

HIGH-SPEED TRAINS TO CONNECT BARCELONA AND PARIS



Spain and France will be connected for the first time by a high-speed train starting on December 15. From then on Barcelona and Paris will be linked by the trains of Alta Velocidad Española (AVE), as agreed in a recent Franco-Spanish summit.

The beginning of service of the **direct high-speed trains between the two countries, which will link Barcelona and the French capital, will feature "a high-level inauguration"** according to the Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy. The ride between the two cities will take six hours and twenty minutes.

"We are witnessing an authentic historic achievement in Spanish-French relations, that will also bring the Spanish and the French closer and ultimately connect Spain with the rest of Europe in a better way," said the PM at a press conference.

Therefore he said that he had agreed with French President François Hollande, to celebrate it as it deserves and organize a high-level inauguration for the AVE line. **"It is a great achievement, since it is the first time that the railway networks of the two countries will have full interconnection,"** said Hollande, recalling that this is a project that has taken twenty years to materialize.

The Spanish PM also stressed that the start of service of the trans-border rail line reaffirms Catalonia as an axis of Spanish-French interconnections. "This is the way forward in Europe and in the world - to overcome barriers and borders, not resigning to them and not building new ones," Rajoy said in reference to the inclusive nature of the AVE trains.

The AVE Barcelona-Paris will start its service as soon as all work is finished between Barcelona and Perpignan. The trans-border tracks connecting Figueres and Perpignan through a tunnel under the Pyrenees was built a few years ago.

The service is starting after the Spanish trains of the Renfe company were approved for operation on the French rail network and trains from the French rail company SNCF were approved for riding on Spanish tracks as well.

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