

Southern's Royal Palm

The *Royal Palm* was one of the earliest named passenger trains to serve the Midwest-to-Florida market. From the beginning the Southern provided top-notch service with the train and while it predominantly operated most of the trip on home rails, south of Jacksonville, Florida the Florida East Coast carried the *Palm* to Miami. The earliest version of the train always carried run-through sleepers of the New York Central. However, to keep up with demand the Southern also started a seasonal version of the train known as the *New Royal Palm*. Despite being streamlined the seasonal train had a short lifespan and was discontinued after only a few years of service. The original train carried on within the Southern's fleet for many years although throughout the 1960s it was slowly truncated and saw services reduced. By the time the train was discontinued just a little over a year before Amtrak began it is essentially a coach-only affair.



The Southern's *Palm* has a history which dates back to November 1913 and even during these earliest days of wooden cars and steam locomotives the train operated with, as mentioned above, run through equipment owned by the NYC (coming from such cities as Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Cincinnati) and worked in conjunction with the FEC to reach Miami. In the 1920s the train was upgraded with heavyweight cars and sleepers and continued to maintain top level service for Florida travelers. Interestingly, however, during the 1930s and early 1940s when the streamliner era was getting into full swing the *Royal Palm* maintained its heavyweight status and steam power. Most likely, however, the Southern would have upgraded the train during the early '40s if it was not for the World War II conflict that caused new construction to be suspended.



In any event, the train retained its heavyweight status nearly until 1950. Directly after the war the Southern placed orders with the Budd Company for new equipment to upgrade the *Palm* as well as new diesel locomotives from the Electro-Motive Division, notably 18 E7As between 1946 and 1949 (and 17 E8As between 1951 and 1953). Additionally, the railroad decided to inaugurate another train over the route, the seasonal *New Royal Palm* which would operate only during the wintertime (which resulted in the *Palm* losing its streamlined status and operated heavyweights until the summer season returned). Both trains departed from Cincinnati Union Terminal to much fanfare on December 17, 1949. The Southern spent a great deal of effort marketing the new train with advertisements like "*Are you planning a trip? Take the luxurious, winter season, streamlined train New Royal Palm to Atlanta, Chattanooga, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Chicago, Toledo, Detroit, Columbus, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Toronto.*"