

LA GRANDE ALLURE

*Travelling by train in Europe
and elsewhere Overseas*

2020's



[SANDRA DAWES]

by Peter Dawes

La Grande Allure: Travelling by train in Europe and elsewhere Overseas 2020's

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

2020's-1: Turkish State Yüksek Hızlı Tren (*YHT – high-speed train*) No. 81013, waiting to depart Ankara for İstanbul (2025/05/03) [SANDRA DAWES]

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DEDICATION

to Sandra Dawes.

FOREWORD

This project documents my extensive train travels over the years in Europe, and to a much lesser extent in Australia and Fiji, India and Sri Lanka, Japan and Hong Kong.

The current volume covers the 2020's, which so far includes just the one holiday, in 2025: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Scotland, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales.

This is **VERSION 1** (future versions will show changes from the previous version at the end of the document).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PETER DAWES worked as a transportation policy researcher, analyst, project manager and advisor for the Canadian Transport Commission and Government of Alberta until taking early retirement. He has had a lifelong personal and professional interest in railways and passenger trains, and resides with his wife Sandra in Edmonton, Alberta.

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PHOTO CREDITS

Dawes, Peter [2020's-6, 8, 32, 47, 50, 58];

Dawes, Sandra [all others];

den Boer, Arjan [2020's-14];

Stirling, David [2020's-55];

Welch, Robert John [2020's-44].

IMPORTANT!

Please see **GENERAL NOTES AND CAVEATS** below for important information regarding copyright, ownership, use and acquisition of photos appearing in this document (specifically under **Photographs**, page 10).

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the seventh volume of my overseas rail-travel project, offering detailed accounts of train trips taken so far during the 2020's, namely our 2025 holiday in Europe.

Previous volumes cover the 1970's, 1st part of the 1980's (1980, '81 and '84), 2nd part of the same decade (1985 and '88), 1990's, 2000's and 2010's. There is also a comprehensive "Reprise" providing: a review of overseas rail-passenger developments by decade; an overall summary of my travels; personal ratings of trains; interesting cars and locomotives encountered; and several tables of detailed trip information. I've also prepared a "Companion Document" offering trip, train and equipment details, which may appeal to the real enthusiast.

Please note that this project follows my *No Matter Where It's Going: Travelling by train in Canada and elsewhere in North America*.

The 2020's (so far) have accounted for 7% of my overseas trips. Other percentages (in descending order): 1980's, 34; 1970's, 17; 2000's, 16; 2010's, 15; and 1990's, 11.

BEFORE PROCEEDING...

Those familiar with other volumes might wish to skip over the rest of this section.

Turning to the current volume, I begin by providing **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** of those persons without whose assistance this project could not have happened. To assist readers as they go through the year-by-year accounts, I then offer **GENERAL NOTES & CAVEATS**, **ABBREVIATIONS**, a **SAMPLE ENTRY**, and a **QUICK INDEX OF TRAINS TAKEN**.

Next comes the meat of the document. For the **decade** involved, I provide the overall context, summary of trips taken, places visited, and particularly noteworthy trips. For each **holiday** within that decade, I begin with a **SYNOPSIS** covering: the context; trips taken and distance travelled; types and numbers of cars and locomotives making up the trains; places visited; noteworthy train trips; fastest and slowest average speeds; and any memorable associated trips by other modes of transport.

Then, under the heading **TRIPS AND TRAIN COMPOSITION** and for each train trip, I provide the date and (in a headline) service provider, train number, embarkation point, disembarkation point, origin and final destination (if different), and train name (where applicable). I go on to show the detailed train composition in a darkly **shaded** box, followed by departure time, arrival time, purpose of the trip, and in some cases major enroute stops. (If more than one leg was involved, I mention the ultimate destination, trip purpose and connecting points at the start of the first leg.) I then describe any interesting aspects about the train and route taken, and things that happened along the way. I also provide a brief account of any relevant events that occurred before the train departed or after it arrived at my destination.

At the end of the entry (lightly **shaded**), I often provide the distance in both kilometres and miles, elapsed time and average speed. Occasionally, I also offer further details on equipment, particularly Sleeping cars and locomotives.

Now for an important explanation. I fully reference every point-to-point, inter-community **rail** trip taken, including excursions on both regular lines and preserved railways – also commuter rail trips, provided they went beyond the city or region concerned. I note, but do not fully reference, associated marine, road and air trips, as well as intra-community trips by main-line railways. Where urban transit systems are concerned, I make note of trains and trams, both underground and surface if they were of an interurban nature (such as

joining a city centre with an airport), provided a direct connection between intercity stations, or enabled access to a specific event or attraction.

At the end of the volume, I provide a **GENERAL INDEX** by subject, **BIBLIOGRAPHY**, **LIST OF PHOTOS**., and (in subsequent versions) a note describing **CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION**.

Three final points. First, please bear in mind that this is a *personal* account of rail and associated travel. It will appeal mainly to people who already enjoy train travel or might want to try it out; to railway modellers, photographers, historians or researchers; and perhaps to those who are just interested in the evolution of rail travel in Europe, also India and Sri Lanka, Japan and Hong Kong, during this period. While trip purpose, references to travelling companions, and anecdotes are included, I present this information in such a manner as to be easily avoided by those looking strictly for train composition.

Second, more knowledgeable readers will find many comments and explanations to be old hat and obvious. If you fit this bill, please understand that you will be a lot more familiar with this subject area than others.

Third, I strongly encourage feedback – everything from factual clarifications to minor typographical corrections; to additional car and locomotive information; and to photographs that might fill in gaps or improve on my own efforts. Please contact me using the information shown on page 2 above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the following:

- the late Mark Bunting, Tom Matoff, Ken Mozersky, John Stilgoe, the late Brian Sullivan, and Greg Thompson for being key influences where both my interest in trains and career in transportation are concerned (as cited in the initial *No Matter Where It's Going: 1950's* volume);
- Ken Boulton, Tom Clark, Greg Gormick, Ken Holmes, the late Fred Matthews, Doug Smith and Nicholas Vincent for being kindred spirits;

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- Tom Clark for wonderful companionship on many trips, and expanding my appreciation of British steam trains;
- Stefan Dringenberg for providing information on equipment; the late George Drury for his articles and books on Swiss rail travel; Jean Patenaude for advice regarding the presentation of company names in French; the late John Price for his efforts as long time editor of the seminal Thomas Cook *Continental* and *International* timetables; and Geoff Sarbutt, Neil Smith and Michael Taylor for providing information on railway equipment;
- Cindy Chow, Charlie Dawes and Dan Walter for providing valuable advice concerning this project;
- Shaun Fawcett for essential help in publishing these volumes online; and
- my wife Sandra for much-appreciated companionship on several holidays, for design suggestions, and for developing the route schematics, website and web version of these documents.

Specifically where this volume is concerned:

- Margaret Dyke & Eva Young, Alison & David Stirling, for providing accommodation, local tours and other forms of hospitality;
- Sylvia Beardshaw for arranging our Severn Valley steam excursion; the Brook Green Hotel, Hammersmith, London, for storing our "ship bag" for five weeks until we boarded QUEEN MARY 2; the Phil Stacey's for hosting us at Poole, England; Eugene, Leah & Sarah McWillie, Alistair & June McWillie, and Harry Stephen for conducting us around Sandra's ancestral lands in Scotland and Edinburgh; and
- Sandra for taking photographs often when I was trying to record train types, numbers and names.

Despite the assistance provided, the author remains entirely responsible for errors or omissions.

Finally, this volume is dedicated to Sandra, for getting right back into the spirit of our train-based holiday style, and taking so many excellent photographs.

Peter Dawes
Edmonton, Alberta
January, 2026.

GENERAL NOTES AND CAVEATS

Photographs: were taken either by the author or his wife, or in some cases, by third parties); have been chosen to support the text; ***remain the property of the photographers; are protected by copyright; and must not be used in any fashion without permission*** (please bear in mind that those involving early morning, late afternoon, or night trains often were taken in adverse lighting conditions);

BEFORE PROCEEDING...

Those familiar with other volumes might wish to skip over the rest of this section.

Timings: are shown in local time and taken from Cook's (later European Rail Timetable Ltd. [ERT]) timetables, railway schedules, or other sources;

Distances: are taken mostly from Cook's, or from railway timetables where Cook's/ERT doesn't provide such information or does so in a manner which makes computing difficult (distances may vary from one trip to another due to routing changes or updates of information made by Cook/ERT or service providers, and for international services are calculated to or from the nearest operating point, which might not necessarily be right at the border; are rounded to the nearest full kilometre or mile; and may vary from timetables especially where conversion back and forth between the two measures was necessary and where Cook's/ERT or the service provider used a different ratio);

Average speeds: may reflect time required for operational, servicing, passenger access, parcel and mail handling, or crewing purposes;

Intermediate stops: are either as shown in Cook's/ERT, railway timetables or other sources, or were recorded during the trip (stops may be omitted where numerous, especially on local or regional trains, or if they were of a conditional nature);

Train numbers: are shown as typically applied by continental European, Indian, Sri Lankan and Japanese railways, while in the British Isles, departure time from the boarding point is used instead of a number (as has been the common practice there);

Car numbers: were usually **not** recorded, due to the sheer number of services taken, quick station stops, and complexity of both train composition and the numbers themselves;

Locomotive numbers: were often recorded during this decade, in contrast to previous decades;

Car and locomotive names: were rarely encountered but always recorded;

Car or car type occupied: is indicated in **Bold** where there was more than one possibility (sometimes accompanied by a Star [*] for clarity in the web version);

Distinction between classes in Coaches: was recorded during some of the earlier holidays (and in India and Sri Lanka), but is not shown in any of these volumes;

Sleeping car types: were not always recorded but have been determined where possible, based on information contained in various sources;

Locomotive hauled trains: refers to trains having one or more locomotives, or one or more powered cars pulling or pushing non-powered cars, and are shown as "d" for Diesel, "e" for Electric, or "s" for Steam (furthermore, the term "Diesel" is used instead of the more technically correct "Diesel-Electric");

Locomotive origins and destinations: are often estimated out of necessity, especially beyond the segment travelled, in which case they are shown with a question mark (e.g.: "Ee HAGEN-DĚČÍN?" means an electric locomotive definitely starting at Hagen and possibly terminating at Děčín);

Train reversals enroute: are common in Europe and Sri Lanka, but are normally ignored here (especially a

train entering a stub-end station, then leaving in the opposite direction, usually with a fresh locomotive attached to what had been the rear end);

Multiple Unit trains: refers to trains in which all or some cars were powered, and are indicated by the addition of an “m” (e.g., “Cmd” means Coach in a Diesel Multiple Unit train; “Cme” one in an Electric Multiple Unit train) [*“Cmb” means a bi-mode Electric/Diesel Multiple Unit train, first encountered during 2025*];

Equipment units: are shown in categories such as “Coaches, Pullmans & Lounges” (please note that the car types mentioned under these category titles were not necessarily encountered in every decade or period);

Equipment deadheading: is indicated by [dd];

Combination Coach/Guard/Baggage cars: are shown in these volumes as pure Coaches;

Buffet and Restaurant cars: are shown as “B” or “R” (some Buffet cars might have been recorded as Restaurant cars, and vice versa; full Buffet cars were not always distinguished from combination Buffet Coaches, especially in the earlier years; and Buffet cars weren't always identified as such in Electric Multiple Unit trains);

Snack-bar and cart facilities: are not indicated but one or the other typically was available on major trains;

City & other names: are shown in the local language, in some cases more than one (please see below under **ALTERNATIVE VERSION OF NAMES**);

Award of multi-service provider trips: goes to the service provider accounting for the greater or greatest distance;

Travel by non-rail means: is highlighted by a bullet, either on its own if it occurred at the start of a journey on a non-rail travel day, otherwise within the normal text;

Recording of train composition: has inevitably resulted in inaccuracies and omissions, due to: switching of equipment prior to my joining or leaving a train (or during the middle of the night); mistakes made in recording equipment types; late boarding or hurried exit from trains; and occasional grumpiness or sheer

laziness – in which case assumptions have been made regarding the particular car or locomotive (or number of units), based in some cases on photos taken at the time, and shown in *Italics*.

ABBREVIATIONS

SERVICE PROVIDERS

[Note: coloured abbreviations carry through from earlier volumes]

AWC	Avanti West Coast
BDŽ	Balgarski Darzhavni Žheleznitsi (Bulgarian State Railways)
BLM	Bergbahn-Lauterbrunnen-Mürren
BLS	Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon Bahn
BOB	Berner Oberland Bahnen
BRB	Brienzi Rothorn Bahn
ČD	České Dráhy (Czech Railways)
CFR	Societatea Națională a Căilor Ferate Române (National Society of Romanian Railways)
CS	Caledonian Sleeper
DB	Deutsche Bahn (German Railroad)
ES	Eurostar
GW	Great Western Railway
IÉ	Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail)
K&D	Keith & Dufftown Railway
LNE	London North Eastern Railway
MÁV	Magyar Államvasutak (Hungarian State Railways)
NJ	Nightjet (ÖBB)
ÖBB	Österreichische Bundesbahnen (Austrian Federal Railways)
SBB	Schweizerische Bundesbahnen/Chemin de fer fédéraux Suisse/Ferrovie Federali Svizzere (Swiss Federal Railways)
SCR	ScotRail Trains

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SNCF	Société nationale des chemins de fer Français (French National Railways)
SR	Southern Railway
SVR	Severn Valley Railway
SW	South Western Railway
TCDD	Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Demiryolları (Turkish State Railways)
TL	Translink (NI [Northern Ireland] Railways)
TPE	TransPennine Express
WM	West Midlands Railway
WTB	Weisseritztalbahn (Weisseritz Valley Railway)

ADDITIONAL RAILWAYS AND RAIL ENTITIES

BR	British Rail
CIWL	Compagnie internationale des Wagons-lits et du Tourisme (International Sleeping Car and Tourism Co.)
EWS	English, Scottish & Welsh Railway
JLV	Jídelní a Lůžkové Vozy (Dining and Sleeping Car Co.) (ČD)
MGR	Chemin de fer Montreux–Glion–Rochers-de-Naye (Montreux–Glion–Rochers-de-Naye Railway)
SNCB	Société nationale des chemins de fer Belges/Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen (Belgian National Railways)

RAIL EQUIPMENT

b	Bi-mode (Electric/Diesel)
BMU	Bi-mode Multiple Unit train
C	Coach
Cab	Cab-controlled Coach
CfL	Cafe Lounge
d	Diesel
DMU	Diesel Multiple Unit train

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DVT	Driving Van Trailer
E	Engine
e	Electric
EMU	Electric Multiple Unit train
ex-	Formerly
m	Self-propelled multiple-unit train
PC	Power Car Coach
R	Restaurant
S	Sleeper
s	Steam
T	Courette

TRAIN MARKETING NAMES

EC	EuroCity
HST	High Speed Train
IC	Intercity
ICE	Inter City Express
RJ	RailJet (ÖBB-CĐ)
TGV	Train à grande vitesse (High Speed Train)

SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS

dc	Double-berth compartment
qc	Quadruple-berth compartment
tc	Triple-berth compartment

EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS

ABB	ASEA Brown Boveri
ALS	Alstom
ASEA	Allmänna Svenska Electriska Aktiebolaget

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BBC	Brown Boveri
BBD	Bombardier
BMS	Berliner Maschinenbau (Schwartzkopff)
BR	British Rail
BREL	British Rail Engineering Ltd.
BT	Brush Traction
CAF	Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles
DWA	Deutsche Waggonbau AG
EC	Electroputere Craiova
FF	Fiat Ferroviaria
HIT	Hitachi Rail
HR	Hyundai Rotem
LEW	Locomotivbau Elektratechnische Werke (Hennigsdorf)
68S	6880 Society
ŠKD	Škodovy Závody
SLM	Schweizerische Lokomotiv-und Maschinenfabrik
SMS	Siemens Transportation
TCC	Tokyu Car Corp.
TUL	Türkiye Lokomotif ve Motor Sanayi Anonim Şirketi (Tülomsaş)
TUV	Türkiye Vagon Sanayi Anonim Şirketi (Tüvasaş)

COUNTRIES

Aust. – Austria; Bel. – Belgium; Bul. – Bulgaria; Cze. – Czech Republic; Eng. – England; Ger. – Germany; Gr. – Greece; Hung. – Hungary; Ire. – Ireland; Neth. – Netherlands; N. Ire. – Northern Ireland; Rom. – Romania; Scot. – Scotland; Serb. – Serbia; Sp. – Spain; Swit. – Switzerland; Tur. – Turkey; Wal. – Wales.

