

Linesiding with John October 2019 Update

Contents:

1. Future Tour Proposals

- **Christmas or New Year in Transylvania **NEW!****

19 - 30 December (or 28 December) or
27 December - 7 January (or 5 January)

- **Bosnia & Serbia Real and Charter Steam 2**

31 May - 8 June with a possible Mostar extension until 10 -11 June

- **Romania Narrow Gauge 2**

25 July - 10 August 2020

- **China Narrow Gauge 3**

8-28 September 2020 with optional Shibanzi extension 28 September - 4/5
October

2. Recent Trip Reports

- **Malaysia Oil Palm Plantation Railways**

- **China Narrow Gauge 2**

- **Romania Narrow Gauge Exploratory Tour**

- **Statfold Barn Road, Rail and Ale event (September 2019) **NEW!****

Christmas or New Year in Transylvania Moldovita and Viseu de Sus

Do like to be somewhere steamy at Christmas/New Year with like-minded enthusiasts? I know some people have family commitments but I also know others who like to escape the UK at this time.

There are not many countries in the world that offer a regular steam passenger service over the holiday period. Romania is one such place with at least 2 lines offering a daily service. At both there is the chance of trains in the snow (although not guaranteed, of course).

Both lines are running tourist passenger trains daily in the Christmas - New Year period with 2 return trains daily at Moldovita (at 10 and 2) and at least one daily tourist train at Viseu de Sus (departing 9 am) along with logging trains. Moldovita will operate a second train running close behind the first if the bookings are there. Viseu de Sus can offer up to 4 steam trains along with 2 diesel trains (departing 40-60 minutes apart) if there is sufficient demand in advance. This was the case at both lines in August 2019 but I don't know how busy the lines will be at Christmas/New Year. Realistically, we must expect fewer passengers and fewer trains.

Based on August 2019:

Moldovita - trains operate on a roadside 12km remnant of the logging system. Two steam locos were available in summer and a draisine but no diesel. The

line climbs from Moldovita to Argel where there is a run round loop and food and drink outlets. The line is riverside in places and there are several areas which could be described as street running rather than just roadside. The scenery is pleasantly hilly and rural.

Viseu de Sus - logging trains operate leaving around 7 am and returning after the last tourist train around 5 pm. The logging trains go beyond the limit of tourist trains. Tourist trains operate to Paltin and back with a water stop en route at Glimboaca on the way out, a distance of 26 km each way. The line follows the Vasser River crossing it numerous times. There are no parallel roads apart from a brief section of dirt road near Viseu de Sus. Otherwise, the dirt road is on the other side of the river until the road runs out near Delta Novat. There are pedestrian bridges over the river in places from the dirt road - mainly safe and not too scary. From Delta Novat, the railway climbs up a narrower winding river valley. Food and drink is provided at Glimboaca (snack) and Paltin (barbecue) and is included in the special train fare. The train waits for around 30 minutes at Glimboaca to take water and around 90 minutes at Paltin (train continues empty stock beyond Paltin to be reformed) before returning. The trip last around 5.5 hours. The diesel logging train includes a crew carriage but we don't know if it is possible to obtain permission to ride out and back with the logging train. This experience would be very different from the steam tourist train ride and likely be longer, colder, more basic and with no steam activity apart from back at Viseu de Sus. However, this is one of the last narrow gauge logging trains in the world and some people might want to do it just because of that. Theoretically, steam can be used on logging trains but I haven't see any reports of that happening in recent years.

I've written to Carpathian Travel Centre (the company that arranged my successful August tour) to see if they can organise this trip if there is enough interest. This is what I've asked for:

Could you give me a quick answer as to whether this idea for a Christmas or New Year visit to Moldovita and Viseu de Sus would be practical at the end of this year (2019-2020)? If you think this is something you could arrange, I will see if I can find enough people to participate. Either with:

- car with driver and 3 people
- minibus and driver with up to 7 people (This August, we discovered that one passenger in the front seat and 6 passengers in the rear seats was the maximum for the minibus we had.)

In both scenarios, I will be one of the 3 or 7 people leaving space for 2-6 more.

If I have enough interest, I will come back to you for a firm quote.

Proposed Itinerary

Day 1 arrive Cluj

Day 2 drive to Moldovita (4hr 30min) with a stop at Dej Railway Museum+

Day 3 ride and lineside the 2 trains per day (10:00 and 14:00)

Day 4 ride and lineside the 2 trains per day (10:00 and 14:00)
Day 5 drive to Viseu de Sus (2hr 30min)
Day 6 train ride Viseu de Sus (first train at 9:00)
Day 7 linesiding at Viseu de Sus*
Day 8 second train ride at Viseu de Sus
Day 9 linesiding at Viseu de Sus*
Day 10 drive to Cluj (3 hr)
Day 11 fly home from Cluj

+ at Moldovita, I would like to stay close to the steam railway. In August we stayed at Humor which is too far away. Google Maps shows several pensions near Moldovita.

