

# WORLD'S LONGEST JOURNEY - THE 1ST FREIGHT TRAIN BETW. CHINA AND SPAIN



On December 9 the first direct freight train between Spain and China arrived at the ADIF logistics facilities in Madrid-Abroñigal, making it the longest freight train journey in history.

The freight convoy travelled over 13,000 kilometers in 21 days from the Chinese city of Yiwu (seen as the world's largest center for the sale and distribution of goods) to the Spanish capital, **crossing eight countries: China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, France and Spain.**

The train, named Yixinou, began its journey on November 18 and on the way unloaded 30 of the 40 containers with which it started. After its arrival, the train will leave again for the Chinese city and will transport a cargo of typical Spanish products such as ham, wine and olive oil.

The results of this first experimental trip will be evaluated later in relation to the possible development of a stable bidirectional rail freight corridor between Spain and China.

The train, which went across Spain, is operated by IRS (InterRail Services) and DB Schenker Rail through the Transfesa railway company. During the journey, the convoy, with a gross weight of 1,400 tons, changed engines approximately every 800 kilometers.

Gauge changes or switches in the sequencing of containers were also made, due to gauge differences in the frontier cities of Dostyk (Kazakhstan), Brest (Belarus) and Irún (Spain).

The Minister of Public Works, Ana Pastor, was present at the arrival of the rail convoy and she called it a milestone in rail transportation, since the route is longer than those of the Trans-Siberian and Orient Express (12,250 kilometers).

She noted, moreover, that this route is the result of the commitment by the Chinese and Spanish presidents at their recent September meeting to boost trade relations between the two countries.

The Public Works Minister explained that this freight convoy shows that Madrid / Spain is a hub for this business and that rail transportation is competitive, recording more than 8% growth. "It is a route of hope," she added. In her speech Pastor stressed the central government's commitment to the promotion of rail corridors and intermodal transportation.

Meanwhile, Madrid mayor, Ana Botella, also said during the ceremony that this freight train surpasses "the epic of the legendary Trans-Siberian train" and that it is the "Silk Road of the 21st century". Furthermore, she declared that this route reinforces the role of Madrid and Spain as "a global geostrategic enclave" since it is currently the first bridge between Europe, Latin America, Africa and now China.

Botella also reported that many of the more than 30,000 Chinese citizens living in the city come from the province of Zhejiang, which is where the freight train originates. **She stressed as well that for a long time Madrid has shown great interest in China, seeing that in September 2015 it will be 30 years since the signing of a twinning agreement with Beijing in 1985.**

For its part, the charge d'affaires of the Chinese Embassy, Huang Yazhong, expressed his satisfaction with the arrival of this train as an opportunity to strengthen China's relations with Spain and Europe. He revealed that Spain is China's seventh largest trading partner and China is Spain's first non-European trading partner.

He further declared that the volume of business in this partnership involved 24.91 billion dollars last year and has reached 20.8 billion in the first three quarters of this year. He also added that in the next five years the export of products from China is expected to reach 10 trillion dollars.

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