

Travel



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Thursday, November 24, 1983

A good stop for 'snowbirds'

Chattanooga Choo-Choo is worth leaving home for

Travel writer Iris Jones will in the next few issues take a look at places "snowbird" travelers can visit on their way south to Florida, or north on the return trip home. The I-75 highway route from Michigan to Florida goes through or by such interesting places as Cincinnati, Ohio; Lexington, Kentucky; Chattanooga, Tenn.; and Atlanta, Ga. Today, Jones delves into Chattanooga, Tenn.

1-of-a-kind traveler
Iris Jones
contributing travel editor

"Choo," we'll let you tap your foot to the music as we sing.

There's no charge to get into the Chattanooga Choo-Choo complex, not even for young folks who don't know the lyrics that Mack Gordon wrote for Harry Warren's music.

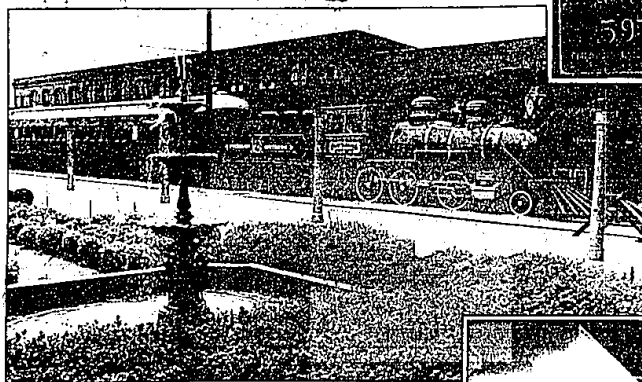
I can't say that everyone in the world knows where to find Chattanooga, Tenn., but millions of them know that catchy little tune from the 1941 movie *Sun Valley Serenade*. And millions of them come to Chattanooga every year to visit the Chattanooga Choo-Choo, now a railway station complex of dining rooms, bars, shops, hotels and a model railroad museum, all tied together by an antique yellow trolley.

We leave the Pennsylvania station about a quarter to four. Read a magazine, and then we're in Baltimore. Dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer. Than to have your ham and eggs in Carolina.

The composers took a little poetic license with that one, but the train did go through Chattanooga on its way to Florida, and you can still eat dinner in the diner in style. Most people buy tickets at the old ticket booth for dinner in the Depot, which features steak, shrimp and other good stuff.

LOCAL FOLKS hang out in the Station House, with its great buffet table and good snacks to go with after-work cocktails. If you really want to live it up, however, make reservations well in advance for one of the few small tables in Le Grande Diner.

It may be the only mobile five-star restaurant in the world, although it is permanently parked under the supervision of Mitch Jackson, *maitre d' ex-*



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The Chattanooga Choo-Choo complex includes an authentic steam engine-drawn train, the kind which inspired the song, "Chattanooga Choo-Choo." During the days of the song, the train ran through Chattanooga. The complex contains dining rooms, bars, shops and a model railroad museum. The signboard (above) gives details of dinners at the Station House, which may be the only five-star mobile restaurant in the world.

Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga Choo-Choo?
Truck twenty-nine.
Why don't you give me a shine.

For those of you who don't know the words to the song "Chattanooga Choo-Choo,"



David Steinberg is the entertaining conductor on the trolley which conveys visitors between points in the Chattanooga Choo-Choo complex.

traidinaire from Louisiana. Mitch and his staff will serve you an eight-course dinner tableside for \$30 plus drinks. The wine menu ranges from Blue Nun to Chateau Lafite-Rothschild.

One of the unusual features of the complex is the Hilton Hotel, which has a main building with swimming pools and tennis courts, flanked by 24 railway cars converted into hotel rooms. Your room is half a car, decorated in Victorian style with brass beds and Tiffany lamps. The porter will bill you for drinks you serve yourself from the portable bar, or you can have room service.

I didn't stay in these rooms, and I had mixed reports about them. Some guests thought they were "a little tacky"; others were impressed.

When you hear the whistle blowing eight-to-the-bar. . . . Then you know that Tennessee is not very far.

Shovel all the coal in, gotta get a-rolling. Whoo-Whoo Chattanooga, there you are. . . .

Well, folks, you may not be able to hear the whistle blowing eight-to-the-bar, but you can pay 25 cents to ride the 1920 trolley which once graced the streets of New Orleans.

If you are lucky you'll get a crazy man called David Steinberg for a conductor.

ductor. He calls this line the *BAFUADHTAIP* — the Back and Forth, Up and Down, Here, There and Anywhere in the Parking Lot Line.

"We actually don't go anywhere," Steinberg says. "The end of the line is on the other side of the parking lot. You could walk it quicker."

RIDING IT is more fun, though, especially when Steinberg catches an overseas visitor with his specialty: naming all the main streets of the visitor's hometown.

Well, I guess you get the picture. The Choo-Choo, as they call it in Chattanooga, is right in the middle of town, not far off Interstate 75, close enough for a meal or an overnight stay. Maybe you won't be able to say:

There's gonna be a certain party at the station, in satin and lace, I used to call *Funny Face*. . . .

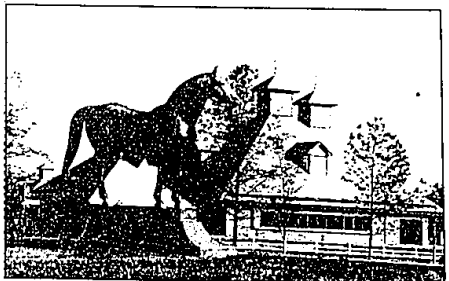
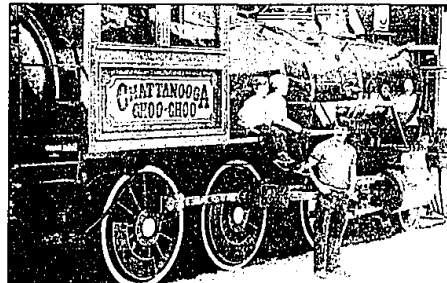
But if you warm up your vocal chords in the car, you can drive into town, singing in unison:

Chattanooga Choo-Choo, won't you choo-choo me home!

For more practical information, contact the Chattanooga Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Civic Forum, 1001 Market Street, Chattanooga, Tenn. 37402 or phone 615-758-2121.



Each year thousands of visitors stroll through the Chattanooga Choo-Choo complex. The authentic steam-engine train is a big favorite with youngsters. The drive from I-75 to Chattanooga is worth the time.



The statue of Man O' War is located at the Kentucky Horse Park.

Lexington's for horses

Driving south on I-75 from Michigan to Florida, the visitor has an opportunity to look around Lexington, Ky. The city is famed for the horses bred on nearby farms and ranches.

The Kentucky Horse Park is an attraction worth visiting. Visitors can ex-

perience the elements of a horse farm on 1,000 acres of blue-grass countryside. It is the only ranch of its kind dedicated exclusively to horses.

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