* linesiding depends on being able to drive towards Delta Novat by car (which may not be easy in winter although we did this in August) and that several tourist trains per day will operate (only the 9:00 is timetabled, any other train will depend on demand). If linesiding is definitely impossible or not worthwhile, Day 7 could be omitted and Day 9 could be morning at Viseu de Sus prior to driving back to Cluj in the afternoon. This would reduce the 10 days to 8 days

Possible Dates:

Christmas trip

19 - 30 December (or 28 December)

or

New Year trip

27 December - 7 January (or 5 January)

I expect to hear from Carpathian Travel Center shortly. It would help if I have an idea of possible numbers when I hear back from them to allow me to know which option to pursue.

If you like the idea of Christmas or New Year in Romania, please let me know. There will only be 2 - 6 additional places available so this tour could book out. Please let me know which of the dates would be best for you and if the other dates are chosen, are you still interested?

I did consider whether both Christmas and New Year could be included in this tour but I don't think that is practical this time:

- flights just before and just after Christmas and New Year could be fully booked or expensive. Departing on the 19 December or 27 December should be in a period when fewer people are travelling. Also returning on 30 December or 7 January may also be quieter (not so sure about 30 December).

- finding enough steam activity for the period 19 December until 7 January (20 days) or similar, would be a challenge and probably double the price of the

tour.

- I am not sure that other steam lines will be operating a regular steam service at this time. If Sovata, Covasna/Comandau or Criscior offer a Christmas/New Year steam service, an longer tour might be possible but would likely lead to considerable extra driving in what could be difficult winter conditions for limited additional 'good' steam activity. This is something I will re-evaluate for any future winter visits.

I don't have photos of these lines in the winter but see the following to get an idea of what it could be like:

<http://www.mocanita.ro>

<https://www.farrail.com/pages/touren-engl/romania-narrow-gauge-winter-steam-2019.php> (you may need to sign up to view this page)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtA0IU5Jxzo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQ8kBi_1EAK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYT13cGMd3E>

Please note, the plan is to ride and photograph regular working trains. There are no plans for charters and the group size I am looking at would not allow for that.

Let me know immediately if you could be interested.

Bosnia & Serbia Real & Charter Steam Tour 2020

I am awaiting a reply from Dario and Majda but they are considering this proposal from me and will reply shortly:

Dear Majda & Dario

John Parker and I would like to arrange a further Bosnia and Serbia Real and Charter Steam Tour for summer 2020. Are you willing to arrange one more tour?

Preferred dates:

31 May - 8 June with a possible Mostar extension until 10 -11 June. All dates Sarajevo - Sarajevo.

Does that work for you? Are there any National Holidays or other events in Bosnia to be aware of for these dates?

Steam Attractions

Banovici - 2 days

Day 1

Oskova narrow gauge shunt

Afternoon full line charter with G wagon and several empty coal wagons (class 83 steam loco)

Day 2

Oskova standard gauge shunt (class 62 USA tank preferred)

Second Afternoon full line charter with G wagon and several empty coal wagons (different loco, preferably the other class 83 or class 55)

Visit to Banovici Works (primarily the works yard) during one or both charters

Kreka - 2 days

Day 1

Morning Sikulje shunt

Afternoon Dubrave Shunt

Day 2

Morning Dubrave Shunt

Afternoon Sikulje shunt

Brief visit to Bukinje Works prior to one of the morning shunt visits

Mokra Gora 2 days

Day 1

Visegrad - Mokra Gora steam charter

Day 2

Mokra Gora - Sargan 8 steam charter (if suitable arrangements can be made for us to mix in with the regular diesel tourist trains - otherwise Sargan 8 tourist train ride and open air railway museum - Pozega- east of Mokra Gora, or second Visegrad charter)

The steam activity will probably fit into a Monday - Saturday period (6 days).

Add arrival in Sarajevo on Sunday

Return to Sarajevo on Sunday, afternoon trams and old town, fly home

Monday (or possibly late Sunday)

or extension to Mostar (if anyone is interested) - Mostar extension 8 until 10
-11 June

Non-railway activities (including eating and drinking experiences) should include:

Etno Restaurant near Hotel Zlaka

Tuzla centre walkabout and sports bar

Loco plinthed in Tuzla

Tuzla Brewery Bier Keller

Sarajevo old town ethnic restaurant

Sarajevo trams and old town

Loco plinthed on Sarajevo station

and could include:

lunch in Lukavac
lunch by Lake Modrac

Mostar extension:

Train ride to Mostar
walking around Mostar including the rebuilt bridge
brewpub and dinner overlooking the river
day excursion to fortified village, hermitage and lunch
drive back by road with stop for plinthed loco by the damaged bridge at the river and lamb lunch nearby.

