



Guests board the train for the inaugural run of Rovos Rail's day route.



Guests receive a welcoming drink on arrival at Capital Park station.



Transnet's Siyabonga Gama receives a book on the history of Rovos Rail from Rohan Vos.

A dream on wheels – living the life locomotive

Valerie Boje and Damaris Helwig were among the guests at the launch of Rovos Rail's new day train in Pretoria

TRAINS can be more than mundane means of transport; they can also be transports of delight. As Siyabonga Gama, CEO of Transnet Freight Rail, commented at the 20th anniversary celebration last week of Rovos Rail: "People in a hurry take planes... but to watch the countryside glide by as you go nowhere slowly", now that is one of life's treats.

He was paying tribute to the luxury rail tourism experience created by Rohan Vos and his team which has now been extended to include a charter day train operating from the historic Capital Park station.

Operations manager Peter Winterbottom explains that the route, which is modified according to clients' needs, is basically a figure of 8 around Pretoria but – as guests on the maiden trip realised – it is less about which stations one is passing through or unusual views of the city than the gentle motion as you sip a drink or savour a snack, realising that every detail of your comfort has been considered and catered for – a tantalising taste of what a longer trip on Rovos Rail is all about.

Vos started his Pride of Africa service in 1989 and now offers private train trips lasting two days to two weeks to a number of South African destinations including Cape Town, George, Durban and Sun City, as well as to Victoria Falls and Dar

es Salaam. For the new service Vos has added classically restored carriages including kitchen, dining and lounge carriages and an observation car as well as a refurbished Class 25NC steam locomotive which – true to tradition – he named King Zog, after his beloved Dalmatian.

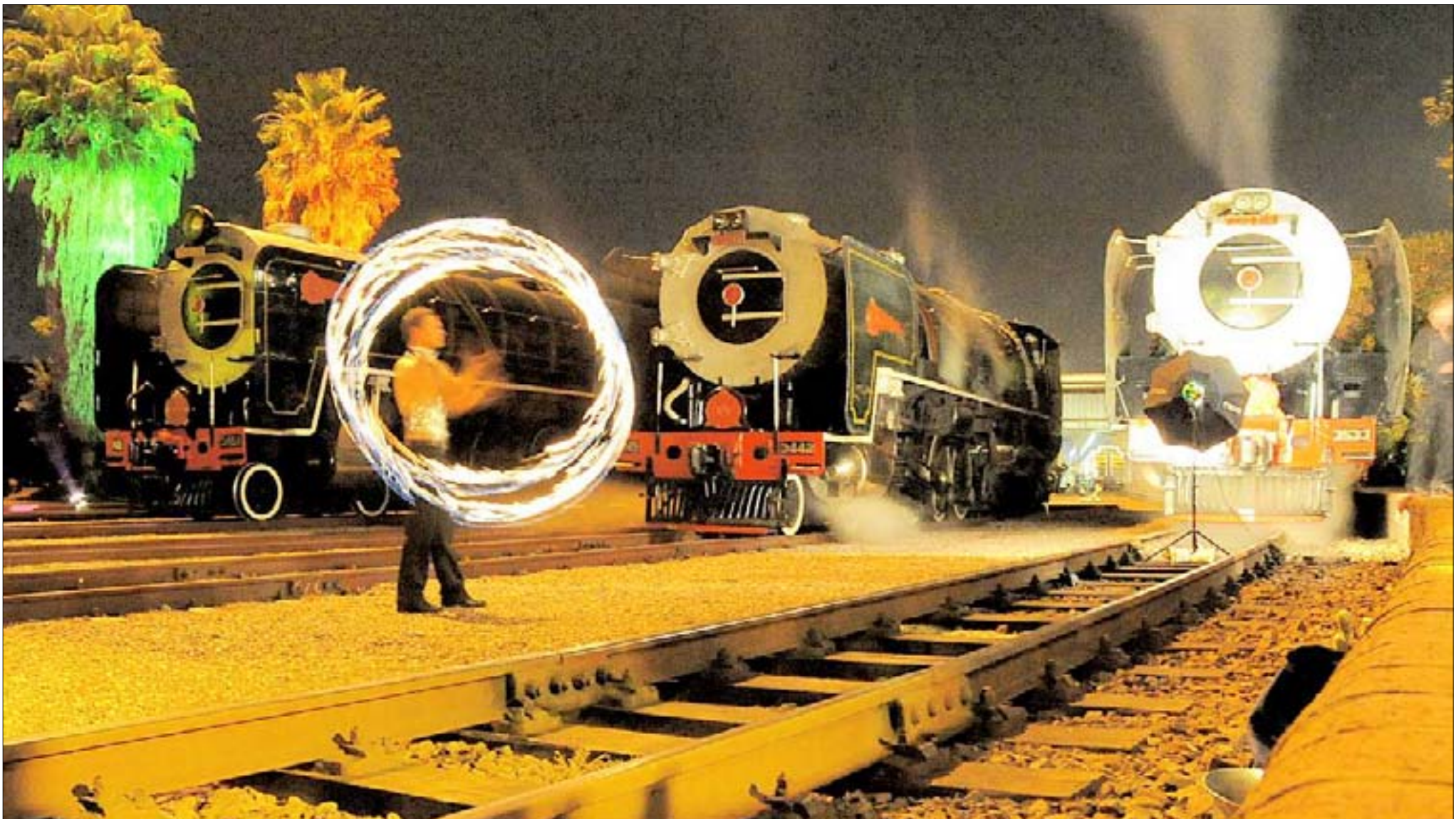
Other Rovos 25NC locomotives are named after Marjorie, his mother and Anthea, his wife while the Vos children, Shaun, Brenda and Bianca, are honoured with Class 19D locomotives and Tiffany with a Class 6 locomotive.

Initially, Vos operated Rovos Rail from Pretoria Station – at one stage even purchasing and restoring the Victoria Hotel for his guests – but since 1999 the home of Rovos has been at Capital Park where Vos restored a disused station into a museum to steam as well as a fully working station.

The launch of the latest service is part of a celebration of 20 eventful years for Vos, his family and staff, now recorded in the first history of Rovos Rail, produced by a team which included his wife and daughter, Bianca.

Gama, who received the first copy of the history, applauded Rovos Rail as a truly South African product with an international reputation and said it had particular importance with the upcoming influx of visitors expected to South Africa.

To find out more on city lunch, dinner or day charters, contact Peter Winterbottom or Sanet de Lange at the Rovos operations centre, 012 315 8257.



A fire dancer entertains guests in front of three classic 25NC locomotives at the 20th anniversary celebration of Rovos Rail in Pretoria. The one on the right is King Zog.

PICTURES: DAMARIS HELWIG



Guests enjoy a drink in the observation car at the rear of the train.



Delicious fresh treats are prepared in the train's kitchen.



A saxophonist entertains guests in the lounge car.

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