy of riding these at one time.

But what of today? Do these iron horses still exist to thrill our children of today? Are there place for families to go so that their young children can make their own memories? Yes! These trains are alive and steaming all around the world today! And more are being built or re-built every year!

In the California alone, it is estimated that there are at least 45 miniature engines being built. New facilities are opening or are in the planning stages each year. Some railroads, like the **Redwood Valley Railway** in Tilden Park, Berkeley, California, and the **Riverside and Great Northern Railroad** in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, have just recently celebrated 50 years of service! Other mile stones include the 10 year anniversary of the **Orland, Newville & Pacific Railroad** in Orland, California. Various museums have resurrected old trains and brought them back to life for their visitors as well.

But it isn't just public attractions. Private individuals are building their own railroad empires right in their own back yard. Some are indeed empires, as the track runs through miles of property. Many are smaller lines that might run around a city lot. All of them provide hours of fun for young and old alike.

FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES

But what does this all mean for families today? For many, it is a living, breathing education. In one visit you can learn about history of railroading, the science and math behind the locomotives, building and construction, wood working, machining, and more. You can visit with the people who run the railroads, often volunteers, and receive a lesson in community service. Visit the ticket office and gift shops and learn about business. And take a look at the gorgeous locomotives and rolling stock and see pure art! Creative families can find educational value in all aspects of Grand Scale railroading.

As an adult, you can be transported back in time to your youth. Revisit your own memories of the whistles and happy families. . . and make new memories with your own family today.

WHERE TO RIDE?

Grand Scale railroads can literally found all around the country. Three of the public railroads are listed above but others include: Griffith Park in Los Angeles, the Little Puffer in the San Francisco Zoo, the Portland Zoo railroad in Portland, Oregon, the Milwaukee Zoo railway, the Whiskey River Railway, Little A-Merrick-A, Marshall, Wisconsin, the Michigan AuSable Valley Railway in Fairview, Michigan, the Detroit Zoo railway, the Traverse City Railway, the Peconic County RR in Long Island, and many, many more private and public RRs.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Various publications now exist to help people in their search for Grand Scale railroads. The prominent magazines include the *Grand Scales Quarterly* and the *7+RAILROADER*, both published by Robinson & Associates in Red Bluff, California; *Live Steam*, published by Village Press in Traverse City, Michigan. Robinson & Associates also produces videos devoted to this very market.

The Web has also been a valuable tool for those interested in learning more. Web sites of interest include www.grandscales.com and www.7plusrailroader.com, which have exhaustive links pages. Another great resource is www.discoverlivesteam.com, www.livesteaming.com and www.steamingpriest.com. All provide a great deal of information.

Robinson & Associates also provides a free brochure titled "Want to Learn More About Riding Railways?". The information can be found via their website (www.7plusrailroader.com and www.grandscales.com) or by calling 530-527-0141. Requests can also be faxed to: 530-527-0420.

