

Western Pacific Railroad 841 "Silver Plate"

California Zephyr Dining Car

The dining car has long been one of the social centers and highlight experiences of a train journey. Six dining cars were built for the *California Zephyr*, all bearing restaurant and meal themed names. Today, the "Silver Plate" is the last of these cars to survive intact and unaltered. Two others, heavily rebuilt, still operate on Amtrak in 2015, while the rest were all scrapped between the late 1980s and 2010.

The car seats 48 people using four seat tables: 32 in the main section and 16 in nooks at each end of the car. This can be reconfigured during off-peak seasons with only 24 in the main section by alternating two and four seat tables. The wall of the Steward's Podium features a carved-linoleum mural by artist Pierre Bourdelle. The carefully designed kitchen features four refrigerators, propane stoves and large pantry cabinets. An "air curtain" keeps cooking odors out of the dining area.

Dinner was the most popular meal. Up to six seatings were required, by reservation, to serve the large number of diners. During initial check-in, passengers made reservations for their preferred time with the Zephyrette hostess and received a reminder card. There were no reservations for breakfast or lunch.

Each road contributed a regional specialty to the cuisine. A favorite was Colorado mountain brook trout, an offering by the Rio Grande. Thanks to WP Dining Car Superintendent Harold G. Wyman's personal expertise on wines, a nice selection of California vintages was always on hand. One well remembered offering was a five-course Italian dinner, complete with a bottle of red California wine, for only \$3.00. For sleeping car patrons, room service was available for a small charge.

builder

Budd Company

built

November, 1948

type

Dining Car

lot number 9624-021

length

85' 0" overall

original cost

\$134,936.06

operating weight

158,670 lbs

passenger capacity

48 seat dining room

convertible to 40 seat

acquisition

donated by California
State Railroad Museum