ALTERNATIVE VERSION OF NAMES

Athína	Athens
Beograd	Belgrade
Bruxelles/Brussel	Brussels
Bucureşti	Bucharest
Milano	Milan
München	Munich
Praha	Prague
Roma	Rome
Wien	Vienna

SAMPLE ENTRY

6-7 MAY:

CFR-MÁV-ÖBB IC 346 BUCUREŞTI NORD-WIEN HBF *Dacia*

Ee	[ÖBB]	BUDAPEST-WIEN
Ee		BUCUREŞTI-BUDAPEST [91 53 0 410 009-1]
S*		[61 53 70-70 91 004-9]
T		
C	[3]	
R		BUCUREŞTI-ARAD
R	[MÁV]	BUDAPEST-WIEN
C	[2] [MÁV]	"
S		[CLUJ NAPOCA] ARAD-WIEN
T		"
C		"

To **WIEN** on *Dacia*, departing 1507, arriving next morning 20 minutes late at 0840, including stops at Braşov, Sighişoara, Arad, Lőkösháza (Hung.), Békéscsaba, Budapest, Győr and Hegyeshalom, behind electric locomotives **[equipment CFR unless indicated otherwise]**; * We occupied a compartment in the Romanian

Sleeping car; * Upon arrival, we walked over to Hotel Ibis, right across from the station (one night there); spent the afternoon riding D and No. 2 streetcars around the Ring, stopped by the famed Café Central, and took in some jazz at Jazzland in the evening, located in a 500-year-old cellar * 1,160 km (est.) in 16 hrs 33 mins (including time change), or 70 km/h (724 mls/44 mph) (*Copșa Mică-Alba Iulia segment estimated at 80 km*); * Consist partly assumed; * No. 91 53 0 410 009-1 (EC, 1967-91); * No. 61 53 70-70 91 004-9 (DWA, 19??; 10dc; ex-DB, rebuilt CFR 2005).

Explanations:

6-7 MAY:

- departure & arrival dates;

CFR-MAV-ÖBB IC 346

- service providers were Societatea Națională a Căilor Ferate Române (*National Society of Romanian Railways*), Magyar Államvasutak (*Hungarian State Railways*) & Österreichische Bundesbahnen (*Austrian Federal Railways*); train number 12002; some railways coloured in all volumes, as **ÖBB** in Blue here;

BUCUREȘTI NORD-WIEN HBF

- originating & terminating cities (in this case, of the train itself); Nord and Hauptbahnhof stations;

Dacia

- name of train;

Ee [ÖBB] BUDAPEST-WIEN

- Austrian Locomotive between those points (the “e” indicating Electric);

Ee BUCUREȘTI-BUDAPEST
[91 53 0 410 009-1]

- Romanian Locomotive between those points & its number (the “e” indicating Electric) [*equipment CFR unless indicated otherwise*];

S* [61 53 70-70 91 004-9]

- Romanian Sleeper & its number, over the entire route (Bold & * indicating that we occupied this car);;

T

- Romanian Couchette car, over the entire route);

C [3]

- three Romanian Coaches, likewise;

R BUCUREȘTI-ARAD

- Romanian Restaurant car, between those points;

R [MÁV] BUDAPEST-WIEN

- Hungarian Restaurant car, between Budapest & Wien;

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C [2] “	• two Hungarian Coaches, likewise;
S [CLUJ NAPOCA] ARAD-WIEN	• Romanian Sleeper originating at Cluj Napoca, on at Arad for Wien;
T “	• Cuchette car, likewise;
C “	• Coach, likewise.
* 1,160 km (est.) in 16 hrs, 33mins or 70 km/h (724 mls/44 mph)	• distance travelled, elapsed time & average speed in kilometres (<i>and miles</i>), plus other details;
* No. 91 53 0 410 009-1 (EC, 1967-91)	• Locomotive built by Electroputere Craiova, during this production run;
* No. 61 53 70-70 91 004-9 (DWA, (DWA, 19??; 10dc; ex-DB; (rebuilt CFR 2005;	• Sleeping car built by Deutsche Waggonbau AG; unknown year; 10, 2-berth compartments; ex-German Railroad; rebuilt by Romanian Railways.

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1200	Dublin Heuston-Cork	99
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1800	Galway-Dublin Heuston	103
KEITH & DUFFTOWN (K&D)		
1130	Keith-Dufftown	113
1530	Dufftown-Keith	113
LONDON NORTH EASTERN (LNE)		
0548	Edinburgh Waverley-Doncaster	115
0947	Doncaster-London King's Cross	117
1011	Stonehaven-Edinburgh Waverley	114
NIGHTJET (NJ)		
408	Berlin Hauptbahnhof-Zürich Hauptbahnhof	77
ROMANIAN (CFR)		
D346	<i>Dacia</i>	62
1094	Ruse-Bucureşti	61
SCOTRAIL (SCR)		
0747	Glasgow Central-Bishopton	108
0850	Bishopton-Glasgow Central	109

<i>number</i>	<i>name or from-to</i>	<i>page(s)</i>
1007	Glasgow Queen Street-Inverness	109
1103	Keith-Aberdeen	113
1244	Aberdeen-Stonehaven	113
1428	Inverness-Keith	111
SEVERN VALLEY (SV)		
1300	Kidderminster-Hampton Loade	44
1410	Hampton Loade-Bewdley	46
1737	Bewdley-Kidderminster	46
SOUTHERN (SR)		
0700	London Victoria-Gatwick Airport	48
SOUTH WESTERN (SW)		
0905	London Waterloo-Parkstone	47
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SWISS FEDERAL (SBB)		
IC 812	Zürich Hauptbahnhof-Spiez	80
IC 964	Spiez-Basel SBB	89
TRANSLINK (N. IRELAND) (TI)		
0900	Belfast Grand Central-Dublin Connolly	98
1010	Belfast Grand Central-Derry	96
TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS (TPE)		
0909	Scunthorpe-Doncaster	116
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<i>number</i>	<i>name or from-to</i>	<i>page(s)</i>
1050	Dublin Connolly-Belfast Grand Central	93
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12002	<i>Ankara Ekspresi</i>	51
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81013	Ankara-İstanbul Söğütölütlüçeşme	55
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P5000	Freital Hainsberg-Kurort Kipsdorf	74
P5001	Kurort Kipsdorf-Freital Hainsberg-	74
WEST MIDLANDS (WM)		
1135	Worcester Foregate-Kidderminster	44
1852	Kidderminster-Birmingham Moorgate Street	46
ZENTRALBAHN (ZB)		
1602	Brienz-Interlaken Ost	82
 <p><i>[Berner Oberland Bahn (rail- info.ch/BOB/index.en)]</i></p>		

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THE 2020's



2020's-2: Driving Van Trailer No. 9004 bringing up the rear of Irish Railways-Translink's Belfast-bound 1050 *Enterprise* service, Connolly Station, Dublin (2025/05/20) [SANDRA DAWES].

*ENGLAND/IRELAND/WALES/SCOTLAND/
TURKEY/BULGARIA/ROMANIA/
HUNGARY/AUSTRIA/CZECH
REPUBLIC/GERMANY/SWIT-
ZERLAND/FRANCE*



[Sources: avantiwestcoast.co.uk; bls.ch/en; [bb.ch/en](http://bob: rail-info.ch/smalspuren); lmb: jungfrau.ch/en-gb/arrival-at-station-car-parks/muerren-railway-station; brienz-rothorn-bahn.ch/en; eurostar.com/rw-en; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgarian_State_Railways; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C4%83ile_Ferate_Rom%C3%A2ne; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iarnród_Éireann; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_North_Eastern_Railway; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SNCF; [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translink_\(Northern_Ireland\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translink_(Northern_Ireland)); en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_State_Railways; gwr.com; keith-dufftown-railway.co.uk; svr.co.uk; scotrail.co.uk; sleeper.scot; southernrailway.com; southwestern railway.com; tpexpress.co.uk; westmidlandsrailway.co.uk; njfrühstücks-karte; wtb photo loco; zentralbahn.ch/en.

OVERALL CONTEXT

So, this summer, as you stand in interminable queues at an airport, remember that a night-train renaissance could get you to your holiday destination more comfortably and more sustainably. The EU's actions on international rail lag behind the rhetoric. Building more night-train carriages to run more services on tracks already there should be a no brainer.

Jon Worth
("Europe was promised a night train revival, so why the delay?", *Guardian Weekly*
(2025/06/20, 47).

Our first major 2020's holiday was motivated by a desire to travel again in Europe, in the old train-based way. The above quotation had some relevance for us, given the five overnight trains we took during this 2025 holiday.

In the United Kingdom, as of 2025, the rail passenger industry continued to evolve from the franchise concept that followed British Rail's demise to a form of government ownership, if not full nationalization. Covid-19 played a big role in spurring a change that already was underway. The national government still owned the infrastructure, managed by Network Rail on its behalf, and several franchises were brought back under government management. Perhaps the biggest example was the transformation of Virgin

Trains East Coast into London North Eastern Railway, which in 2025 was operated by “Dft Operator Limited”, a government-owned holding company established to take over Train Operating Companies (TOC's) that were either failing financially or returning to public ownership at the end of their contract terms. (Other Dft companies included South Western and TransPennine Express.) A small number of non-franchised companies were operating under the government's “open-access” policy, such as LUMO between Edinburgh and London King's Cross. Planning for a network of high-speed lines connecting London with the Midlands and north of England was proceeding, but faced opposition from land owners in particular, and as of this writing had been truncated to London-Birmingham only. On the freight side, Freightliner and German Federal-owned DB Cargo UK were examples of TOC's. Leasing companies still owned much of the carriage and locomotive fleet.

On the Continent, European Union policy still required that countries split their railways into separate infrastructure and operating entities, in some cases leading to spinoffs of regional services to provincially funded entities. This also led to some new passenger and freight open-access services, both within countries and internationally. In 2020, Eurostar International Ltd. merged with sister company Thalys, with French National Railways (SNCF) holding 55%, Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec 30%, Hermes Infrastructure 10%, and Belgian National Railways (SNCB) 5%. The company was effectively bankrupt, due in part to Covid, but the French government was leading the way in ensuring its survival. An example of an open-access, high-speed service was Trenitalia France's *Freciarrosa* (Red Arrow) service between Milano Centrale and Paris Gare de Lyon.

Where overnight trains were concerned, some Sleeping car services continued to be provided by state owned railways. Austrian Federal Railroad (ÖBB) had taken over several of the old German Railroad (DB) *City Night Line* services under its *Nightjet* brand, and inaugurated other routes. In Britain, Scottish Rail Holdings was now operating Caledonian Sleeper services between England and Scotland, using modern, Spanish-built equipment. Great Western still provided its London Paddington-Penzance *Night Riviera* train, with old-but-refurbished Sleeping cars.

Tourist lines continued to abound in Britain, examples being the Severn Valley steam line between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth in England and Keith Dufftown Railway between its namesake towns in Scotland using Diesel Multiple Unit trains. In Germany, the Weisseritz Valley Railway operated a narrow-gauge steam line in the Dresden area.

Finally, rail passes continued to be essential for our way of travelling: • Britrail "England", 3 days-in-a-month, flexi passes during the first week; • Eurail "Global" 15-days passes for most of the continental stretch; • Eurail 5-days-in-a-month passes for all of Ireland; and • Britrail 15-days Consecutive passes for the last 10 days. (The Eurail Global passes were valid everywhere on the Continent we went, but we only activated them after reaching Sofia, Bulgaria.)

TRIP DETAILS

[The following refers to our only Overseas holiday so far during the 2020's, and much of it will be repeated in the opening part of the 2025 representation itself.]

During this 2025 holiday, we took 72 train trips and travelled 12,349 kilometres (7,707 miles), including: 3,654 km (2,280 mls) in the the United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland), 1,426 km (890 mls) in Ireland (including Northern Ireland); 1,404 km (876 mls) in Turkey; 1,212 km (756 mls) in Germany; 1,014 km (633 mls) in France; 790 km (493 mls) in Romania; 709 km (442 mls) in Bulgaria; 657 km (410 mls) in Czech Republic; 610 km (381 mls) in Switzerland; 413 km (258 mls) in Hungary; 194 km (121 mls) in Belgium; 172 km (107 mls) in Austria; and 94 km (59 mls) in the Netherlands.

Number of trips by service provider: **8** –Irish (EI); **6** – Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon and ScotRail; **4** – Berner Oberland (including Bergbahn Lauterbrunnen-Mürren) and Czech; **3** – Avanti West Coast; German; London North Eastern; Severn Valley (SV); and South Western; **2** – Brienz Rothorn; Eurostar (ES); Bulgarian State; French National; Keith & Dufftown (K&D); Romanian (CFR); Swiss Federal; Translink (N. Ireland) (TL); TransPennine Express; Weisseritz Valley (WTB); Turkish State (TCDD); and West Midlands; **1** – Caledonian Sleeper (CS); Great Western; Nightjet (ÖBB); Southern; and Zentralbahn.

PLACES VISITED

(Note: * indicates by non-rail means)

England: Bewdley; Birmingham; Crewe; Doncaster; Gatwick Airport; Hampton Loade; Kidderminster; London; Poole; Scunthorpe; Southampton; and Worcester; **Ireland:** Belfast; Cobh; Cork; Derry; Dublin, Galway; and Limerick Jct.; **Scotland:** Aberdeen; Bishopton; Cullen Bay*; Dunnottar Castle*; Dufftown; Edinburgh; Erskine*; Glasgow; Inverness; Keith; Loch Katrine*; and Stonehaven. **Wales:** Holyhead.

Austria: Wien; **Belgium:** Bruxelles/Brussel; **Bulgaria:** Ruse and Sofia; **Czech Republic:** Plzeň and Praha. **France:** Cherbourg and Paris. **Germany:** Berlin; Dresden; Freital Hainsberg and Kurort Kipsdorf; **Netherlands:** Amsterdam; **Romania:** București; **Switzerland:** Basel; Bern; Brienz; Grütschalp; Interlaken; Lauterbrunnen; Mürren; Planalp; Spiez; Thun; and Zürich; and **Turkey:** Ankara and İstanbul.

PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY TRIPS

ES 9149-9352, Amsterdam Schiphol-London St. Pancras (by high-speed *Eurostar* through the Chunnel, changing trains in Bruxelles/Brussel Midi); **SV 1300**, Kidderminster to Hampton Loade (steam-hauled over this highly scenic line and back, truncated due to a serious washout); **TCDD Ankara Ekspresí**, İstanbul Söğütölütlüçeşme to Ankara overnight (in a TCDD Sleeping car, roomy but requiring occupants to pull down the beds themselves); **TCDD 81013**, Ankara to İstanbul Söğütölütlüçeşme (on a Yüksek Hızlı Tren [*YHT* – high-speed train] based on a Siemens *Velaro* design; running mostly on new, dedicated track, including mountain segments); **TCDD-BDŽ Sofiya Express**, İstanbul Halkalı to Sofia Tsentralna (middle of the night immigration inspections by both the Turks and Bulgarians, the former requiring passengers to disembark for inspection, the latter taking away passports before returning them); **CFR-MÁV-ÖBB Dacia**, București Nord to Wien Hauptbahnhof (overnight in a shower-equipped compartment of a Romanian Sleeper); **WTB 0925**, Freital Hainsberg to Kurort Kipsdorf (well-run, narrow-gauge steam train near Dresden); **NJ**, Berlin Hauptbahnhof-Zürich Hauptbahnhof (overnight on one of several former *City Night Line* overnights now operated by ÖBB under the *Nightjet* brand); **SNCF 9218**, Basel SBB to Paris Lyon (*Lyria* brand Train-à grand Vitesse, the fastest of our holiday, at an average of 169 km/h [*106 mph*]); **EI-TL 0900**, Dublin Connolly to Belfast Grand Central (on an *Enterprise* intercity service, the guard showing me the Driving Van Trailer but the locomotive leading this day); **CS 2140 Caledonian Sleeper**, London Euston to Glasgow Central (overnight in a Spanish-built Sleeper car, Scotches in the Café Lounge); **K&D**, Keith to Dufftown (day excursion on a Diesel Multiple Unit train over the preserved “Whisky Trail” line.

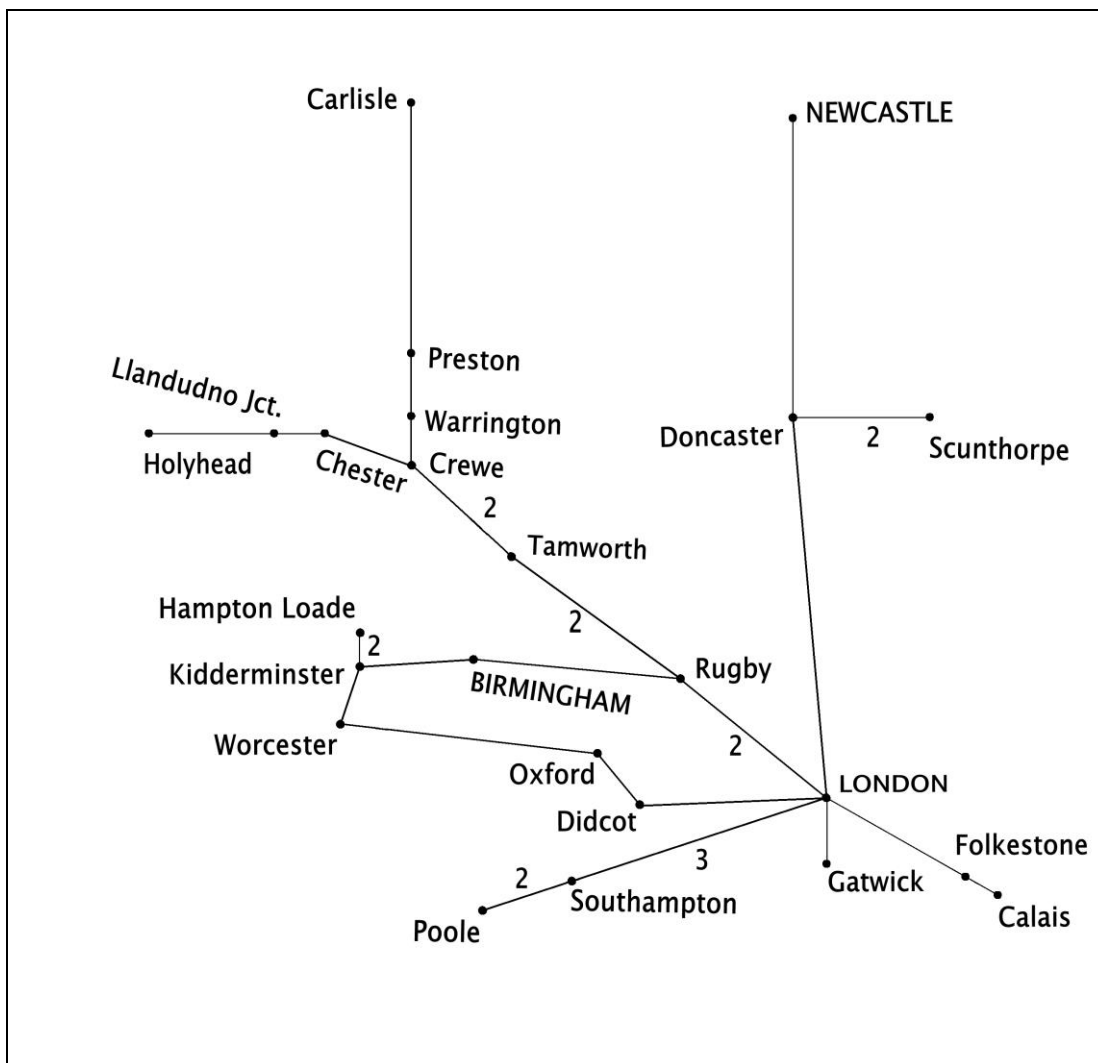
TIMINGS

... are taken from detailed trip cards, railway timetables, station-display boards, and websites, plus various editions of Thomas Cook and European Rail Timetable Ltd.'s *European Rail Timetable*.

ROUTE SCHEMATIC 1A: BRITISH ISLES

ENGLAND & WALES

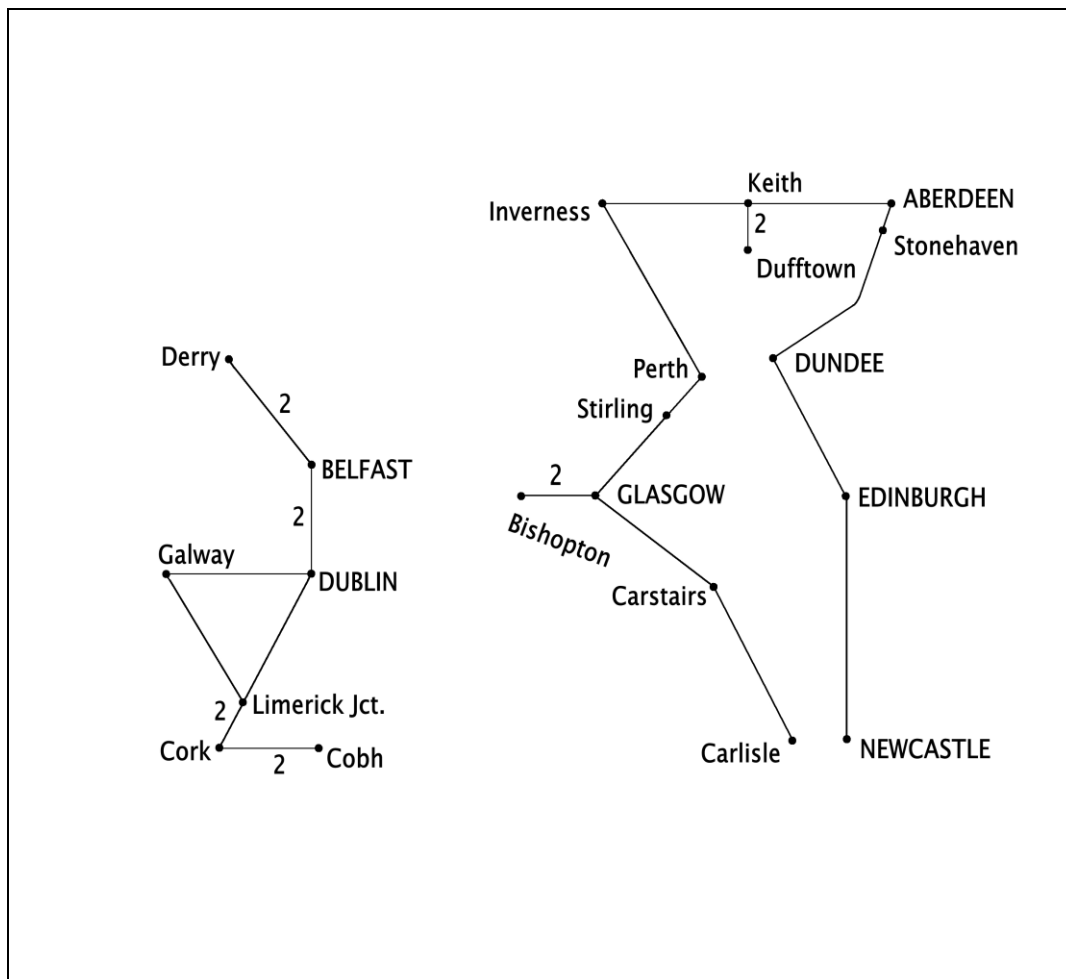
[Showing one-way trips by route segment (• one such trip unless shown otherwise; • Caledonian Sleeper rerouted via unknown route but shown here as regular London-Carlisle)]



ROUTE SCHEMATIC 1B: BRITISH ISLES

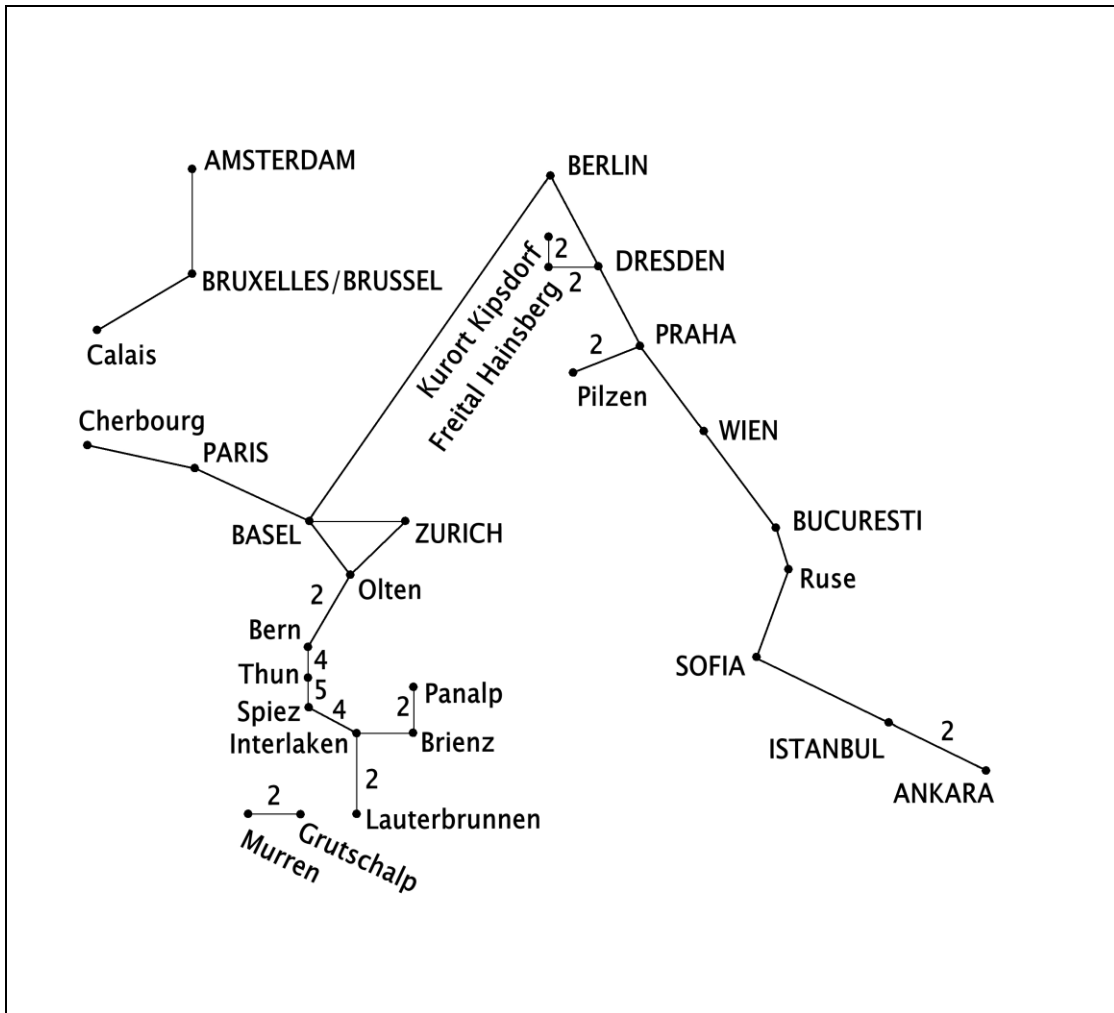
IRELAND & SCOTLAND

[Showing one-way trips by route segment (• one such trip unless shown otherwise; • Caledonian Sleeper rerouted via unknown route but shown here as regular Carlisle-Glasgow)]



ROUTE SCHEMATIC 2: THE CONTINENT

**[Showing one-way trips by route segment
(one such trip unless shown otherwise)]**



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2025

*ENGLAND/IRELAND/WALES/SCOTLAND/
TURKEY/BULGARIA/ROMANIA/
HUNGARY/AUSTRIA/CZECH
REPUBLIC/GERMANY/SWIT-
ZERLAND/FRANCE*



*[Placard on the side of Bulgarian State Railways Car Line No. A-2, Sofia-
Ruse Train No. 2611-463, "Sofia" (left) & "Ruse" (right)
(2025/05/05)] [PETER DAWES].*

SYNOPSIS

This was my seventeenth overseas holiday (12th with Sandra), featuring in order: • almost a week in England; • three-and-a-half weeks on the Continent (Turkey, then transiting Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria to reach Czech Republic, then briefly through Germany to Switzerland and transiting France to the Channel); • ferry to Ireland and a week there, • a week-and-a-half in Scotland, then England again; and finally • six days on Cunard's QUEEN MARY 2 back to New York (airplane onward home from there). Our primary home bases were at: • the Brook Green Hotel in Hammersmith, west London; • Alison and David's home in Erskine, Renfrewshire, Scotland; and • Eva & Margaret's place in Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire. The above Bulgarian State placard gives a flavour of one of the more interesting trains we took on the Continent, from Sofia to Ruse.

Trips taken: We took 72, covering 12,349 kilometres (7,707 miles), 28 in the United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland), 15 in Switzerland, 10 in Ireland (including Northern Ireland), 6 in Germany, 4 in Czech Republic, 2 each in Bulgaria, France, Romania and Turkey, and 1 in Belgium. Sixty-seven of the trips were in my "Coaches, Pullmans & Lounges" category and 5 in "Sleeping & Couchette Cars", with the latter accounting for 59% of the total distance. Thirty were on locomotive hauled, compared to 42 on self-propelled trains, but the latter covered only 41% of the distance. There were 7 trips behind steam, 3 in UK and 2 each in Germany and Switzerland.

Equipment units: 534, made up of 41 Locomotives & Related Units and 493 cars (Coaches, Pullmans & Lounges, 447; Sleeping & Couchette Cars, 25; Restaurant & Other Meal Cars, 18; Baggage & Miscellaneous Cars, 3).

BRITISH ISLES

Places visited in England: Bewdley; Birmingham; Crewe; Doncaster; Gatwick Airport; Hampton Loade; Kidderminster; London; Poole; Scunthorpe; Southampton; and Worcester; ***Ireland:*** Belfast; Cobh; Cork; Derry; Dublin, Galway; and Limerick Jct.; ***Scotland:*** Aberdeen; Bishopton; Cullen Bay*, Dunnottar Castle*; Dufftown, Edinburgh; Erskine*; Glasgow; Inverness; Keith, Loch Katrine*, and Stonehaven. ***Wales:*** Holyhead. (***Note:*** * indicates by non-rail means.)

