

HIGH SPEED TRAINS: SERIOUS COMPETITION TO THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY



It has always been the case that the airline industry has held a great advantage over the railway industry thanks to higher levels of comfort and being a great deal faster. Nowadays, this is not necessarily the case. Passengers, especially business passengers, are beginning to realize that the average 10-minute check-in and ticket buying time at a train station is much more attractive than waiting at an airport for hours on end.

This certainly lessens the strain on the passenger's shoulders. However, many put up with long waits at airports due to the speed which an aircraft will take you to your destination. This is also becoming a fact of the past as Europeans, especially the French, have been producing the fastest trains and rail services on the planet. The epitome of this new chapter in European rail travel is the TGV link between Paris and Frankfurt, beating air links in all fields of comfort, speed and relative price.

The speed of the afore-mentioned journey has now been estimated at 3 hours and 50 minutes, as opposed to the previous time of 6 hours and 15 minutes. On a similar note, the Paris-Reims connection has been cut from 95 minutes to a mere 45 minutes. Although aircraft are naturally quicker, the checking in and baggage reclaiming factors actually makes them a lot slower. Since the French TGV network was linked to Germany, the airlines operating in the area have been severely hit. At a top speed of 575 km per hour, the TGV trains are actually faster than some lighter aircraft. The link to Germany cost USD 5.3 billion to build, using up 78.000 tons of steel, enough to build 8 Eiffel towers.

Germany is set to follow the French example with the introduction of the magnetic levitation train "Maglev". This should take place despite last year's accident killing 23 people when the locomotive was being tested. This train is very environment friendly, using up no where near as much fuel as aircraft. Indeed, it does not damage the environment at all. The Scandinavians wish to introduce such assets to their countries as well. The future certainly looks rosy for the European rail industry.

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