



MILESTONES & Memories

1986 | Rohan received the first letter of permission to run a train on the national rail network.



1987 | Rebuilding loco 2702 BIANCA and the seven carriages that were to depart on the first journey.



1988 | Dramatically increased coach-building activity took place, plus the arrival and rebuild of loco 439, an 1893 6 Class. • The first video was shot and initial publicity photographs were taken. • Joy Hayward became Rovos Rail's first employee in the marketing department.

1989 | The original 1893 railway hotel, the Victoria Hotel, was restored as the new head office, staff quarters, training depot and departure point for the inaugural trip to the Eastern Transvaal.



To celebrate the first birthday in April 1990, a fully steam-hauled Pride of Africa journeyed to Cape Town on a four-day trip. A succession of breakfast, lunch and dinner trips were run between Cape Town and Simon's Town for the travel industry, press and corporates.



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1992 | A few trips were run to Maputo in Mozambique but the uncertain security situation and wreckage strewn along the track made this route unattractive. • Two years before Nelson Mandela was elected, Rohan piloted his twin-engined plane into the airport at Dar es Salaam. • The first rooms in the Victoria Hotel were opened after three years of restoration. • On 3 August, Beatrice Collon, still with us today, started in the marketing department.



1993 | The first Rovos train trundled into Dar es Salaam and the trip has taken place every year since then.



1994 | When tourism was at its lowest ebb in years, Rovos Rail committed itself to extending the route from Pretoria to Victoria Falls, now one of the most popular routes that has gained worldwide status. • A significant milestone was reached when Rovos Rail purchased 38 redundant carriages from the Railways, which was quite an achievement after nearly going bust a year earlier.



1995 | Coach 15021, an engineer's caboose, was overhauled and positioned in the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront to be used as a Cape Town office. • The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) lent the company R2.5m to assist in expanding the fleet, very important to the company's continued growth and we will forever be thankful for the assistance. • Eight rebuilt carriages were launched.



1996 | For the first time two trains departed on the same day from our Pretoria yard – one to the Eastern Transvaal and the other to Cape Town. The first journey from Cape Town to George was also run in this month. • In a year of frenzied activity, 15 rebuilt coaches, which were used to create the second train, were put into service.



1997 | Propnet (Transnet's property arm) signed the lease over the Capital Park property – 12 acres at the time, now grown to 60 acres. Today this is a shining example of a private railway yard of world-beating standard. • We experienced our first derailment of four coaches – luckily not serious and close to home.

1998 | The workshop equipment was moved to Capital Park and construction started on the station, platform, crew rooms and other facilities. • Rovos Rail reunited South Africa and Namibia by rail with a 3 400km seven-day journey from Pretoria via Kimberley, Upington and the Fish River Canyon to Windhoek, and finally to the Atlantic coast at Swakopmund.



1999 | The official opening of the new Rovos Rail Station that coincided with the 10th Anniversary, on which occasion Rohan's mother, Mrs Marjorie Vos, formally launched the Class 25NC locomotive 3484.



2000 | We had 12 coaches derailed in Bulawayo due to severe flooding, so we changed the Victoria Falls route to Polokwane with a flight to Victoria Falls. • A new safari was introduced between Pretoria and Durban including game drives in the Kruger National Park, Mkhaya Reserve in Swaziland and Hluhluwe Reserve in Zululand.



2001 | Rovos Air began developing with the purchase of two 1954 Convair 440 aircraft. They were used to convey train passengers from Polokwane to Victoria Falls in Zambia and also available for charter anywhere in Southern Africa. • A panoramic nine-day African Collage around South Africa was introduced. • A nine-day Golf Safari ran for the first time – five top-class courses with optional excursions for non-playing guests now operating three to four times a year.



2002 | The 13-day Southern Africa Air Safari was introduced in March including an optional two-night journey on the train and two nights at six outstanding venues in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia. • A 1944 DC3 was added to the Rovos Air fleet.



2003 | The building programme was once again accelerated with the purchase of a further 14 coaches from the Railways.

2004 | Discussions were ongoing about possibly traversing Zimbabwe again.

2005 | Rovos Rail started building 15 carriages. • In October, the first departure from the company's new lounge at No 1 Adderley Street, Cape Town, took place. • The Smoking/Club Lounge and Pullman accommodation were launched in November.



2006 | A direct journey between Pretoria and Victoria Falls was reintroduced travelling via Botswana. • A freight-train derailment ahead of us at Mbeya in Tanzania severely interrupted the Dar es Salaam journey.

2007 | In January, Rovos bought a nine-coach train from Spier Wine Estate to convert into a function and excursion train. • A Diesel Blower conversion on coal-firing 25NC loco MARJORIE increased the range to 400kms. • The first Pullman coaches were launched, along with 237 Observation Car. • Our first motor vehicle carrier was also produced this year.

2008 | The inaugural four Cape-to-Cairo itineraries were successfully completed. • Disaster struck in May when 12 frontline carriages were destroyed by a fire in the Capital Park yard. • A new boardroom/educational facility was opened in the old restaurant building on our western border at Rovos Rail Station.



2009 | March saw the arrival of a historic 35-ton steam crane. • On April 29, the newly rebuilt eight-coach excursion train was launched on the occasion of our 20th anniversary. • Coach train delivered to Ingwe in Pietermaritzburg in May. • We purchased a house named 'The Homestead' at 94 Main Road, St James in Cape Town, with a view to turn it into a six-room guesthouse. • On July 22nd, we purchased an existing six-room guesthouse in St James at 108 Main Road – the St James Manor. • In October, we expanded Rovos Rail Station by 3 acres, taking a lease on the restaurant and auctioneer premises with a view to converting the buildings into financial offices, a boardroom and training facilities. • At the end of November, the Commonwealth bogie modification to the Zimbabwe coaches was approved by the Railways.



2010 | Coaches 3444 and 3863 launched in February. • Zimbabwe coach 4098 undertook its first journey with the Commonwealth bogies. • In April, we opened our first guesthouse in Cape Town, the St James Manor. • The train from Cape Town was involved in a derailment at Centurion Station on April 21st. • The refurbished financial offices, boardroom and training facilities were opened on the 1st May. • During September and October, Lounge Car 3277, Pullman Car 3438 and Diner 6447 were launched. • In December, we purchased Seaforth House at 96 Main Road, St James, with a view to converting it into a three-bedroom guesthouse.



2011 | On the January 21st, we launched Diner 5274 (fondly known as 'Rust Bucket'), Guards Van 3964, Observation Car 6320 as well as the last of the coaches damaged in the derailment. • On February 10th, our DC3 'Delaney' was brought back from Windhoek to Pretoria. • Opened St James Seaforth Guesthouse in Cape Town on April 1st.

2012 | The rebuilding of St James Homestead in Cape Town commenced in May with six spacious rooms to add to the nine already in operation. • The first pillared dining car 3463 was launched in December.



2013 | DC3 Delaney went out on a 20-day Southern Africa Air Safari. • Two more pillared dining cars and an observation car were launched. • In December, we opened St James Homestead in Cape Town.



2014 | In February of this year we purchased five 1973 diesel locomotives from Apex Industrial at Queensland Rail. After their expected arrival in Pretoria in late June work will begin on their major overhaul. • Two more Namibia departures were added to the schedule.



• We expect to rebuild 10 coaches during the year for the fourth train. • Rovos Rail celebrates 25 years on 29th April.