Noteworthy rail trips: *Severn Valley (SV) 1035*, Kidderminster to Hampton Loade; *Caledonian Sleeper*, London Euston to Glasgow Central; *Keith & Dufftown*, Keith to Dufftown; *London North Eastern*, Edinburgh to Doncaster; *Irish Rail-Translink 0900*, Dublin Connolly to Belfast Grand Central; *Translink 1010*, Belfast Grand Central to Derry; *Irish 1200*, Dublin Heuston to Cork; *Irish 1137*, Limerick Jct. to Galway.

Fastest average speed: *London North Eastern 0947*, Doncaster-London King's Cross: 146 km/h (91 mph). **Slowest:** *SV 1015*, Kidderminster-Hampton Loade, 17 km/h (11 mph).

Memorable non-rail trips: • by Irish Ferries' ULYSSES, Dublin to Holyhead; • by automobile from Erskine to Loch Katrine & return; Keith to Cullen Bay & return (both Scotland).

THE CONTINENT

Places visited in Austria: Wien. **Belgium:** Bruxelles/Brussel; **Bulgaria:** Ruse; and Sofia; **Czech Republic:** Plzeň and Praha. **France:** Cherbourg and Paris. **Germany:** Berlin; Dresden; Freital Hainsberg; and Kurort Kipsdorf. **Netherlands:** Amsterdam (Schiphol Airport only); **Romania:** București; **Switzerland:** Basel; Bern; Brienz; Grütschalp; Interlaken; Lauterbrunnen; Mürren; Panalp; Spiez; Thun; and Zürich; and **Turkey:** Ankara and İstanbul.

Noteworthy rail trips: *Eurostar (ES) 9149*, Amsterdam Schiphol to Bruxelles/Brussel Midi/Zuid; *ES 9352*, Bruxelles/Brussel Midi/Zuid to London St. Pancras; *Turkish State (TCDD) Ankara Ekspresí*, İstanbul Söğütölütlüçeşme to Ankara; *TCDD 81013*, Ankara to İstanbul Söğütölütlüçeşme; *TCDD-Bulgarian State Sofiya Express*, İstanbul Halkalı to Sofia; *Romanian State-Hungarian State-Austrian Federal Dacia*, București Nord to Wien Hauptbahnhof; *Weisseritz Valley*, Freital Hainsberg-Kurort Kipsdorf; *Nightjet*, Berlin Hauptbahnhof to Zürich Hauptbahnhof; *Berner-Oberland 0904*, Interlaken Ost to Lauterbrunnen; *Brienz-Rothorn 1400*, Brienz to Panalp; *Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon-Swiss Federal*, Spiez to Basel SBB; *French National (SNCF)*, Basel, SBB to Paris Lyon.

Fastest average speed: *SNCF 9218*, Basel SBB to Paris Lyon: 169 km/h (106 mph). **Slowest:** *Brienz Rothorn Bahn 1400*, Brienz to Panalp & return: 4 km/h (2 mph).

Memorable non-rail trips: • by ferry from İstanbul, European side, across the Bosphorus to the Asian side; by cable lift from Lauterbrunnen to Grütschalp, then Mürren up to the Schilthorn; • by Irish Ferries' W.B. YEATS, Cherbourg overnight to Dublin.

HIGHLIGHTS!

Riding several high-speed trains, namely a Siemens-built *Velaro Eurostar* through the Chunnel, then another version of this train from Ankara to İstanbul, and later a TGV *Lyria* service from Basel to Paris. Resting overnight in spacious Turkish State Sleeping cars from İstanbul to both Ankara and Sofia, despite intrusive customs and immigration procedures at the Turkish-Bulgarian border (which actually just added to the sense of adventure)! Taking the Severn Valley steam train as on past trips, and visiting the river town of Bewdley with our QUEEN ELIZABETH 2 friend Sylvia, also riding the open observation car of the narrow-gauge Weisseritz Valley Railroad, near Dresden.

MILESTONE

Riding trains in several new countries, namely Turkey, Bulgaria and Ireland, all participants in Eurailpass, although we did not activate the continental version until reaching Sofia, for reasons described below.



[“Have a safe journey”, from Czech Railways ticket envelope, 2025].



[Rechargeable İstanbulkart, valid on most public transport, 2025]

TRIPS AND TRAIN COMPOSITION

- **21-22 APR:** To **LONDON** via Amsterdam, starting with a KLM Royal Dutch Airlines Airbus A330 overnight into Airport Schiphol (the only direct, year-round flight between Edmonton and Europe).

22 APR:

ES 9352 [AMSTERDAM] SCHIPHOL-BRUXELLES/BRUSSEL MIDI/ZUID [PARIS NORD] Eurostar

Ee [4532]
C [5]
CfL
C [6]
CfL
C* [5]
Ee

To **LONDON** via Bruxelles/Brussel, boarding this Amsterdam-originating, Paris-bound *Eurostar* right beneath the airport; * Depart 1327, arrive 1506, stopping at Rotterdam and Antwerpen, powered by a tri-voltage, PBA Class TGV set built by Alstom; * We occupied Standard Coach 93-70 37 40 165-3, designated as Car 18 in this 18-car train; * 195 km in 1 hr 39 mins, or 118 km/h (122 mls/74 mph); * No. 4532 (ALS, 1996; ex-Thalys).

ES 9149 BRUXELLES/BRUSSEL MIDI/ZUID-LONDON ST. PANCRAE Eurostar

Cme [8] [4015]
Cme* [8]

Depart 1651, arrive five minutes late at 1810, calling only at Lille Europe station, this *Eurostar* consisting of back-to-back, Electric Multiple Unit, *Velaro* “e320” trains built by Siemens Mobility; * We occupied the car designated as No. 12 in a 16-car train; * 338 km in 2 hrs 19 mins, or 146 km/h (211 mls/91 mph); * No. 4015 (SMS, 2011-3).



2020's-3: Eurostar's Amsterdam-Paris No. 9352 just arrived at Airport Schiphol station (2025/04/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

AMSTERDAM TO LONDON BY EUROSTAR

... involved a high-speed Eurostar (formerly Thalys), Paris-bound train from Airport Schiphol to Bruxelles/Brussel Midi/Zuid station, where we changed to another *Eurostar* for London St. Pancras, through the Chunnel. Finding the correct platform at Schiphol was difficult, but several fellow passengers kindly confirmed that we had found the right one (including a couple destined for Barcelona, all the way by train – which by now required an overnight stay in the French capital). Heavy renovations were underway in Midi/Zuid station, relegating intending passengers to a narrow temporary waiting area. A member of our train crew gave me permission to take a photograph, only to be countermanded by a colleague attending to a train on the *next* platform! Onward from St. Pancras by means of Victoria and Central Underground lines to Shepherd's Bush, followed by a 10-minute walk to the Brook Green Hotel in Hammersmith, our home for five nights.



2020's-4: Eurostar's Bruxelles/Brussel-originating No. 9149, newly arrived St. Pancras Station, London (2025/04/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

23 APR:

GW 0851 LONDON PADDINGTON-WORCESTER FOREGATE STREET [GREAT MALVERN]

Cmd [5] [800 002]

To **KIDDERMINSTER** via Worcester, to ride the Severn Valley Railway, beginning with a Circle Line tube train from Hammersmith to Paddington Station; * Depart 0851, arrive Worcester 11 minutes late at 1114, including stops at Reading, Didcot Parkway and Moreton-in-Marsh; * The ticket agent at Paddington had activated our Britrail passes with good humour; * This was a Hitachi-built, Great Western (GW) Class 800 "Electro-Diesel Multiple Unit" train of five cars, with no Buffet or Café, just cart service; * GW was now owned by the Scottish-based transport operator, FirstGroup; * 195 km in 2 hrs 23 mins, or 82 km/h (122 mls/51 mph); * No. 800002 (HIT, 2014-8) (our car recorded as 811002).



[gwr.com, 2025].

WM 1115 WORCESTER FOREGATE STREET-KIDDERMINSTER [DORRIDGE]

Cmd [5]

Depart on time at 1115, arrive eight minutes late at 1133, including stops at Worcester Shrub Hill and Droitwich Spa, in a Bombardier-built, West Midlands Class 172 Diesel Multiple Unit "Turbostar" train; * West Midlands Trains was a Train Operating Company running under this and the London Northwestern banners; * 24 km in 18 mins, or 80 km/h (15 mls/50 mph).

SV 1300 KIDDERMINSTER-HAMPTON LOADE

Es	[GWR]	[6880 Betton Grange]
C [4]		[E4550, W25771, E21254, E4690]
B		[SC1855]
C [2]		[M16169, M25346]

Day outing on the Severn Valley, behind steam locomotive BETTON GRANGE; * Depart 1300, arrive Hampton Loade 1352, including stops at Bewdley, Arley and Highley; * Our locomotive this day was a built-from-scratch, 4-6-0, hauling ex-British Rail carriages from Western, Eastern, Midland and Southern regions; * 19 km in 1 hr 6 mins, or 17 km/h (11 mls/11 mph); * No. 6880 (68S, 2024); * Nos. M16169 (1961), M25346 (1957); SC1853 (1961); E4550 (1956), E4690 (1957), E21254 (1963), W25771 (1961) (all BR).

ON THE SEVERN VALLEY AGAIN

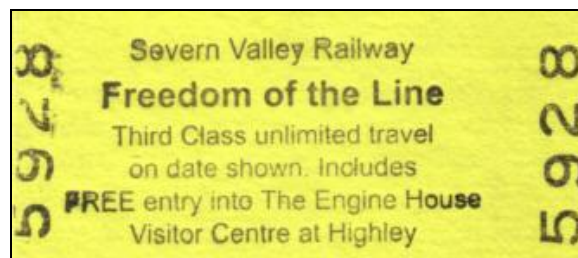
Our dear QE 2 friend, Sylvia, met us at the Severn Valley's Kiddersminster station (alas, Richard having passed away). After scampy (seafood), chips and Bitter beer in the station pub, we proceeded to our train, Sylvia having complimentary tickets for us (she and Richard being longtime supporters of the preserved railway). We parked ourselves in a 1st Class compartment of "Composite Corridor" carriage No. 16169, of British Rail 1961 vintge. Due to a rockslide at the northern end of the 26 kilometre (16-mile) line, our train could go only as far as Hampton Loade, the last station before end-of-the-line at Bridgnorth. We then doubled back down to Bewdley, and after a walk around this beautiful old town located on the western banks of the River Severn, caught the train back to Kidderminster.



2020's-5: Sylvia Beardshaw & author in our 1st Class compartment of carriage No. 16169, part of Severn Valley's 1300 service from Kidderminster to Hampton Loade (2025/04/23) [SANDRA DAWES].

NO. 6880 BETTON GRANGE

... had been built under the auspices of the 6880 Society, based on the Great Western Grange Class 4-6-0's. Back in 1939, No. 6880 was to be the 81st locomotive in this class, but the war intervened and production ended. Construction from scratch of the new version began in 1998, but the locomotive did not go into operation until 2024, based at the Langollen Railway in northern Wales. As of this date, it had been lent to the Severn Valley for operation.



[Severn Valley ticket (good in 1st Class too, on Apr. 23, 2025)]



2020's-6: 4-6-0 locomotive No. 6880 BETTON GRANGE arriving Kidderminster on a Hampton Loade-originating Severn Valley train (2025/04/23) [PETER DAWES].

SV 1410 HAMPTON LOADE-BEWDLEY [KIDDERMINSTER]

[As for train above, except locomotive at the other end]

Depart 1410, arrive 1452; * 13 km in 42 mins, or 19 km/h (8 mls/11 mph).

SV 1737 [HAMPTON LOADE] BEWDLEY-KIDDERMINSTER

[As for train above, except locomotive at the other end]

Depart 1737, arrive 1750; * 6 km in 13 mins, or 27 km/h (4 mls/17 mph).

WM 1852 [WORCESTER] KIDDERMINSTER-BIRMINGHAM MOOR ST. [STRATFORD-UPON-AVON]

Cmd [5]

Depart 1852, arrive circa 1915, including stops at Stourbridge Jct. and Birmingham Snow Hill, followed by a 10-minute walk over to New Street Station; * 31 km in 23 mins, or 82 km/h (19 mls/51 mph).

AWC 2021 [WOLVERHAMPTON] BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET-LONDON EUSTON

Cme [11] [390 103 Asquith Xavier]

Depart 2021, arrive on time at 2154, including stops at Coventry, Rugby and Watford Jct., on an 11-car, Avanti West Coast, *Pendolino* EMU tilt-train (meaning, the train could run faster by tilting through curves); * These train sets began running at 11 instead of the original nine cars in 2012; and a major refurbishment commenced in 2021; * This set was named after a man who, in 1966, obtained employment at London Euston after first being denied a job, due to his colour; * Coach C featured a “walk-in” café; * As with the other main-line trains taken this day, no ticket check was performed; * AWC was the trading name of First Trenitalia West Coast Rail, owned jointly by First Group and Trenitalia, operator of most Italian passenger trains; * Back to our hotel by Hammersmith & City tube train; * 182 km in 1 hr 33 mins, or 117 km/h (114 mls/73 mph); * No. 390 103 (ALS/FF, 2001-5).

24 APR:**SW 0905 LONDON WATERLOO-PARKSTONE [POOLE]**

Cme [5] LONDON-BOURNEMOUTH [WEYMOUTH]

Cme* [5] [444 016]

To **POOLE** on a day excursion to meet up with my 1st cousin Kitty’s son Phil and family, beginning with Central & Jubilee tube trains to Waterloo Station; * Depart 0905, arrive Parkstone Station (a suburban stop just short of Poole itself) on time at 1118, including stops at Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton and Bournemouth – on a South Western, Electric Multiple Unit, *Desiro* train, the front-half splitting at Bournemouth for Weymouth, our rear-half going to Poole; * These Desiro EMU’s were built by Siemens during 2002-4, and refurbished 2017-20; * Owned by FirstGroup and LTRr [Sic] Corp. of Hong Kong, the South Western franchise would be succeeded by government-owned Dft Operator the following month (i.e., May of 2025); * 182 km in 2 hrs 13 mins, or 82 km/h (112 mls/51 mph); * No. 444106 (SMS, 2002-4).

SW 1803 [POOLE] PARKSTONE-LONDON WATERLOO

Cme [5] [WEYMOUTH] BOURNEMOUTH-LONDON

Cme* [5] [444 016]

Returning, we literally had to run onto the platform to catch the 1803 service, arriving Waterloo 2016, on the same train set as on the morning trip, reaching the Brook Green Hotel via Jubilee & Central lines.

ZIPPING AROUND LONDON

We spent the next two days around the capital: • having dinner with niece and London-resident Stephanie on Friday evening; • watching newly promoted Burnley Football Club demolish my Queen's Park Rangers 5-0 on Saturday afternoon at the old stadium on Loftus Road, and • enjoying the musical "Titanique" in the West End Saturday evening (a spoof on Céline Dionne and the song she performed in the movie). Transportation mainly involved the Central, Circle, Hammersmith & City, and District lines, plus a scenic, double-decker No. 94 bus ride from Shepherd's Bush to Oxford Circus.

27 APR:

SR 0700 LONDON VICTORIA-GATWICK AIRPORT [BRIGHTON]

Cme [9]

To **ISTANBUL** by means of a Turkish Airlines Airbus "A321neo" out of Gatwick Airport; * Using the District Line, we reached Victoria Station and departed there at 0700, arriving Gatwick at 0754; * This was a Bombardier, 2003-built, Class 377 *Electrostar*, Electric Multiple train recorded as having nine 9 cars, which would suggest a 5-car unit hooked together with a 4-car version – a true local, Gatwick being the ninth stop after Clapham Jct., Croydon, Redhill and five others; * After arriving at Istanbul International Airport, we took a speeding, over-priced taxi to our Pera Palace Hotel (three nights there); * 43 km in 54 mins, or 48 km/h (27 mls/30 mph); * Nos. 377 ??? (BBD, 2003).

