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[Home](#) > South Africa's Garden Route loses its 'Choo Tjoe'

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It's a postcard-perfect image of South Africa: the antique steam train chugging along the Garden Route, through lush forests, alongside lakes and lagoons, and past pristine beaches.

Pictures may be all that's left of the Outeniqua Choo Tjoe, which hasn't plied its regular route since floods in August 2006 severely damaged the tracks.

The Choo Tjoe -- pronounced like choo-choo -- was the last regularly scheduled steam train in South Africa, riding for nearly four hours every day but Sunday along 67 kilometres (42 miles) of the southern coast from the Knysna station to the Transport Museum in George.

South Africa, pressed with other priorities, has yet to undertake repairs to the route. The train has tried running different rails to the west of George, but hasn't found a ridership for a less scenic route.

Transnet, the state enterprise that manages the nation's railways, decided to cut its losses a year ago.

"We are very eager to see it resume because it is very important for our heritage and the tourism industry in the area," said Tammy Evans, spokeswoman for the provincial tourism department.

"We have asked to take it over when it closed. We want the line, and we want the train as well," she said.

The Western Cape province and Transnet have held talks on a public-private partnership to revive the line, which could cost up to 200 million rands (\$26 million, 20 million euros) -- not including the cost of renovations to the train itself, which is now idle in a nearby "heritage depot".

Transnet says merely that it's "considering options regarding the Outeniqua Choo Tjoe, including the reopening of the line."