

Few tickets remain for Fair Express.

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Aug. 23--Seats on the historic Colorado State Fair Express train Saturday are filling up fast -- but a few tickets for the scenic run from Denver to Pueblo are still available, according to organizers.

It will be a scene out of the past when the Union Pacific train pulls out of Denver's Union Depot early Saturday, because it will be an 11-car train of historic vintage cars, beginning with the famous No. 844 steam locomotive.

"The response has been tremendous and we are nearly sold out," reported Frances Koncilja, a Pueblo native and Denver lawyer who helped organize the inaugural Fair Express. "We already have passengers from more than 20 countries taking part and with the support we've had from businesses, we expect this inaugural train to be a great success."

The Fair Express harkens to an earlier day in Colorado, when passenger trains regularly ran between Denver and Pueblo, bringing crowds to the Fair during the summer. This year, organizers revived the idea as a way to promote both Pueblo and the Fair in the Denver area and Union Pacific agreed to provide historic cars for the four-hour run to Pueblo.

Anyone interested in riding the train can purchase a ticket online at the Express Web site at www.coloradostatefairexpress.com. Tickets range in price from \$385 to \$435.

Koncilja noted that passengers will be entertained on the trip by food and drinks provided by Denver area businesses as well as musical entertainment. The price includes Fair admission and a carnival-ride pass. A tour of historic Pueblo will also be offered to the passengers.

Riders will have the chance to experience historic dome-seating cars such as the Missouri River Eagle and Columbine or Superflyer coaches such as the Katy Flyer and the Portland Rose.

Backers hope the Express will become a successful, annual event on the Fair calendar. Many Colorado political figures will already be in Pueblo for the Fair's annual legislative barbecue on Friday evening, but Rep. John Salazar, D-Colo., will be riding the Express. Organizers credited Salazar with helping persuade Union Pacific to support the new Fair Express.

The train itself will begin its journey on Thursday, when it leaves Cheyenne, Wyo., for Denver. This Friday it will be on display at Denver's Union Station. It will leave for the Fair at 8 a.m. Saturday morning and is expected to reach Pueblo at noon. It will depart for a return trip to Denver at 6 p.m.

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