A CROWDED GATWICK TRAIN

This Sunday morning train was operated under the Southern Railway brand, which was run by the the British-French Govia Thameslink Railway franchise. On this early Sunday morning, all the *Gatwick Express* trains had been cancelled, and passengers directed to Southern's 0700 local Brighton service, which was packed to the hilt with regular passengers and those trying to get to the airport with their luggage.



[southernrailway.com]



2020's-7: İstanbul from the Sirkeci-Kadeköy ferry across the Bosphorus, featuring the Hagia Sophia mosque (2025/04/28) [SANDRA DAWES].

FASCINATING İSTANBUL!

We spent the next three days in İstanbul, on both sides of the Bosphorus Strait, staying at the old Compagnie internationale des Wagons-lits et du Tourisme (*International Sleeping Car and Tourism Co.*) Pera Palace Hotel, in the Beyoğlu district overlooking the Golden Horn. The hotel dated from 1892 but had been nicely refurbished. Subsequent highlights included: • Taksim Square (heavy police presence due to the highly controversial arrest of the city's mayor on corruption charges and the upcoming 1st of May, a traditional day for protesting); • Hagia Sophia mosque (dating from A.D. 537) guided tour; and • Sirkeci Station, the old terminus of Wagons-Lits' *Orient Express*. (including a small museum). One curiosity of the city was the prevalence of well-fed, well-behaved feral cats everywhere.



2020's-8: T2 tram on reserved right-of-way in the Sultanahmet part of İstanbul (2025/04/29) [PETER DAWES].

ALL BY İSTANBULKART

We travelled around on “İstanbulkart” rechargable cards, a cheap and convenient way of getting around on the Metro, trams, buses and most ferries, in our case mainly Tram lines 1, 2 and 6, and Metro line U3. Some highlights • T2 “Nostaljik Tramvay”, Taksim to Karaköy, supplemented by an unusual tunnel funicular on the last stretch; • Turkish State suburban Line B from Kumkapi to Sirkeci (stumbled upon after we got lost in the Fatih part of the city); • F1 funicular to Kabataş, then T1 tram into the heart of the city, Sultanahmet; • and ferry from Sirkeci across the Bosphorus to Kadıköy and back, passing the old Asian-side Haydarpaşa train station, then closed for rehabilitation.



[Logo of İstanbul Metro, 2025]



2020's-9: Turkish State (TCDD)'s No. 12002 *Ankara Ekspresi*, newly arrived at Ankara, YHT meaning High Speed Rail (2025/05/01) [SANDRA DAWES].

30 APR-1 MAY:

TCDD 12002 [HALKALI] İSTANBUL SÖĞÜTLÜÇEŞME-ANKARA *Ankara Ekspresi*

Ee [68-070]
C [5]
CfL
S* [61 75 70-75 019-1]

To **ANKARA** on Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Demiryolları (Turkish State Railways), or more properly, the operating side “TCDD Taşımacılık” (Transport), accessing Söğütölüçeşme Station by TCDD suburban Line B, under the Bosphorus; * Depart 2255, arrive next morning 89 minutes late at 0820, stops including Gebze, İzmit and Eskişehir, taking the old conventional route instead of the high-speed version behind a Class E68000 electric locomotive built by Tülomsaş (Türkiye Lokomotif ve Motor Sanayi Anonim Şirketi), based on a Korean Hyundai Rotem design; * 575 km in 9 hrs 25 mins, or 61 km/h (359 mls/38 mph), distance based on Hadarpaşa Station-Ankara; * No. 68-070 (TUL, 2013-5); * No. 61 75 70-75 019-1 (TUV, 1998; 10dc).



2020's-10: Roomy interior of our 2-berth compartment in *Ankara Ekspresi* (2025/04/30) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-11: Panoramic view of Ankara from the castle, elongated blue roofed train station (*upper right*) (2025/05/01) [SANDRA DAWES].

ANKARA EKSPRESİ

Located on TCDD's suburban Line B, Söğütölüççeşme proved to be a soulless, concrete station with no departure board and no café, snack bar or other amenities – despite being the main terminal for YHT high-speed trains. There was a video display promoting YHT and *Sofiya Express*, but nothing regarding our train. Our TVS2000, Standard Class, “Yatakli Vagon” compartment was roomier than usual in such cars, but you had to put down the beds yourself. To compensate, there was a mini-bar filled with complimentary snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. The toilet at one end of our car was of the squat type. Come morning, the busy Café Lounge was a nice touch, serving tea on our almost one-and-a-half-hour late train (we were stopped approximately 45 minutes an hour out of Ankara).



[“Sleeping car” in Turkish (*from the side of car*
61 75 70-75 019-1, Ankara), 2025/05/01]



2020's-12: Turkish State Yüksek Hızlı Tren (YHT) (High Speed Train) No. 81013 waiting to depart Ankara for İstanbul (2025/05/03) [SANDRA DAWES].

OUR LITTLE PART OF ANKARA

Heavy security was evident around the station, given that this was 1st of May, and the current political situation in the country. We spent two nights at the historic Divan Çukhurhan, a hotel located an arduous, 45-minute walk up the hill at the entrance to the kalesi (castle), in the Altındağ area of the city – this structure dating back to A.D. 5th century. Sticking close to our hotel, we: • toured the kalesi, with its magnificent views of the city below; • visited the Erimtan Archaeology and Art Museum and the Çengelhan Rahmi M. Koç technology museum, both next door to our hotel; and • took meals at the nearby Kirit (Cat) Café (including a 15-bowl, Turkish breakfast). (Unusually, we took no public transport in Ankara.)



[Turkish State Railways' logo, 2025 (en.
[ikipedia.org/wiki/TCDD Transport](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/TCDD_Transport))]

3 MAY:**TCDD 81013 ANKARA-İSTANBUL SÖĞÜTLÜÇEŞME**

Cme [8] [800 116]

To **SOFIA** via İstanbul, beginning with an Electric Multiple Unit, *Yüksek Hızlı Tren* (YHT) high-speed train, departing 1145, arriving Söğütlüçeşme Station on time at 1600, calling at Eskişehir, İzmit, and one suburban place at either end; * Our train was an 8-car. Siemens HD80000 *Velaro*, and we occupied car No. 93 75 9801 1628TR; * 545 km in 4 hrs 15 mins, or 128 km/h (340 mls/80 mph) (sources vary as to the length of the YHT line); * Nos. 800 116 (SMS, 2015-21).

YÜKSEK HIZLI TREN

TCDD Taşımacılık (Transport) offered *Yüksek Hızlı Tren* (YHT) high-speed service between İstanbul and Ankara with two train types: • 8-car Siemens *Velaro* HD80000 (ours), with a top speed of 300 kilometres (186 miles) per hour; and • 6-car Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles HD 65000 achieving 250 km (155 mls) per hour. For these top speeds, our 115 km/h (72 mph) timing seemed unimpressive. The goal was to expand YHT to most large cities in Turkey (a branch already deked off the Ankara line to Konya), but two main factors had led to the high-speed network failing to meet traffic expectations: • parts of the route still used the old conventional right-of-way (and not just approaching the two end cities), thereby extending trip times; and • only two trains per day used the Marmaray Tunnel under the Bosphorus to reach the European side of İstanbul. Archaeological finds had delayed the extension of the YHT's from Söğütlüçeşme to the old Haydarpaşa station on the Bosphorus, which itself was under major rehabilitation. Another theoretical option was for trains to use the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge across the strait, which apparently was built for both road and rail traffic.



[TCDD high-speed train logo]



2020's-13: Turkish State's *Sofiya Express* at the Kapikule border crossing around 0245 hours, waiting for its passengers to return from Turkish customs & immigration procedures (2025/05/04) [SANDRA DAWES].

3-4 MAY:

TCDD 12503-BDŽ 492-1622 İSTANBUL HALKALI-SOFIA TSENTRALNA *Sofiya Express*

Ee		HALKALI-KAPIKULE [68-017]
Ee	[BDŽ]	KAPIKULE-SOFIA
C	[4] [BDŽ]	SVILINGRAD-SOFIA
C	[2] [BDŽ]	[BURGAS] PLOVDIV-SOFIA
T	[2]	
S*		[61 75 70-75 059-7]

Depart 2000, arrive next morning on time at 0948 on *Sofiya Express*, at the start of a four-day journey to Praha, access from Söğütölütüçeşme Station to Halkali by TCDD suburban Line B; * Stops included Kapikule, Svilingrad (Bul.), Dimitrovgrad and Plovdiv **[equipment TCDD unless shown for BDŽ]**; * We checked in at Hotel Niky for one night, then spent the day touring this historic city by means of a free tour, highlights being the main pedestrianized street, Roman ruins and former Communist Party headquarters; * 593 km in 12 hrs 48 mins (taking time change into account), or 46 km/h (370 mls/29 mph); * Switch of locomotives assumed to have occurred at Kapikule; * No. 68-017 (TUL, 2013-5); * No. 61 75 70-75 059-7 (TUV, 1998; 10dc).

SOFIYA EXPRESS

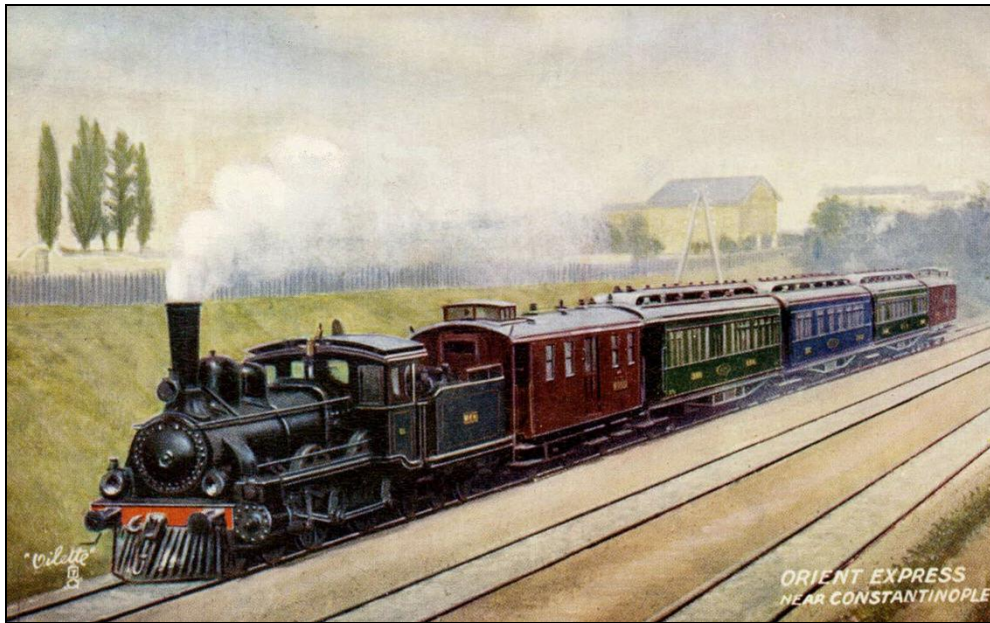
... was operated by TCDD Transport to the border at Kapikule, then Balgarski Darzhavni Žheleznitsi (*BDŽ – Bulgarian State Railways*) from there to Sofia. During our wait in Halkali Station, one of the famed İstanbul feral cats accepted some food scraps, then stretched out asleep on top of my backpack! Although No. 12503 consisted of just two Couchette cars and one Sleeper to the border, BDŽ added Coaches on the Bulgarian side at Svilingrad, then more at Plovdiv, for the run into Sofia. We had the same type of Sleeping car as on *Ankara Ekspresí*, meaning lots of space, beds folding down from the wall, and a mini-bar.

BORDER NIGHTMARES

Turkish customs and immigration officers boarded *Sofiya Express* at Kapikule around 0245 hours and directed everyone to disembark and proceed through a dark and bat-infested tunnel to a Soviet-style office to be interviewed. Underway again at 0350, the train proceeded to Svilingrad on the Bulgarian side, where *their* officials let us stay on board but took our passports – all carried together on the left arm of a Bulgarian official – not returning them until 0445! Approaching Sofia, it became evident that the Bulgarian railways were in bad shape, including a huge, mostly abandoned electrified freight yard and serious graffiti on most carriages.

ORIENT EXPRESS

Sofiya Express still largely followed the route of Wagons-Lits' famed *Orient Express* from İstanbul to Sofia, except that the train now originated at suburban Halkali rather than centre city Sirkeci Station. (This change was initiated during the reconstruction of railways to accommodate the new Marmaray tunnel under the Bosphorous, and had not been reinstated.) In its final iteration (1962), the train was named *Direct-Orient Express* and carried a Paris Sleeping car on Tuesdays and Fridays only (this car originating at Athína on three other days of the week, and Beograd twice weekly). A Restaurant car was provided only on certain segments west from Beograd.



2020's-14: Postcard of Wagons-Lits' Orient Express, c. 1900 (atlasobscura.com/articles/an-illustrated-history-of-the-orient-express) [ARJAN DEN BOER].

5 MAY:

BDŽ RE2011-INT 462 SOFIA SERVER-RUSE

Ee	GORNA ORJHOVICA-RUSE [91 52 0044 180-5]
Ee	SOFIA-GORNA ORJHOVICA [VARNA]
C	[5] ` “
C*	[3]

To **BUCUREȘTI** via Ruse, requiring a transfer from Tsentralna (Central) station to suburban Server station by a local EMU train, which departed at 0650 (Tsentralna being partly inaccessible due to heavy reconstruction);
* Depart Server at 0706, arrive 1320, on a mostly Varna (on the Black Sea) train; * Included were stops at Pleven and Gorna Orjahovica, where the rear three Coaches were detached for Ruse, behind a venerable Class 44 electric locomotive; * 400 (est.) km in 6 hrs 14 mins, or 64 km/h (250 mls/40 mph); * No. 91 52 0044 180-5 (ŠKW, 1975-80).



