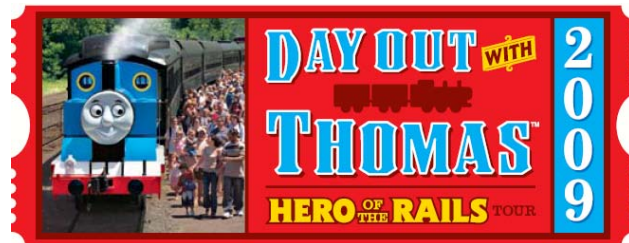


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DAY OUT WITH THOMAS™ 2009: THE HERO OF THE RAILS TOUR
PULLING INTO THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD

FANS CHEER AS HEROIC STORYBOOK ENGINE TAKES OVER RAILROADS,
CHILDREN'S HEARTS

Thomas the Tank Engine™ to visit Great Smoky Mountains Railroad
July 24 – July 28 & July 30 – August 2

Bryson City, North Carolina – It's a bird! It's a plane....wait...it's a train? Thomas the Tank Engine™ is set to roll into **Bryson City** for the ***Day Out With Thomas™ 2009: The Hero of the Rails Tour***. All Thomas fans are invited to spend the day with their favorite engine that always saves the day! The event, which takes place **July 24-July 28 and July 30-August 2, 2009**, will be hosted by **the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad** and presented by HIT Entertainment.

For more than six decades, children have been captivated by the courageous adventures of and his engine friends. Pulling out of the station for its 14th consecutive ride on the rails, the ***Day Out With Thomas 2009: The Hero of the Rails Tour*** will visit more than 40 cities in the United States and Canada. ***Day Out With Thomas*** is the only place for families to take a ride with a 15-ton replica of everybody's favorite #1 engine, Thomas the Tank Engine, and enjoy Thomas-themed activities at the Imagination Station, including stamps, temporary tattoos and hands-on arts and crafts. Each year the tour grows, traveling to new destinations, adding new activities and welcoming new visitors. In addition, exclusive Thomas & Friends merchandise is available at ***Day Out With Thomas*** events including a 2009 ***Day Out With Thomas*** passenger car and commemorative t-shirts, pennants, engineer caps, frames, and more.

Thomas the Tank Engine, star of *Thomas & Friends™*, on PBS KIDS® and PBS KIDS SproutSM will be kicking off his ***Day Out With Thomas 2009: The Hero of the Rails Tour*** in March and is expected to welcome more than one million passengers through December. During the ***Day Out With Thomas 2009: The Hero of the Rails Tour***, children will ride with Thomas up steep hills, around deep, blue lakes, and help him rescue his engine friends—if only in their imaginations. ***Day Out with Thomas 2009*** activities include:

- A 25-minute (approximate) ride with Thomas the Tank Engine
- The opportunity to meet **Sir Topham Hatt**, Controller of the Railway

- A ***Thomas & Friends Imagination Station***; featuring stamps, temporary tattoos, hands-on arts and crafts activities and coloring sheets.
- Storytelling, video viewing and live music

The tour provides a unique, interactive family experience at every station, offering a variety of entertaining activities that reflect the local flavor of each stop. At the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad activities will include: Bubble Station, Bouncy Train, Model Railroad Museum, Sandblast Area, Balloon Animals, and a Petting Zoo.

The approximately 25-minute train ride with Thomas the Tank Engine will depart every 45 minutes, rain or shine, with departure times at 10:00am-2:45pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Fridays, or 9:15am-3:30pm on Saturdays, and 9:15am to 2:45pm on Sundays. Tickets for the ***Day Out With Thomas 2009: The Heroes of the Rail Tour*** are \$18 for ages two and up.

Tickets are on sale now by calling toll-free 866.468.7630 or logging onto www.ticketweb.com/thomas For more information and directions contact the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad at 1-800-872-4681 or gsmr.com.

For general information or to find a ***Day Out With Thomas 2009: The Hero of the Rails Tour*** event near you, visit www.thomasandfriends.com.

For media use only: For high-resolution downloadable artwork or additional information please go to www.hitnewsonline.com and select ***Day Out With Thomas 2009: The Hero of the Rails Tour*** Artwork.

About The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad

The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad offers half day train excursions through the scenic mountains and colorful countryside of Western North Carolina. Train excursions depart from the historic depot in Bryson City. For additional information call 800-872-4681 or visit www.gsmr.com.

About Thomas & Friends

Thomas & Friends invites children to enter a world of imagination through the tracks of a train and the words of a story. *Thomas the Tank Engine* was created by a father for his son more than 60 years ago. Today, families in more than 145 countries enjoy fun and adventure with their engine friends while experiencing timeless life lessons of discovery, friendship and cooperation. *Thomas & Friends* is making tracks to great destinations on PBS KIDS®, PBS KIDS SproutSM and with downloadable episodes available through iTunes. For more information about the world of *Thomas the Tank Engine* and his friends, please visit www.thomasandfriends.com.

About HIT Entertainment

HIT Entertainment, owned by private equity investment group Apax Partners, is one of the world's leading independent children's entertainment producers and rights-owners. HIT's portfolio includes properties, such as BarneyTM, Bob the BuilderTM, Thomas & FriendsTM, PinguTM, Fireman SamTM, Angelina BallerinaTM and Rainbow MagicTM. HIT represents Chapman Entertainment's Fifi and the FlowertotsTM and Roary the Racing CarTM in North America and Japan, as well as Wallace & GromitTM, Shaun the SheepTM and Aardman Classics from Aardman Animations. HIT also acts as a worldwide representative for The Jim Henson Company's library of classic family brands and as representative for The Wiggles® in the UK. Launched in 1989, HIT's lines of business span television and video production, content distribution, publishing, consumer products licensing and live events and has operations in the UK, US, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. HIT is a part-owner of US-based preschool channel, PBS KIDS SproutSM, and international preschool channel JimJam, (outside of the US, UK and China). For more information, visit www.hitentertainment.com.