The *Ferdinand Magellan* is owned and proudly displayed in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, by the Gold Coast Railroad, a non-profit organization of volunteer railroad enthusiasts. It is unique among Pullman cars: it is the only one ever custom-built for the exclusive use of the President of the United States. Originally constructed by the Pullman Company in 1928, it was one of the last private cars ever built, and one of a group of six conventional private cars named after famous explorers. They were, in addition to the *Magellan*, the *David Livingstone*, *Henry Stanley*, *Marco Polo*, *Robert Peary*, and the *Roald Amundsen*. These cars were all placed in general Pullman service at about the same time, and were owned and operated by the Pullman Company.

Until late 1942, the President of the United States rode in a standard, private Pullman when he traveled by train. He did not ride in a specific car, although the *Roald Amundsen* was frequently assigned to him. White House aides Michael Reilly and Steve Early felt that the Chief Executive should have a custom-built railroad car — one that would afford maximum protection when he traveled by rail. President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved of the idea when he was told that such a car would be not only for his use, but for the use of future Presidents as well. The *Ferdinand Magellan* was chosen to become U.S. Car No. 1. So, in 1942, it was withdrawn from general service and returned to Pullman’s Calumet shops near Chicago for complete rebuilding. The only Pullman car ever to be owned outright by the United States Government, the *Magellan* was to become the traveling home of three Presidents — Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower — thus assuring for itself a place in our nation’s history.

“Let’s make it a little more comfortable,” was President Roosevelt’s comment to Mike Reilly. So, at Calumet, the number of staterooms was reduced from five to four, creating more room in the dining room and observation lounge. Steel armor plate, five-eighths inch thick, was riveted onto the sides, floor, roof and end. Three inch, bullet-proof glass replaced conventional safety glass in the windows. Two escape hatches were constructed — one in the ceiling of the observation lounge one on the side near the center of the car, above the shower bath. Special trucks, wheels and roller bearings were installed to support the additional weight. A standard, heavy-weight Pullman, of the type built prior to World War II, weighed 160,000 pounds. The rebuilt *Magellan* weighs 285,000 pounds, or 142½ tons.

The car, painted original Pullman green, is 83½ feet long, 14½ feet high, and 10 feet wide. Inside, on either side of the front entrance aisle, are refrigerators, an ice hatch, and storage compartments. Next is the galley, pantry, and servants’ quarters, the latter containing small upper and lower berths, a lavatory and shower, and a small closet. Overhead are hot and cold water storage tanks, air conditioning apparatus, blowers, and fans.
The elegant dining room or conference room is the largest room in the car. It contains all the original furniture, including a beautiful solid mahogany table, thirty-eight by seventy-two inches, which seats eight. Matching chairs are upholstered in a green and gold striped satin damask. Wall candelabras and chandeliers are gold-plated. The four china cabinets and eleven buffet drawers are felt-lined. The walls are paneled in limed oak, and the ceiling is ivory, etched in antique gold.

Between the dining room and observation lounge are four staterooms, D, C, B, and A. Guestrooms D and A are identical; each contains an upper and lower berth, toilet, closet, vanity table, chair, and medicine cabinet above the wash basin. Both are carpeted in dark green, with light green walls and brass electrical fixtures and hardware.

The two center rooms, C and B, form the Presidential Suite, with a connecting bathroom between. Stateroom C is the Presidential Stateroom, painted a blue-green, with matching deep-pile carpet, and satin-chrome fixtures. The lower bed is a permanent one, slightly larger than a conventional Pullman berth. An upper berth pulls down from above. Stateroom B, for the First Lady, is tastefully decorated in shades of peach and beige, with satin-chrome hardware. It is equipped with a full-sized, permanent bed, vanity table, closet, wash basin and cabinet. The connecting room has a bath tub and shower, toilet, wash basin, and cabinet, with bright chrome fixtures, and a black-and-white check linoleum floor.