I look forward to hearing from you.

John

I have also asked them specifically if more can be offered at any of the steam locations in order to give an enhanced experience to a first time visitor and something new and different for anyone returning to Bosnia and Serbia. The dates have been chosen close to the longest day to give the best chance of the sun getting into some of the deep valleys at Mokra Gora and provide sunlight on the train at the bottom end of the line at Banovici.

If this tour is of interest, please let me know. Otherwise, detailed planning for this tour won't go ahead.

Romania Propose Romanian Narrow Gauge 2 Tour

Tour length 16 nights 17 days
Dates: 25 July - 10 August 2020

Dates	Day	Railway	Travel	Notes
24/07/20	Fri			
25/07/20	Sat	start tour	arrive Arad	
26/07/20	Sun	Podgoria Tram	overnight Arad?	Podgoria tram runs Sun only
27	Mon	Lonea (coal railway)	drive to Lonea/Petril a (Petrosani) 3hr14min 360km	Runs 5,6,7 days? Summer hol shutdown?
28	Tue	Lonea/Govo	drive to	longest stay

		ra (limestone railway)	Govora (Ramnici Valcea) 2hr47min 243km	at longest line
29	Wed	Govora/Fieni (limestone railway)	drive to Fieni (Targoviste) 2hr41min 179km	
30	Thu	Fieni		
31	Fri		drive to Covasna 2hr30min 136km	
01/08/20	Sat	Comandau	drive to Sovata 2hr57min 178km	Runs 1st weekend only steam/Com andau
02/08/20	Sun	Sovata	drive to Moldovita 4hr16min 248km	Only if steam is working
3	Mon	Moldovita		Hotel close to Moldovita
4	Tue	Moldovita/V iseu	drive to Viseu 2hr37min 145km	
5	Wed	Viseu	train ride	
6	Thu	Viseu		
7	Fri	Viseu	leave Viseu 2hr43min 164km	Travel to Cluj?
8	Sat	Brad	leave Cluj, drive to Brad 3hr4min 265km	Runs Sat/Sun only
9	Sun	Abrud, Salciua - Lunca	drive to Cluj 1hr27min 79km	Runs Sat/Sun only

		Ariesuliu		Runs Sun only
10/08/20	Mon	end of tour		

This map shows all of the places mentioned above:
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1uv6g3Bb1rtThF-ntBaPKVq5D2scb0J4u&usp=sharing>

Goal:

To visit the following steam lines to ride and photograph steam trains:

Comandau

Sovata

Moldovita

Viseu

Brad

Abrud

And the following tramways

Arad (depot/museum at Ghioroc)

The following industrial lines (diesel)

Lonea

Govora

Fieni

and one diesel tourist line

Salciua - Lunca Ariesuliu

I've heard but have yet to confirm that one of the industrial lines - Govora closed recently (after our August tour). If confirmed, we will likely spend more time at the two remaining lines.

I am waiting for Carpathian Travel Centre to come back to me with comments and tour prices.

China Narrow Gauge III Tour

8-28 September 2020

plus optional

Shibanxi extension 28 September - 4/5 October

Please note:

- Despite a rumour on the Steam in China Yahoo group Jun who arranged my China tours is still in China and has not moved to the US!

- The dates have moved forwards to avoid the Chinese national holiday on 1 October and for several days after that. Initially, we were due to be visiting an industrial narrow gauge line at that time and they may not be running trains due to the holiday. We should now be at Shibanxi at that time for an increased number of tourist trains.

Tues 8 Day 1 Meet Shenyang Airport or Airport Hotel morning and transfer to Banshi by road (half day)

(There is a connecting flight for KLM flight arriving Beijing early morning 8 September operated by China Southern which arrives Shenyang at 12:15 so we can make that the meet up time prior to departure by road to Hunjiang.)

Weds 9 Day 2 **Banshi Iron Ore Railway** (electric)

Thurs 10 Day 3 Banshi Iron Ore Railway

Fri 11 Day 4 Transfer to Linghai by road (full day)

Sat 12 Day 5 **Shengtai Paper Reed Railway** (diesel)

Sun 13 Day 6 Transfer Linghai to Xietun via Shengtai Paper by road

Mon 14 Day 7 **Salt railways (Jincheng and Wudao)** diesel

Tues 15 Day 8 Salt railways

Weds 16 Day 9 Salt railways

Thurs 17 Day 10 Dalian to Taocheng - road to Dalian, air to Nanjing, rail to Fanchang West

Fri 18 Day 11 **Taocheng Iron Ore Railway** diesel (note 3ft 6in gauge)