[Bulgarian State Railways logo, 2025]



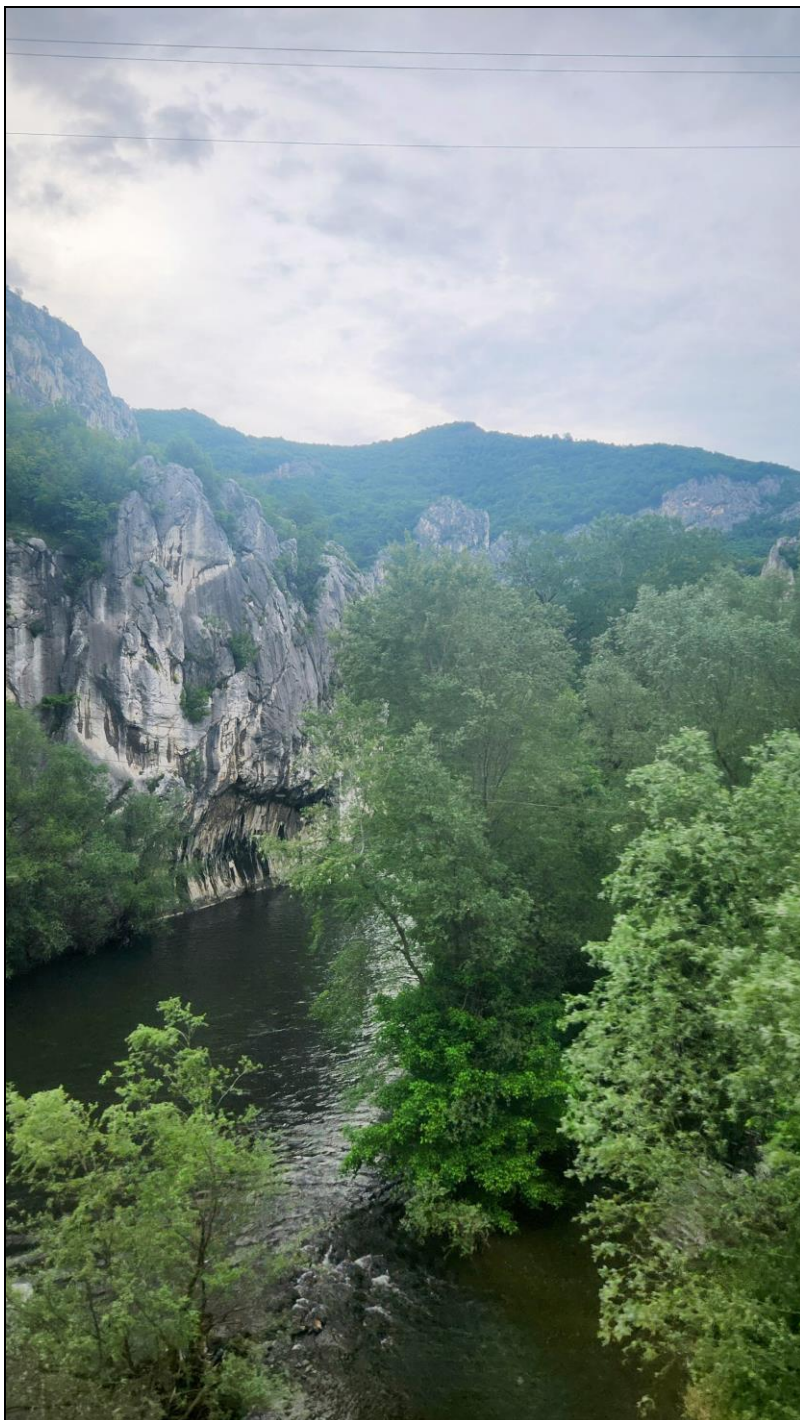
2020's-15: Chaotic scene at Sofia Server Station as passengers (*including the author with his backpack, centre*) walk from the BDŽ local (*nose left*) that had just brought them from Tsentralna (Central) Station, to the grafitti-covered Varna/Ruse express (2025/05/05) [SANDRA DAWES].

FROM DIRTY TOILETS TO CHEF DE GARE

Some observations: • the ticket clerk at Sofia Central was very nice but issued the required seat reservations in 2nd Class, despite having just validated our 1st Class Eurailpasses; • first of two Conductors on the Varna/Ruse train allowed us to sit in the 1st Class Coach, but the second Conductor shooed us back to 2nd; • the seat upholstery was worn and dirty (even in 1st Class); the on-board toilets were horrible; • tried our French on a kid travelling on Interrail (the equivalent of Eurail for European travellers), the third French kid we'd encountered on our travels; and • obvious French influence both in and outside of the stations, such as "Chef de Gare" and "Salle d'attente".



[Eurailpass-provider logo]



2020's-16: Mountainous scenery from the window of our Sofia-Ruse train (2025/05/05) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-17: Colourful & vibrant concourse of București Nord Station (2025/05/06) [SANDRA DAWES].

CFR 1094 RUSE-BUCUREȘTI NORD

Cmd [2]

Depart 1415, arrive on time at 1732, including a stop at Giurgiu (Rom.) at 1442, on a CFR Călători (*Romanian State Railways Passenger*) 2-car DMU; * By Metro Line 1 to Piața Unirii Station, then a short walk to Hotel Rembrant (one night there); * Spent the evening in Caru' cu bere, a friendly bar and restaurant offering Romanian food and live music – a good find, considering our brief stay in this fascinating city (toured the old town next morning before getting our train to Wien); * 127 (est.) km in 3 hrs 17 mins, or 39 km/h (79 mls/24 mph).



[Căile Ferate Române (*Romanian State Railways*)
logo, 2025 (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C4%83ile_Ferate_Rom%C3%A2ne)]



2020's-18: Romanian State Railways Passenger (CFR Calatori) "Voiture-Lits/Schalfwagen/Wagon de Dormit/Sleeping Car/Carozze con Letti?" No. 61 53 70-70 91 004-9, on *Dacia*, Bucureşti Nord (2025/05/06) [SANDRA DAWES].

6-7 MAY:

CFR-MÁV-ÖBB IC 346 BUCUREŞTI NORD-WIEN HBF *Dacia*

Ee	[ÖBB]	BUDAPEST-WIEN
Ee		BUCUREŞTI-BUDAPEST [91 53 0 410 009-1]
S*		[61 53 70-70 91 004-9]
T		
C	[3]	
R		BUCUREŞTI-ARAD
R	[MÁV]	BUDAPEST-WIEN
C	[2] [MÁV]	"
S		[CLUJ NAPOCA] ARAD-WIEN
T		"
C		"



2020's-19: CFR Calatori No. 346, *Dacia*, pausing at Braşov on its way to Wien, led by electric locomotive 91 53 0 410 009-1 (2025/05/06) [SANDRA DAWES].

To **WIEN** on *Dacia*, departing 1507, arriving next morning 20 minutes late at 0840, including stops at Braşov, Sighişoara, Arad, Lőkösháza (Hung.), Békéscsaba, Budapest, Győr and Hegyeshalom, behind electric locomotives **[equipment CFR unless indicated otherwise]**; * We occupied a compartment in the Romanian Sleeping car; * Upon arrival, we walked over to Hotel Ibis, right across from the station (one night there); * 1,160 km (est.) in 16 hrs 33 mins (including time change), or 70 km/h (724 mls/44 mph) (*Copşa Mică-Alba Iulia segment estimated at 80 km*); * Consist partly assumed; * No. 91 53 0 410 009-1 (EC, 1967-91); * No. 61 53 70-91 004-9 (DWA, 19??; 10dc; ex-DB, rebuilt CFR 2005).



[Romanian State Sleeping car no.,
Dacia., Bucureşti Nord, 2025]
[SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-20: Selfie time in our shower-equipped washroom of Sleeping car 61 53 70-70 91 004-9, CFR Passenger No. 346 Dacia (2025/05/06) [SANDRA DAWES].

DACIA

... was operated by CFR, Magyar Államvasutak (*MÁV – Hungarian State Railways*) and Österreichische Bundesbahnen (*ÖBB – Austrian Federal Railways*) between București and Wien, basically from May to September. CFR supplied all the cars out of București, and the Restaurant car went only as far as Arad. Our compartment featured a shower-equipped washroom. Alas, the beds were down from the start (despite leaving mid-afternoon), there were no towels, and the attendant was seldom observed.

THROUGH BUDAPEST TO WIEN

We paused in Budapest Keleti Station on time around 0500, for around 40 minutes. When we arrived 20 minutes late at Wien Hauptbahnhof, they immediately took the locomotive away, and then the cars, before I'd had a chance to confirm the consist.

WIEN TRAMS, COFFEE AND JAZZ

During our brief Wien stay, we spent the afternoon riding D and No. 2 streetcars around the Ring, stopped by the famed (and ridiculously expensive) Café Central, and took in some jazz at Jazzland in the evening, the club located in a 500-year-old cellar. (Thanks to my ever-personable wife, we ended up sharing our alcove with two retired German ladies and two young Italian girls, while enjoying a top-class local band in a sold-out venue.)



[CFR Passenger routing display in a window of our Dacia Sleeping car [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-21: Schwarzenbergplatz stop for Wiener Linien trams
D & 71 (2025/05/07) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-22: ÖBB RailJet No. 74 arriving Wien Hauptbahnhof from Graz, ultimate destination Praha (2025/05/08) [SANDRA DAWES].

8 MAY:

ÖBB-CĐ RJ 74 [GRAZ] WIEN HBF-PRAHA HL.N.

CabC*, C, CfeC, C(4), Ee

To **PRAHA** on a Österreichische Bundesbahnen (ÖBB – Austrian Federal Railways)-České Dráhy (ČD – Czech Railways) RailJet train **[all equipment ÖBB]**; * Depart 1110, arrive Hlavní nádraží (main station) 12 minutes late at 1427, including stops at Břeclav, Brno and Pardubice (by Metro Line C to I.P. Pavlova Station in the Vinohrady district, then foot to Sophie's Hostel for four nights); * This Siemens-built trainset featured "Viaggio Comfort" carriages, powered by a Eurosprinter electric (no numbers recorded); * A private operator with a similar name, "REGIOJET", also offered frequent trains on Wien-Praha and other routes, under the European "open access" policy; * 402 km in 3 hrs 17 mins, or 123 km/h (251 mls/76 mph).

PRAHA BY PUBLIC TRANSIT

Our Vinohrady district offered great Metro and tram service. The clerk at the Hlavní nádraží sold us 3-day transit passes, despite the policy that seniors rode free on the entire system. Trams hurried by on the main street close to our Sophie's hostel (which had comfortable standard rooms and the usual dormitories). Our main restaurant was U Gráffů near I.P. Pavlova, from which one could watch a steady stream of trams, especially Nos. 22 and 23, which took one close to the main square and the many nearby tourist attractions such as the Astronomical Clock. Over the next three days, we: • took a guided tour of the famous "Castle" (access by Metro Line A), including St. Vitus Cathedral; • attended a wonderful baroque concert at St. Nicholas Church; • walked through the Jewish Quarter (finding the apartment on Maiselova Street where we'd stayed on our first visit back in 1992); • visited the National Museum; and • toured the Strahov monastery grounds founded in the 12th century.



["Modern & reliable in every direction", from a Czech Railways ticket envelope, 2025].



2020's-23: Dopravní podnik hlavního města Prahy a.s (Prague Public Transit Co.) No. 22 tram, I.P. Pavlova Square (2025/05/09) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-24: To the trains at Plzeň Hlavní nádraží
(2025/05/10) [SANDRA DAWES].

10 MAY:

CĐ EC 358 PRAHA HL.N.-PLZEŇ HL.N. [MÜNCHEN] Bavorský Express

Ee [91 54 7 362 083-8], C, C[4] [ALEX], C*[4]

To **PLZEŇ** for the day, on a České Dráhy EuroCity express to München, accessing the Hlavní nádraží by Metro Line C; * Depart 0935, arriving 1058, stopping only at Praha Smíchov, * “ALEX” was a brand offered by the German company Länderbahn, which offered services primarily within Bavaria, but also international intercity “deals” to Praha in association with Czech Railways – thus, the “ALEX”-branded Coaches on this train; * Amenities were restricted to a cart operated by a young, blue-haired girl with mega metal and tattoos; washrooms in our car, and an adjacent one, were inoperable; * We took a most interesting tour of the huge and historic Pilsner Urquell brewery complex, then walked to the town square, returning to the station on a No. 2 tram; * 107 km in 1 hr 23 mins, or 78 km/h (67 mls/48 mph); * No. 91 54 7 362 083-8.

CĐ EC 357 [MÜNCHEN] PLZEŇ HL.N.-PRAHA HL.N. Bavorský Express

Ee, C[3], C*(2) [ALEX]



2020's-25: Back to the Praha Hlavní nádraží for our train to Dresden, author in the foreground with his backpack (2025/05/12) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-26: Czech Railway's EC *Berliner* arriving Praha Hlavní nádraží to accept passengers for Dresden, Berlin & Hamburg, led by a Siemens Vectron electric (2025/05/12) [SANDRA DAWES].

Returning, depart 1500, arrive 1622, on the eastbound *Bavorský Express*, this time occupying one of the “ALEX” Coaches, whose toilets were also out-of-order!; * Felt badly when claiming our reserved 1st Class seats from some Mexican tourists with a lot of baggage (helped them find some seats in an adjacent 2nd Class car).

12 MAY:

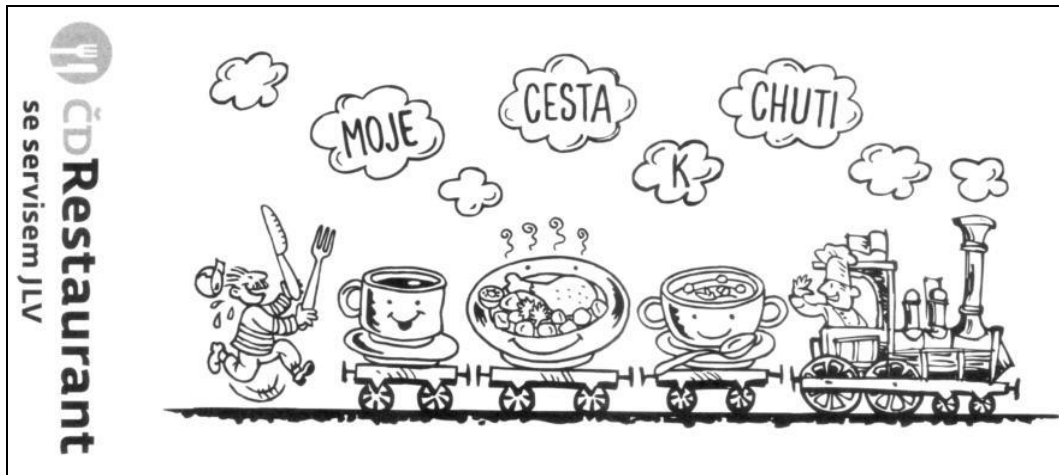
CĐ-DB EC 170 PRAHA HL.N.-DRESDEN HBF [BERLIN] *Berliner*

Ee [91 80 6 193 977-6]

R [JLV]

C [8]

To **DRESDEN** to ride the Weisseritzbahn steam train (one night at Hotel Meininger) (access to the Hlavni by Metro Line C); * Depart 1628, arrive 1850, including stops at Ústí nad Labem, Děčín and Bad Schandau (Ger.), powered by a Siemens Mobility *Vectron* electric [equipment all CĐ]; * Restaurant car was operated by a CĐ unit called Jídelní a Lůžkové Vozy (JLV – *Dining and Sleeping Car Co.*); * 191 km in 2 hrs 22 mins, or 81 km/h (119 mls/51 mph); * No. 91 80 6 193 977-6 (SMS, 2023).



[From a utensils envelope in a CĐ restaurant car, operated by subsidiary JLV on EC No. 170 Berliner (“My Own Taste”) (2025/05/12)].



2020's-27: Dresden Hauptbahnhof, massively rebuilt after World War II (2025/05/12) [SANDRA DAWES].

13 MAY:

DB 0834 DRESDEN HBF-FREITAL HAINSBURG [THARANDT]

CabC*, C, Ee [143 661]

To **KURORT KIPSDORF** via Freital-Hainsberg, to ride the narrow-gauge Weisseritztalbahn (*WTB – Weisseritz Valley Railway*) steam train; * Deaprt Hauptbahnhof at 0834, arrive F-H at 0847, on a Dresden S-Bahn train heading for Tharandt, stops including Freital-Potschappel and Freital-Deuben; * Locomotive was a Class 143 electric, built by Locomotivbau Elektratechnische Werke (Hennigsdorf), East Germany; * 11 km in 13 mins, or 50 km/h (7 mls/31 mph); * No. 143 661 (LEW, 1984-91).

