

An Excursion on the BALLY HOOLEY Steam Train

If you and the kids are looking for an enjoyable way to while away a pleasant hour, why not spend it having a quick trip on the Bally Hooley train, which is pulled by a genuine coal-fired steam locomotive - either the "Speedy" or the "Bundy"? These two engines are now over 55 years old and still doing sterling service for the local community.

Trains start from the station at the Marina Mirage, where Time tables are readily available, on Sundays and Wednesdays. Timetables are also available at many resorts and hotels.

On pulling out from the station you will see many yachts, motor boats and pleasure vessels at their berths in the Marina itself. After passing the Yacht Club you will then enter an area of mangroves which, if the tide is high, may well be under water. After passing a remnant of rainforest, at the commencement of which is our first little "Halt" at "Dougies BackPackers", which only has a very short platform, the mangroves continue until you reach the Bally Hooley Depot on the left hand side. This is where we carry out works of minor maintenance and put the trains to bed at the end of the day.

Shortly after leaving the Depot you will come to the next station at the Sheraton Country Club, where you will see several good looking tennis courts and the Club House itself.

A short time later you will come to the Rydges Sabaya Resort which has its own station platform. Then, after passing other Resort areas, you will round a long bend in the lead up to the terminus at St. Crispin's. Here you will be requested to alight from your carriage while the locomotive is un-coupled and turned around. This is a safety requirement as, while the loco is re-coupling, the carriages may be jolted around briefly. Many visitors enjoy watching and filming the engine steaming away, to return to the turntable where it is rotated (by 3 or 4 man-power!) in readiness for the return trip.

While at this station, you may be fortunate enough to spot one or two crocodiles in the tidal lake which is right next door to the station. Sometimes baby crocodiles are also seen here. The turn-around usually takes about 8-10 minutes, after which you will be on your way back to the Marina Station over the same route. The whole return trip usually takes about 50-55 minutes, but this may vary depending upon how many stops need to be made for dropping off and picking up passengers at the various stations. Stops are not normally made at intermediate stations unless specifically requested.

The whole of the Bally Hooley train crew and other operatives are Volunteers. All contributions go towards payment of Insurance (extremely high !) and the cost of road freight of the coal from Blair Athol, near Clermont some 900 km away - also very expensive !

If you would like to join our little band of Volunteers, please do not hesitate to ask any of the Train Crew for an application form.