

Q: We're taking a driving trip through New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California this summer. We're nuts about old trains. Where do you recommend we visit some of them?

A: First of all, we hope you have good air conditioning in your car, because summer is hotter than hell in all of those states, except in the high mountains. Many of the exhibits are outside, so make sure you get there very early so you'll miss the hottest part of the summer day, usually between 10 am and 6 pm. If there's also part of the exhibit inside an air-conditioned building, duck in at least once every 15 minutes.



There's the California State Railroad Museum in downtown Sacramento. It has one of the largest exhibits of old trains, dating back from early in the 19th Century. Contact at csmf.org

The Pacific Southwest Railway Museum is in San Diego. Its demonstrations include rides in vintage trains across the border to Tecate, Mexico. Contact at www.sdrm.org

The Western Railway Museum is in Solano County in the Bay area of Northern California. In addition to offering rides in an authentic early 20th Century electric train, visitors can experience the nostalgia of riding in vintage streetcars. Contact at wrm.org

The Arizona Railway Museum is in Chandler, and has a significant collection of old Santa Fe and Southern Pacific equipment. However, the museum will be closed during the summer of 2009 for repairs and restructuring. Contact at azrymuseum.org

The Nevada Northern Railway is in old Western town of Ely. In addition to all the train memorabilia, there's a casino and restored frontier jailhouse that boasts of real ghosts. Contact at nevadanorthernrailway.net

The Southern California Scenic Railway Association is in Fullerton, near Los Angeles. An all-volunteer group, it boasts two restored luxury cabooses which are available for parties and other events. scsra.org

Good luck and happy railroading!