WTB P5000/P5001 FREITAL HAINSBURG-KURORT KIPSDORF& RETURN

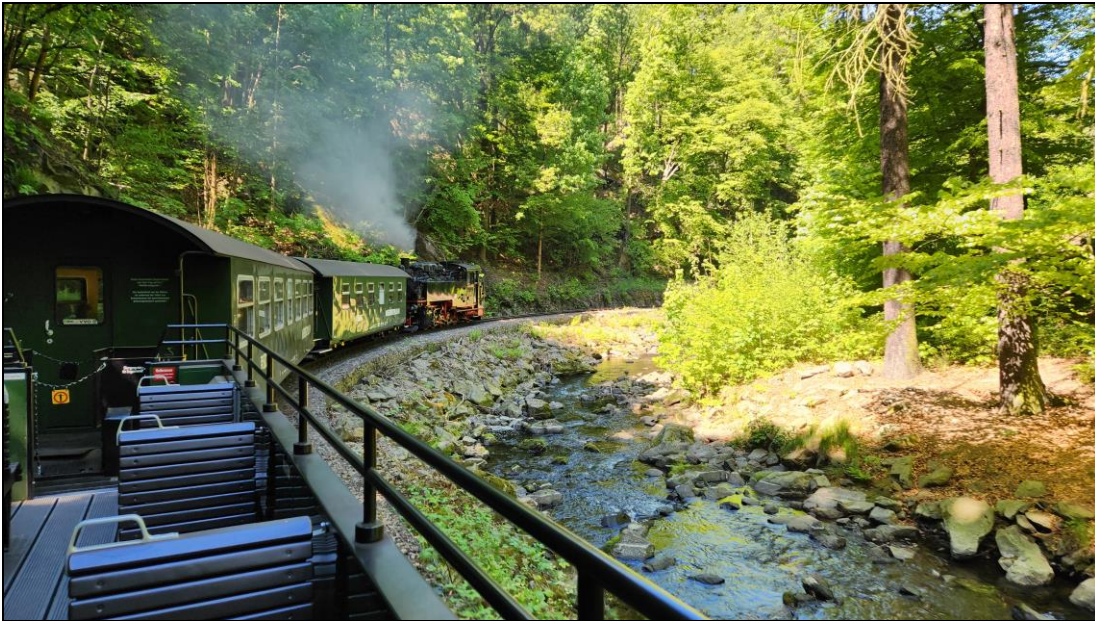
Es [99 1762-6]

X

C* [2]

OBS

C [2]



2020's-28: Weisseritztalbahn No. P5001 on its way back down to Freital-Hainsberg, behind steam locomotive No. 991 762-6 (2025/05/13) [SANDRA DAWES].

Depart Freital-Hainsberg 0925, arrive Kurort-Kipsdorf 1051, including stops at Rabneau, Dippoldiswalde and Overcarsdorf; * 26 km in 1 hr 26 mins, or 18 km/h (16 mls/11 mph); * No. 99 1672-6 (BMS, 1933); * Returning, depart 1111, arrive 1230, and a DB regional service back to Dresden., followed by an afternoon in the largely restored city centre, access by Tram No. 7; * 26 km in 1 hr 19 mins, or 20 km/h (16 mls/12 mph).



[From the side of this steam locomotive, Freital Hainsberg (2025/05/13) [PETER DAWES].

WEISSERITZTALBAHN (WTB)

... was a preserved, 750 millimetre (*2 ft 5½ inch*), narrow-gauge railway operated by the Sächsische Dampfeisenbahngesellschaft (*Saxon Steam Railway Co.*), which in turn was a member of Verkehrsverbund Oberelbe (*VVO – Upper Elbe Transport Association*). Following the Rote (Red) Weisseritz river from Freital-Hainsberg up into the Ore Mountains, the line was completed in 1893 and closed, on a commercial basis, a hundred years later. The mid-train, open-observation car offered great views of this mountainous line. Frequency at this time of the year was twice daily over the entire route, with a third train between Freital Hainsberg and Dippoldiswalde, the passing point on this single track line. Heavily damaged by flooding in 2002, the line was not fully reopened to traffic until '16. Conveniently, WTB used the same station as the Dresden S-bahn trains. No. 99 1762-6 was a heavy, 2-10-2 locomotive built in 1933 by Berliner Maschinenbau (Schwartzkopff), designed for freight rather than passenger-train service.

DB 1237 [ZWICKAU] FREITAL HAINSBURG-DRESDEN HBF

Cme [3]

Depart 1237, arrive 1250, on a DB regional service originating at Zwickau.

13 MAY:

DB EC 172 [BUDAPEST] DRESDEN HBF-BERLIN HBF *Hungaria*

Ee, C [6], R, C*[2]

To **SPIEZ**, Switzerland, via Berlin and Zürich, departing Dresden 1658, arriving Berlin 1843 **[all equipment Magyar Államvasutak (MÁV – Hungarian State Railways)]**, including a suburban stop at either end; * 197 km in 1 hr 45 mins, or 113 km/h (*123 mls/70 mph*).



*[From a photo, 2025/05/13]
[SANDRA DAWES]*



2020's-29: *Nightjet* Sleeping car in No. 408, ready to leave Berlin Hauptbahnhof for Zürich (2025/05/13) [SANDRA DAWES].

13-14 MAY:

NJ 408 BERLIN HBF-ZÜRICH HBF *Nightjet*

Ee	[2]	[SBB]	BASEL-ZÜRICH [91 85 4 420 300-6 (11300)] [91 85 4 420 304-8 (11304)]
Ee		[DB]	BERLIN-BASEL [91 80 6 101 121-2]
S*			[61 80 72-90 031-8]
T	[2]		
C	[2]		
C	[2]	[SBB]	
C	[2]	[DB]	BERLIN-LEIPZIG
C		[ČD]	[PRAHA] LEIPZIG-ZÜRICH
T		[ČD]	"
S		[ČD]	"

Depart 2103, arrive next morning at 0904, on a *Nightjet* (ÖBB) train, including stops at Halle, Leipzig, Erfurt, Frankfurt (Main), Karlsruhe, Freiburg (Breisgau) and Basel (Swit.); * Power was provided by a DB Class 101 electric out of Berlin to Basel, then two SBB Class Re 420 electrics onward to Zürich; * 970 km in 12 hrs 1 min, or 81 km/h (605 mls/50 mph); * No. 91 80 6 101 121-2 (ADT, 1996-9); * Nos. 91 85 4 420 300 6 & 304-8 [11300 & 11304] (various builders, 1967-85); * No. 61 80 72-90 031-8 (SMS, 2003-5; 12tc).

NIGHTJET

... was the brand name for overnight services operated by Österreichische Bundesbahnen (*ÖBB – Austrian Federal Railways*) around western Europe, through the EU's open-access policy. ÖBB took over some of the overnight trains formerly operated by Deutsche Bahn (*DB – German Railroad*) under its *City Night Line* banner, and instituted other new (or revived) trains

TRYING OUT NIGHTJET

Nightjet's Berlin-Zürich No. 408 was an interesting train, in part because it accommodated a Praha-via-Dresden section joining at Leipzig, including the usual combination of Sleeping/Couchette/Coaches, but operated by the *railways*, not *Nightjet*. (We could have picked up the Praha section at Dresden, but I wanted to try *Nightjet* itself out of Berlin – and the *Nightjet* site made reserving a lot easier than DB's.) As far as I could determine, there also were two Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (*SBB – Swiss Federal Railways*) Coaches out of Berlin to Zürich, and two DB's versions only as far as Leipzig. Power was supplied by DB as far as Basel (arrive/depart 0730/0750), then SBB for the final stretch.

OUT OF ORDER

Nightjet supplied a good selection of breakfast items, delivered to one's compartment by the attendant, also a toiletry bag and single-use slippers. In our case, the only problem was that our shower-equipped washroom (for which we had played extra) was out of order and locked tight, so we had to use the "down-the-hall" facilities. (Sandra reported that the common shower worked well.) Interestingly, stowed up on the ledge opposite the beds, where our packs were supposed to go, was a duffel bag lettered "Wagons-Lits", apparently a hold-over from the days when that company supplied Sleeping cars to the ÖBB! (The attendant declined to move it elsewhere, and was equally unhelpful concerning how to obtain a refund for the out-of-order washroom.)



[Cover of an ÖBB (Austrian Federal) Nightjet breakfast brochure, 2025]



2020's-30: *Nightjet* No. 408 newly arrived in Zürich Hauptbahnhof from Berlin, SBB Class 420's 11300 & 11304 leading (2025/05/14) [SANDRA DAWES].

14 MAY:

SBB-BLS IC 812 [ROMANSHORN] ZÜRICH HBF-SPIEZ [BRIG]

Cme [9?]

Depart 1002, arrive on time at 1124, on an SBB Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon Bahn (BLS), single-level, Electric Multiple Unit InterCity train, including a Restaurant car, stops including Bern and Thun; * By foot down the hill to La Belle Vue hotel for three nights) **[train set SBB]**; * 163 km in 1 hr 22 mins, or 120 km/h (102 mls/75 mph); * Onward by an afternoon BLS lake boat, BERNER OBERLAND, from Spiez to Thun on the Thunersee.

BLS EC 59 [BASEL] THUN-SPIEZ [MILANO]

Cme* [7]

Cme [7] BASEL-BRIG

Depart six minutes late at 1900, arrive Spiez three minutes late at 1908, non-stop, on a 2-set, EuroCity *Astoro* service (including a Restaurant car), the front set going to Milano, the rear to be dropped at Brig **[both train sets SBB]**; * 10 km in 8 mins, or 77 km/h (6 mls/48 mph).



2020's-31: Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon EC 59 five minutes late at Thun, made up of two SBB train sets, the front one going all the way to Milano, the rear as far as Brig (2025/05/14) [SANDRA DAWES].

15 MAY:

BLS IC 1065 [BASEL] SPIEZ-INTERLAKEN OST

Cme [11]

To **PALALP** on the Brienz-Rothorn Bahn, (BRB) via Interlaken Ost and Briez; * Depart Spiez on a BLS InterCity train at 1105, arrive Interlaken Ost on time at 1128, stopping at Interlaken West **[all equipment SBB]** – the objective being to sail across the Brienzersee, then take a steam train up the Rothorn; * 18 km in 23 mins, or 40 km/h (11 mls/25 mph).

BRB 1400/1450 BRIENZ-PANALP & RETURN

C [2], Es [16]

After crossing the beautiful lake on BLS' JUNGFRAU, depart Brienz at 1400 and arrive 1440, non-stop, on a Brienz Rothorn steam train; * Returning, depart 1450, arrive 1520; * 2 km in 30 mins, or 4 km/h (1 mls/2 mph); * No. 16 (SLM, 1992; ex-MGR).



2020's-32: Brienz Rothorn Bahn train being serviced at Panalp, Sandra photographing a following train (2025/05/15) [PETER DAWES].

BRIENZ ROTHORN BAHN

... was an 800-millimetre (2ft 7½ in) rack railway powered mostly by steam since its opening in 1892. Our locomotive No. 16 was built by Schweizerische Lokomotiv- und Maschinenfabrik (SLM – Swiss Locomotive & Machine Works) and dated only back to 1992. This early season train was operating only up as far as Panalp, approximately one quarter of the 8-kilometre (5-mile) length. Even over this short, truncated route, the views from this train were nothing short of spectacular, especially of the Brienersee below.

ZB 1602 [INNERTKIRCHEN] BRIENZ-INTERLAKEN OST

CabC, C*[2], Ee

Depart 1602, arrive 1624, non-stop, on a Zentralbahn regional train; * 16 km in 22 mins, or 44 km/h (10 mls/28 mph).

ZENTRALBAHN

... was a Swiss railway operating the former SBB Brünig Line (Interlaken-Luzern) and Luzern–Stans–Engelberg Bahn – both 1,000 millimetres (3ft 3⅜ in).



2020's-33: Brienzersee from our Brien Rothorn Bahn train (2025/05/15) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-34: Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon Bahn *Golden Pass Express* at Interlaken Ost (2025/05/15) [SANDRA DAWES].

BLS 1812 [INTERLAKEN OST] WEST-SPIEZ [ZWEISIMMEN]

CabC

C* [5]

Ee [465 002 GORNERGRAT]

Depart 1812, arrive on time at 1836, on a BLS *Golden Pass Express* headed for Zweisimmen, behind a Class 465 electric; * 16 km in 24 mins, or 40 km/h (10 mls/25 mph; * No. 465 002 (SLM/ABB, 1991-6).

GOLDEN PASS EXPRESS

... was a service operated by BLS and Montreux Oberland Bernois Bahn between Interlaken and Montreux, with the gauge adjusted at Zweisimmen from standard to 1,000 millimetres (3ft 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in). Also adjusted was the height of the car body to accommodate different platforms – this being the first such arrangement in the world. Due to the timing, our train ran only as far as Zweisimmen, not through to Montreux.



[From the side of a Coach, Spiez (2025/05/15) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-35: Spiez from the railway, during a spectacular rainbow (2025/05/15) [SANDRA DAWES].

16 MAY:

BLS 0823 [ZWEISIMMEN] SPIEZ-INTERLAKEN OST

[Same consist as for BLS 1812 directy above]

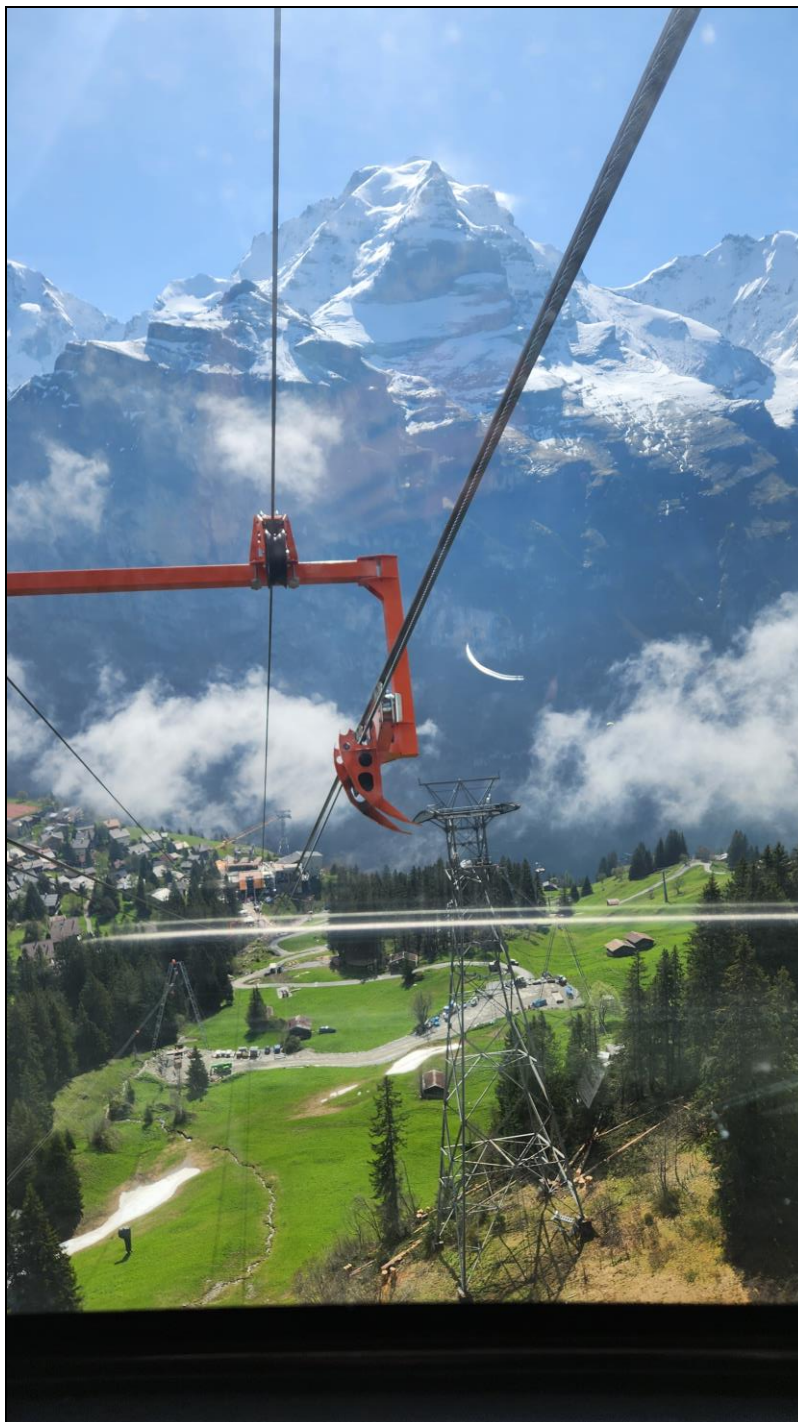
To the **Shilthorn**, via Interlaken, Lauterbrunnen, Grütschalp and Mürren; * Depart 0823, arrive Interlaken Ost at 0848, stoping only at Interlaken West.

