



The North Carolina Transportation Museum is located in Spencer, N.C., just off I-85 at Exit 79, about an hour from Charlotte, Greensboro or Winston-Salem. Housed in what was once one of Southern Railway's main repair facilities for its steam locomotives from the beginning of the 20th century until the 1950s, the 57-acre site is popular with train aficionados, but also preserves and translates many other aspects of transportation history, including automobiles, aviation and more.

In May 2002, the museum received the prestigious honor of being named a Smithsonian Affiliate. As an affiliate, the museum works closely with the Smithsonian, shares its collections and exhibits, and uses its outreach services for traveling workshops and presentations.

Highlights of the site include:

- ◆ A 25-minute on-site train ride, given in antique passenger cars pulled by antique steam and diesel locomotives. Volunteers serve as both the train crew and as historic interpreters for the ride.
- ◆ The 37-stall Bob Julian Roundhouse, where minor repairs to locomotives were once made. The largest-such facility in the Southeast, the building, along with Barber Junction Depot (the visitors' center), was restored in 1996 at a cost of more than \$8 million. It now houses a collection of antique locomotives and rail cars, exhibits on rail history and a restoration shop, where an army of volunteers works to restore cars for the museum. Volunteers also give group tour guides of the facility and answer questions in the orientation room.
- ◆ The Bumper-to-Bumper exhibit area, which houses a collection of antique automobiles, with backgrounds that represent the era during which each vehicle was manufactured.
- ◆ The Wagons, Wheels and Wings exhibit area, which houses a general transportation collection. Artifacts in this exhibit include a covered wagon, a dugout canoe and an antique fire truck. There is also has an area to house temporary and traveling exhibits.
- ◆ The Back Shop. This mammoth structure – two football fields long and two and a half stories high – was once used for steam engine overhauls, and is in the middle of a lengthy restoration process that will cost more than \$30 million. Once completed, it will house a truly comprehensive transportation exhibit. A Piedmont DC-3 airplane, an Amtrak engine and an electric streetcar have already been obtained by the museum for inclusion in this collection.

Southern Railways donated the site to the state of North Carolina in two gifts, in 1977 and 1979. The museum, which opened in 1980, operates under the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources' Historic Sites, and is the largest historic site in the state. Admission to exhibits is free, but there is a small fee for the train ride and for select special events. The site attracts about 100,000 visitors each year.