

# Eurostar

## A Snapshot Survey

based on a customer questionnaire covering a one year period from start of July 2014 to end of June 2015



*The statue of Sir John Betjeman overlooks the world acclaimed Eurostar terminus at London St Pancras*

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## Introduction

The Railway Development Society Ltd, campaigning as Railfuture, is an independent body for rail users which campaigned for many years for the construction of a Channel Tunnel. Since the opening of the Tunnel and inauguration of Eurostar services in 1994, we have actively promoted these services and the environmentally friendly journey opportunities they have offered.

As a founder member of the European Passenger Federation, since 1994 we have worked with similar organisations in France, Belgium and 15 other European Countries to promote these services and identify possible improvements.

In March 2008 we issued a report based on a snapshot survey of customers' experiences during a 3 month period.

We then carried out a survey of journeys over a 4 month period between June and September 2011. Our aim was to identify good and bad points and also to see if the customer experience had improved since 2008. We also conducted a Mystery Shopper exercise to see:

- a) How well Eurostar is promoted elsewhere on the British rail network
- b) How helpful & informative the call centres were, and
- c) How user-friendly & helpful the website was.

Railfuture have now completed a third survey, over a longer period of one year from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014 to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015. The questionnaire was distributed via our quarterly journal "Railwatch", posted on our website and distributed by some local rail users associations. 223 replies were received from 180 different people.

## Our main conclusions

As might be expected, an increasing number of people are booking via the internet and fewer people are using travel agents or tour operators.

Since our first survey, and from the experience of our members, more passengers seem to be using Eurostar to reach destinations beyond Paris & Brussels. It should therefore be made much easier to make a through booking involving more than one train operator. We are urging that this be improved.

Many passengers cited poor connections, the lack of direct services and high fares as further problems when travelling to destinations beyond Paris, Lille or Brussels. Train operators should perhaps consider how much business they are losing to the airlines, for instance London-Frankfurt or London-Amsterdam.

Many passengers commented on the poor facilities at Paris Gare du Nord. We understand that work has now begun on improvements due to completed by Summer 2016.

Many passengers commented on the poor state of the interior of the trains. While this should improve soon with the introduction of the new Class 374 Velaro trains, the remaining Class 373 trains are in need of refurbishment. Eurostar should also consider providing more space for passengers' luggage as part of the refurbishment.

In view of the many comments made over the poor quality of on-board catering, we would expect this to improve in future.

Many people said that it took too long to get through security, and they then did not have enough time to board the train. A significant minority saw the length of time to clear security as a disincentive to travel. As Eurostar now 'encourage' passengers to check-in 45 minutes ahead they should consider opening the trains for boarding earlier than 20 minutes before departure, or alternatively, have more staff employed on security.

## Responses to the questionnaire

1. **Journey purpose and booking.** This was the first survey we have done to cover a full 12 month period, with 142 journeys in the "Summer" period (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September) and 83 journeys in the Winter period (1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March).

76% of journeys were for leisure, 12% for business and 12% for family reasons.  
75% of respondents were travelling as individuals and 25% as part of a group.  
83% of respondents booked return journeys, 17% booked single journeys.  
40% of respondents booked online, 17% via tour operators, 11% via travel agents,  
7% booked via the phone and 5% at St Pancras International station.  
83% of journeys were in Standard Class, 12% Standard Premium, 1% First Class.

2. **Why did you choose Eurostar?** As this question was open-ended, the majority of the responses have been classified as:

41% said it was better than flying.  
39% mentioned ease of travel.  
13% were on an inclusive holiday.  
6% mentioned environmental reasons.  
One person mentioned the new direct London-Lyon service.

3. **What is your home station?**

46% were in London & South East.  
10% were in Yorkshire.  
8% were in East Anglia.  
8% were in the North West.  
6% were in the North East.  
6% were in the East Midlands.  
4% were in the West Midlands.  
4% were in Wales.  
3% were in Scotland.  
1% were in another EU member state.

4. **Where did you board your Eurostar today?**

*OUTBOUND FROM:*

St.Pancras	97%
Ebbsfleet	2%
Ashford	1%

*RETURN FROM:*

Paris	45%
Brussels	43%
Lille	11%
Marne-la-Vallee	0.5%
Lyon	0.5%

5. **What was your ultimate destination?**

Paris	19%
Brussels	7%
Other French	27%
Other Belgian	9%
Germany	22%
Italy	4%

Switzerland	2%
Spain	2%
Luxembourg	1%
Hungary	0.5%
Denmark	0.5%
Portugal	0.5%

**6. What would make Eurostar a better experience?**

a) **Boarding:** The most common complaints in order of importance were:

- Poor facilities at Paris Gare du Nord.
- Not enough time to board.
- Check-in too slow.
- Problems with luggage by doors.

b) **Food on the train:** The most common complaints in order of importance were:

- Poor quality food in general.
- Lack of hot food.
- Expensive food.
- Standard Premier food poor.

c) **Staff:**

46% thought the staff were good.  
34% thought the staff were satisfactory.  
12% said they were poor.  
6% said their English was poor.  
3% said they were invisible if there was a problem.

d) **Ambience:** This was an open-ended question where:

52% found the trains tired & tatty.  
13% found the trains cramped.  
11% mentioned lack of luggage space.

**7. Would not having to go through security make a difference?**

58% said it would make no difference as to how often they would use Eurostar.  
31% said it would make a difference as to how often they would use Eurostar.

**8. Other comments made at the end of the questionnaire**

As expected, many different comments were provided. In order of importance, the most common were:

- More direct services needed from the UK to more destinations on the Continent.
- Easier online booking needed for through journeys beyond Paris/Lille/Brussels.
- Fares too expensive for travel beyond Paris/Brussels.
- Better connections needed at Brussels/Lille for onward journeys.
- Poor facilities at Paris Gare du Nord.

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