The luxurious, twelve-foot observation lounge is spacious and restful. It has soft cream woodwork, with
green carpeting. Walls are padded and tufted in an attractive light brown material resembling leather. All the furniture throughout the car is original. In the lounge are two barrel chairs and a sofa, upholstered in medium blue, and four arm chairs in brown. Eight windows and sixteen light fixtures in the ceiling illuminate the lounge. Although portions of the interior have been repainted as part of the Gold Coast Railroad's maintenance program, all paint has been carefully matched with the original colors, so the decor remains unchanged.

Each room has a telephone. When the Presidential train was standing, the telephone system was connected to a trainside outlet. When the train was traveling, communication was handled by Signal Corps personnel in Communications Car #1401, a converted B&O baggage car. The open-end, brass-railed platform was often used by the President as a podium for speech-making. It has five microphone connections for the public address system and for radio broadcasting. On the roof above the platform are permanent loudspeakers, which carried the speeches to the crowds. Outputs for additional speakers, as well as for telephones, are in small boxes on either side of the observation platform.

Outside are many special devices. For example, under the car are sixteen lockers for carrying 110-220VAC/32VDC electrical rectifiers, telephone equipment, public address amplifiers, AC/DC electrical inputs, a standby air compressor for the plumbing system, batteries, and six thousand pounds of ice for the air conditioning. To cool the car, a water pump forces ice water through cold copper tubing up to a ceiling evaporator, where blowers force cool air out through ceiling ventilators which run the length of the interior. Thermostats control the temperature. During operation, steam generated in the locomotive, travels in pipes under the car and is used for heating in the winter, as well as for hot water for the staterooms and galley. The main water tank holds 274 gallons, and there are seven air storage tanks for the brakes, plumbing and air conditioning. Two seven and a half kilowatt, thirty-two volt DC, axle-driven generators produce the necessary electricity to charge the batteries when the car is moving.

The rebuilt Magellan was presented to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on December 18, 1942, exactly fourteen years to the day from the date it was outshopped. For security reasons during World War II, only the word "Pullman" appeared on the outside, so
that from a distance this rolling fortress looked just like an ordinary private railroad car. Whenever it was part of a train, however, the train moved under the code word POTUS, meaning President of the United States. Every railroad knew that POTUS had the right of way over all other railroad traffic.

To lessen the chances of sabotage during World War II, the car did not have a permanent location in Washington, D.C. It was moved around when not in use and was stored variously on a siding at Washington’s Union Station, the Potomac railroad yards, the Naval Gun Factory at the Navy Yard, and in the sub-basement of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. At the Navy Yard, a special elevator was installed on the observation platform to enable President Roosevelt to board the car from a wheelchair. This elaborate device was removed after Roosevelt’s death.

On January 9, 1943, a five-car train was quietly assembled in Washington. The President’s Navy mess attendants from the yacht Potomac were summoned to perform the services ordinarily rendered by Pullman porters. Officials in charge of making up this special train were told not to issue any instructions that would cause speculation. The train left Washington at 10:00 P.M. with President Roosevelt aboard the Magellan, and traveled north, ostensibly to Hyde Park. However, it went only as far as Fort Meade, Maryland. An hour later, it headed south. Thus began the first leg of President Roosevelt’s journey to the now-famous Casablanca Conference. Before dawn on January 11, 1943, the train arrived in Miami at S.W. 27th Avenue and Dixie Highway via the Florida East Coast Railroad. Here, the President was driven by car to Dinner Key, where he boarded a seaplane for Africa. The train then left for Jacksonville, but returned again at 8:00 A.M., January 26. At 6:00 P.M., on the 30th, the train left Miami for the return trip to Washington, with President Roosevelt aboard. A report of this trip by the Pullman Special Agent-Inspector, the late P. Clifton Darcey, is on display in the car. Twenty-three years later, Mrs. Darcey wrote: “...I remember the trip so well. I didn’t hear from him for almost a month. After he was gone about five days, the White House called me and said if I had to get in touch with him to call them. They would get word to him in five minutes. I never knew where he had been until I found the report, as I never asked any questions about any of the trips...”

