

Credit Valley Explorer to become first tour train with a dome car

The Credit Valley Explorer will soon become the only tour train in Canada offering passengers the option of views from a dome car.

Already known as offering Southern Ontario's most scenic rail tours, the Explorer has leased a 1950s-vintage dome car from Darren Wakeland of Walkerton, who purchased it on an as-is basis from the Wabash Railroad, which had acquired it some years ago from Amtrak.

Steve Gallagher, operations manager for Cando Contracting, which operates the Explorer for the Orangeville-Brampton railway, said Wednesday work is already under way on restoring the coach and should be completed by late August. The hope is to have it in regular service in time for the Explorer's fall colour tours.

Gallagher said that while the stainless steel coach will seat 62, the dome itself seats just 24 and those seats will likely command a premium price.

Built by the Budd Company in the 1950s, dome cars have a glass dome on the top of the coach where passengers can ride and see in all directions around the train. The cars were primarily used in the United States and Canada, although a small number were constructed in Europe for Trans Europ Express service, and similar panorama cars are in service on Alpine touristic railways like the Bernina Express.

Gallagher said the plan is to install small tables throughout the coach so it can be used for three-hour tours between Orangeville and the north end of Brampton that feature meals. He said that while it is to go into service for the fall colour tours, it will be used all year.

Currently, Via Rail Canada operates the largest fleet of dome cars in North America. All were built by Budd for the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1950s, and transferred to Via service in the 1970s, where they continue to run between Toronto and Vancouver. The Ontario Northland Railway also operates dome cars on the Polar Bear Express from Cochrane to Moosonee.



The Credit Valley Explorer will soon be offering views from one of these dome cars.