Sat 19 Day 12 Transfer to Nanjing via **Cishan Limestone Railway** (electric) by road or rail (Taocheng not working Saturdays)

Sun 20 Day 13 High speed train Nanjing - Xiangyang E, transfer to Laohekou by road

Mon 21 Day 14 **Laohekou Limestone Railway** diesel

Tues 22 Day 15 Laohekou, then late afternoon road transfer to Xiangyang for overnight train to Chenzhou

Weds 23 Day 16 Arrive Chenzhou early morning, visit one of the small mine lines in this area or Matian depot area and line orientation (not working Wednesday, Sunday)

Thurs 24 Day 17 **Matian Coal Railway** diesel (railway operates Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, Sat only - not Wed or Sun)

Fri 25 Day 18 Matian

Sat 26 Day 19 Matian, overnight train to Chongqing (dep 19:16 or 20:10)

Sun 27 Day 20 arrive Chongqing lunchtime (12:47 or 13:50), option to return home evening or remain in Chongqing

Mon 28 Day 21 option to return home or transfer to **Shibanxi** (steam passenger and tourist trains but steam-outline diesel also in use)

This itinerary could change either before the trip or during it, if we find that one of the lines is not functioning. In the case of Matian which is probably the most likely to close before we visit, the plan would be to travel on to Chongqing and visit the Honglu/Yongchuan electric coal line instead. However, once firmly fixed, the start and end dates for this tour will not change.

The extension to Shibanxi will allow participants to see the intensive steam passenger service operated at holiday times. There will also be an opportunity for the following options:

- lunch in the mine canteen at Sanjin with a chance to walk through the maintenance area to get there.
- visit the back end of the Sanjin mine to see battery electrics bringing spoil out of the mine and tipping it.
- drive round the neighbouring area to see what small coal mines we can find.

One good candidate which I would make first priority uses diesel locos and features an open-sided tunnel on a ledge.

- visit Water Heart Village an ancient fortification on top of a flat hill with 4 of 5 gates remaining and to try to arrange (in advance) lunch there in one of the houses using local farm produce

Note: It's not clear what work the steam-outline diesel pretender will do. At the maximum it will pilot most tourist trains from Mifeng to Xianrenjiao and possibly operate the early and late local passenger trains. To get to and from Mifeng, it may also pilot trains from Shibaxi. So with maximum use, it's a total pain and forces one to focus on downhill or tender-first uphill shots of steam only trains. However, with less than maximum use of the diesel, Shibaxi is still a very attractive place to be. With maximum use of the pretender, the options above are likely to come into play.

I expect that normal terms would apply for the tour:

- high speed trains and flights are extra at cost
- the price includes meals, single rooms, free beer, transport including tour minibus and overnight trains, services of a local guide.

I have agreed the tour arrangements with Jun and will be able to issue a tour proposal with prices shortly. Let me know if you would like to be informed when this is available.

2. Recent Trip Reports

- Malaysia Oil Palm Plantation Railways

In March 2019, I went with a group of Narrow Gauge Railway Society members to see the narrow gauge railways owned by United Plantations using locos which started life as Motor Rail Simplex locos or are close copies of them. These railways are not easy to view as they are within guarded estates and obtaining permission to view them is not easy. They are the only known operating narrow gauge lines (of less than one metre) in Malaysia.

<http://rabylee.uk/UPMalaysiaTourReport.pdf>

- China Narrow Gauge 2

In March - April 2019, I led the second China ng tour. We visited Rongshan (to see what had happened there) and several ng coal lines in Sichuan and Chongqing before moving to Chenzhou to see the excellent Matian coal line, the Yujian steam and diesel tourist line (not yet open but running occasional trains), Hegang sg electrics and one ng coal line, Haolianghe (where the cement line hadn't re-opened for the season), Jixi (a substitute for Haolianghe) and the Huanan ng line which operates a short tourist line (soon to be extended).

<http://rabylee.uk/malaychina2019.html>

- Romania Narrow Gauge Exploratory Tour

In August in peak local tourist season, I visited several of the narrow gauge lines in Romania. We found 4 lines using steam, one where steam had failed and was substituted by diesel, two lines which have not yet re-opened with public trains, a preserved tram line and an active city tram system.

<http://rabylee.uk/romania19.html>

- Statfold Barn Road, Rail and Ale event (September 2019) NEW!

Statfold Barn is transitioning from a private railway which opened 3-4 times a year for enthusiasts into a charitable museum trust designed to preserve the collection for the future with staff employed and bills to pay and a new mission to open more often and attract members of the general public not just enthusiasts. See what I made of my Statfold Barn simple camping experience (no electrical hook up, no showers) at this new 3 day event which has replaced the September Enthusiasts Day.

<http://rabylee.uk/sbr-road-rail-ale19.pdf>

John Raby

1 October 2019