Roosevelt covered about 50,000 miles in the Magellan, preferring to travel at thirty-five miles per hour. This car was part of the eighteen-car funeral train that carried the President’s body from Warm Springs, Georgia, to Hyde Park, New York, April 13-15, 1945. Mrs. Roosevelt rode in the Magellan, which was next to the last car. The Conneaut, normally second from the rear on Presidential rains, was the last car, into which the casket was placed by removing a side window. The heavy, bullet-proof glass in the Magellan could not be removed. Consequently, the Magellan was not used as the funeral car.

After having been leased to the United States Government by the Association of American Railroads since 1942, the Magellan was sold to the Government in 1946 for $10.00, and thereafter carried the official designation of U. S. Car No. 1. The actual cost of the car has never been revealed.

President Harry S. Truman perhaps traveled in the Magellan more than Roosevelt. In his famous 1948 barnstorming campaign alone, Truman covered 21,000 miles and delivered more than 300 speeches from the rear platform. Unlike Roosevelt, Truman preferred speeds up to eighty miles per hour. According to a letter from President Truman, the heavy car “gave nightmares to every railroad engineer in the country who had to pull it on the back of his train.”

The third and last President to occupy U. S. Car No. 1 was Dwight D. Eisenhower, who used it very little. He did use it occasionally on trips to Philadelphia, once on a trip to upstate New York, and also on a state visit to Canada in November 1953 to address the Canadian Parliament at Ottawa. The last time the Magellan was used officially was in 1954, when Mrs. Eisenhower went from Washington, D.C. to Groton, Connecticut to christen the world’s first atomic submarine, Nautilus. After that, the car stood idle for four years.

It was declared surplus Government property in April 1958 and was transferred to the U. S. Army’s Fort Holabird in Maryland, ending sixteen years of official service. All Army records of the car were ordered destroyed six months later. The radio, telephone, and public address equipment were removed and sold as surplus, but the historic car itself was eagerly sought after by those who knew about it. It was not until 1958 that a member of the Gold Coast Railroad read about the car in a railroad trade publication. Losing no time, the founders of the Gold Coast Railroad, a Senator from the State of Florida, and the President of the University of Miami became interested parties. Negotiations resulted in the United States Government transferring the Magellan to the Florida Development Commission, who, in turn, gave the car to the University of Miami. The General Services Administration valued the surplus car at $80,277.53, exclusive of its value as an historical property.

On January 15, 1959, the Magellan arrived at the University of Miami’s Campus, nine miles south of Miami, where the Gold Coast Railroad was already giving train rides to the public in a coach and a caboose pulled by a full-sized, steam locomotive. Since 1959, the Ferdinand Magellan has been one of the
main attractions at the Railroad. On November 13, 1966, the Gold Coast Railroad moved its operations to Fort Lauderdale, and shortly thereafter outright ownership of the Magellan passed to the Gold Coast Railroad, Inc., a non-profit corporation. In 1977 the car was placed on the National Register of Historical Places.

Each year, over 10,000 visitors tour the Magellan. Admissions and donations, which are tax-deductible, help pay for maintenance materials. Preventive maintenance is performed on the car every week by unpaid volunteer members of the Gold Coast Railroad. No attempt is made to "modernize" or "improve" the original appearance. All efforts are toward preserving it, rather than changing it.

The stately Magellan is protected from the weather now, and rests on connecting trackage inside the Gold Coast Railroad’s large terminal building at 3398 S.W. 9th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It is open to visitors every Sunday afternoon.

The Gold Coast Railroad has many attractions other than the Magellan. The Railroad also operates several steam locomotives and maintains an extraordinary exhibit of artifacts and models.