

# Shelter from the Storm

**Delayed by Hurricane Katrina, the Spirit of Louisiana 745 steam locomotive makes its long-awaited journey to Union Station's KC Rail Experience**

For the Spirit of Louisiana 745 steam locomotive, it was a case of better late than never. Much better, in fact.

Last August, after three years of devoted restoration work on the 1921 vintage locomotive, volunteers from the Louisiana Steam Train Association (LASTA) were preparing for a trip north from New Orleans to take part in the grand opening of the KC Rail Experience, Union Station's new permanent rail exhibit.

Then came Hurricane Katrina, followed a few weeks later by Hurricane Rita. Although the historic locomotive withstood the devastating effects of both storms, the resulting damage to the Gulf region left the train unable to leave New Orleans. At the same time, many of the LASTA volunteers had been forced to evacuate their homes.

Last month, through the efforts of LASTA's dedicated volunteers – and invaluable assistance from Kansas City Southern Railroad – the 745 and its four-car consist pulled into Union Station for a three-month stay. The train arrived, appropriately enough, on Mardi Gras, the holiday most associated with the train's home and also the start of the Lenten season with its theme of impending resurrection.

In addition to the 745 locomotive, the Spirit of Louisiana Train features displays on the history of Mardi Gras and New Orleans that include artifacts, video theaters and a commemorative gift shop. Admission to the Spirit of Louisiana Steam Train and Museum is included with a ticket to the KC Rail Experience.

Visits from historic trains like the Spirit of Louisiana are just part of the KC Rail Experience. As the newest permanent exhibition at Union Station, the KC Rail Experience celebrates America's rail tradition with fascinating artifacts, vintage rail cars, interactive displays and historic ghosts who share the true stories of the men and women who made Union Station a national treasure.

KC Rail Experience is open Tuesday – Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Today is the final day the 745 is under steam. Come down and hear that whistle blow!



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