BOB 0904 INTERLAKEN OST-LAUTERBRUNNEN

Cme [4]

Cme [4] INTERLAKEN OST-ZWEILÜTSCHINEN [GRINDELWALD]

Depart 0904, arrive 0926 on a metre-guage Berner Oberland Bahn train, stopping at Wilderswil and Zweilütschinen, where the Grindelwald section was detached; * These were 4-car Electric Multiple Unit trains built in 1986 by Schweizerische Lokomotiv-und Maschinenfabrik and Brown, Boveri & Co.; * 12 km in 22 mins, or 33 km/h (7 mls/21 mph).



2020's-36: Mürren as seen from the Schilthornbahn cable car, at Interlaken Ost (2025/05/16) [SANDRA DAWES].

BLM 0940 GRÜTSCHALP-MÜRREN

Cme [2]

Depart 0940, arrive 0956, on a 2-car, metre-gauge Bergbahn Lauterbrunnen Mürren Bahn Electric Multiple Unit train, including a stop at Winteregg. * This was after a 1.4 kilometre (0.87 mile) cable lift from Lauterbrunnen up to Grütschalp, and was followed by another cable lift (the Schilthornbahn) up to the **Schilthorn**, this one 4.5 km (2.8 m/s) long; * 4 km in 16 mins, or 15 km/h (3 m/s/9 mph).

BLM 1328 MÜRREN-GRÜTSCHALP

Cme [2]

Returning, by Schilthornbahn back down to Mürren, departing there on the BLM at 1328, arriving Grütschalp 1344, followed by the cable lift down to Lauterbrunnen.

BOB 1601 LAUTERBRUNNEN-INTERLAKEN OST

Cme [4] [312 INTERLAKEN]

Cme [4] [GRINDELWALD] ZWEILÜTSCHINEN-INTERLAKEN OST]

Depart 1601, arrive 1623 on a Berner Oberland Bahn train, our set named INTERLAKEN – stops including Wilderwil and Zweilütschinen, where the Grindelwald section was added; * No. 312 (SLM/BBC, 1986).



*[From the side of Berner Oberland Bahn
EMU No. 312 [SANDRA DAWES]*



2020's-37: Berner Oberland Bahn's 1601 service at Lauterbrunnen, ready to return to Interlaken Ost (2025/05/16) [SANDRA DAWES].

BLS IC 980 INTERLAKEN OST-BERN [BASEL]

Ee [460 010 LÖWENBERG]

C* [3]

R

C [3]

CabC

Depart 1659, arrive 1752, including stops at Spiez and Thun, for a quick evening visit to the capital of Switzerland, behind a Class 460 electric **[all SBB]**; * 59 km in 53 mins, or 67 km/h (37 mls/42 mph); * No. 91 85 4 460 010-2 (SLM/ABB, 1992).



[bbs.ch/en



2020's-38: Friday evening on a Bern Bahnhof platform, passengers awaiting trains for Interlaken at 2004 hours (*right*) & Brig at 2007 (*left*) – both stopping at Spiez (2025/05/16) [SANDRA DAWES].

BLS IC 830 [ROMANSHORN] BERN-SPIEZ [INTERLAKEN OST]

CabC, C*[5], R, C [3], Ee

Depart 2004, arrive 2034 [*all SBB*]; * No. IC 983, Basel-Brig, was supposed to proceed us out of Bern by two minutes, but actually followed us by two or three minutes along this busy, double track line; * 41 km in 30 mins, or 82 km/h (26 mls/51 mph).

17 MAY:

BLS-SBB IC 964 [BRIG] SPIEZ-BASEL SBB

Ee, C [3], R, C*[2], CabC

To **PARIS** via Basel, departing 0922, arriving Basel SBB station at 1101, stopping at Thun, Bern, Olten and Liestal [*all SBB*]; * First Class was full after Bern on this Saturday morning train, with some passengers standing; * 142 km in 1 hr 39 mins, or 86 km/h (87 mls/54 mph).



2020's-39: SNCF (French National Railways) *Lyria* TGV, just in from Zürich & soon to board for Paris (2025/05/17) [SANDRA DAWES].

SNCF 9218 [ZÜRICH] BASEL SBB-PARIS LYON

PC [4728], C*[3], CfL, C [2], PC

Depart 1234, arrive 1540, stopping only at Mulhouse and Belfort/Montbélaird TGV; * This was a double decker *Train à grande express* of the *Lyria* brand, marked "France-Suisse" and "Schweiz-Frankreich" because these versions joined France and Switzerland, in this case, Zürich and Paris; * By Métro Ligne 14 to the Gare St-Lazare stop (one night at Hotel Exe Centre); * 525 km in 3 hrs 6 mins, or 169 km/h (328 mls/106 mph); * No. 4728 [93 87 0 3100 56-1F] (ALS, 2011).



[SNCF-SBB France-Switzerland company
(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TGV_Lyria)]

TGV LYRIA

... was the brand name for services operated by Société nationale des chemins de fer Français (SNCF – *French National Railways*) and SBB as a stand-alone entity (owned 74% by SNCF, 26% by SBB). No. 4728 on our train was a TGV Duplex 2N2 (“Euroduplex”). Although these TGV’s were capable of 300 km/h (186 mph), our train averaged but 169 (106). Lots of passengers with lots of baggage – but the overhead luggage spaces could accommodate only small items, and other luggage areas could only hold so many larger pieces. SNCF also was noted for requiring seat reservations on major intercity trains such as this *Lyria*, and making those reservations expensive (in our case, 29 Euros per seat).

18 MAY:

SNCF TER 3309 PARIS ST-LAZARE-CHERBOURG

Cme [6] [5631]

To **DUBLIN** via Cherbourg; * Depart 0845 (five minute walk from our hotel to Gare St-Lazare), arrive 1219, on a Class Regio 2N double decker EMU, including stops at Caen, Bayeux and Lison – TER standing for “Train express regional”; * 371 km in 3 hr 34 mins, or 104 km/h (232 mls/69 mph); * No. 56631 (ALS, 2013-); full No. 94 87 5600 677-1); * **18-19 MAY:** by Irish Ferries’ W. B. YEATS overnight to Dublin (taxi to The Address Hotel Connolly for one night; the rest of the day spent mainly at Trinity College taking in the exhibits concerning the Book of Kells manuscript prepared by Irish monks, c. A.D. 800 (access by the excellent Luas trams, Red and Green lines).

TRAIN NOMAD

... was a collaboration between “La Région Normandie et SNCF Voyageurs”, and included regional bus services. The design of this Class Regio 2N train was, shall we say, unique. Our car featured single (for persons with reduced mobility) and double levels, and our 1st class seats resembled a compartment for two. Some of the intermediate cars in the consist were double, others single decked. Two young girls in our car behaved badly and stupidly, possibly hung-over on their way back home from a night in Paris – the only case of bad behaviour we encountered during our many train trips in several countries.



2020's-40: SNCF "Région Normandie" No. 3309 ready to depart Paris St-Lazare's classic trainshed, author taking a side photo (2025/05/18) [SANDRA DAWES].

W.B. YEATS

... was operated by Irish Ferries on the overnight Cherbourg-Dublin route, a 51,400 Gross Registered Tonnes (GRT) motor vessel built by Flensburger Schiffbau Gesellschaft of Flensburg, Germany, and placed in service in 2019. (In comparison, TITANIC was 46,300 GRT, showing just how big ferries had become over the years.) The ferry was named after the Irish poet. In addition to cars and trucks, it could accommodate 1,800 passengers, including us in a 4-berth cabin. Fortunately, the notorious English Channel and Irish Sea behaved themselves and we had a smooth crossing.



[From W.B. YEATS Boarding Card (2025/05/18)]



2020's-41: Night time view of Irish Ferries' W.B. YEATS berthed at Dublin, 2018/12/20 [IRISH FERRIES] [niferry.co.uk/irish-ferries-w-b-yeats].

20 MAY:

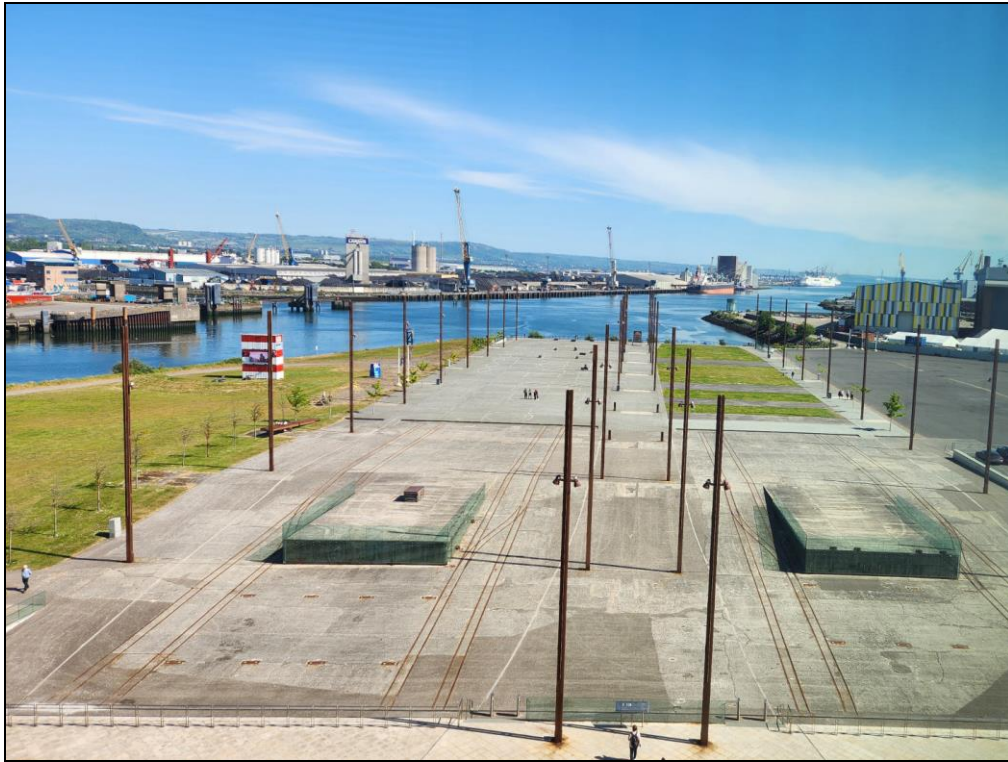
IE-TL 1050 DUBLIN CONNOLLY-BELFAST GRAND CENTRAL *Enterprise*

Ed [206], X, C (4), CfL, C, **CabC*** [9004]

To **BELFAST** on an *Enterprise* express operated by Iarnród Éireann (*IE* – *Irish Rail*) and Translink (*TL* – *Northern Irish Railways*) – our hotel located right across the street from Connolly Station [**all equipment Translink**]; * Depart 1050, arrive seven minutes late at 1305, this train powered by a Class 201 diesel-electric built by General Motors Diesel Division, London ON, in the mid-1990's; * Stops included Drogheda, Dundalk and Portadown (N. Ire.); * Three nights at Titanic Hotel, located in the old Harland & Wolff (H&W) headquarters building, the magnificent "Drafting Room" now an elegant bar lounge; * 183 km in 2 hrs 15 mins, or 81 km/h (114 mls/51 mph); * No. 206 (GMD, 1994-5); * No. 9004 [50 70 8090 040-4] (ALS, 1996); * Next days involved a lengthy visit around the re-developed Titanic Quarter of Belfast, the highlight being the excellent, multi-storied Titanic Museum (could have been tacky but instead explained the background of industrial Belfast, the shipbuilders H&W, the building of the famous ocean liner (admission included the adjacent preserved White Star Line Cherbourg tender, NOMADIC).



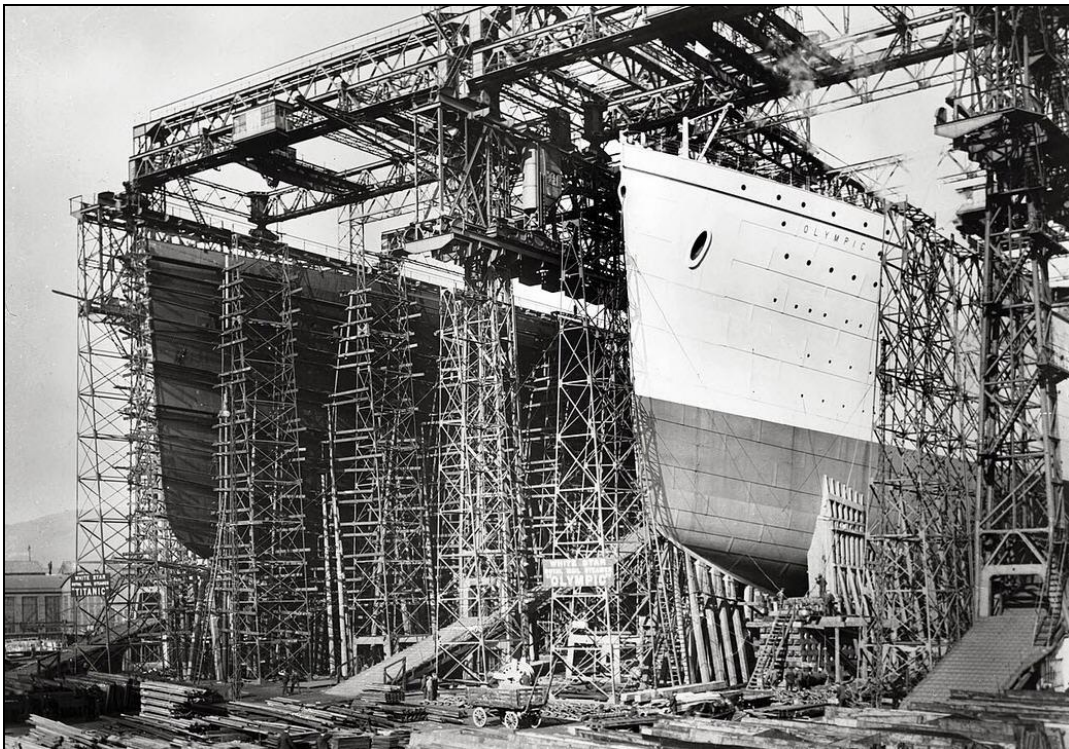
2020's-42: Irish Rail-Translink's 1050 service from Dublin just arrived at Grand Central Station, Belfast, behind London ON-built, diesel-electric No. 206 (2025/05/20) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-43: Former Harland & Wolff slipways upon which White Star's OLYMPIC & TITANIC were built, then launched into the River Lagan beyond (2025/05/21) [SANDRA DAWES].

FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL

Iarnród Éireann (IÉ – Irish Rail) was a subsidiary of state owned Córas Iompair Éireann (Irish Transport System). Translink was the brand name for Northern Ireland Transport Co., which included NI Railways. Holding 5-days-in-one-month, phone based Eurailpasses valid on either side of the border, we would discover that both on board and gate staff either were not comfortable with QR codes, or just preferred to let us continue without checking! The Translink guard on our Dublin-Belfast *Entreprise* was particularly friendly and helpful, even gave me a tour of the cab in the “Driving Van Trailer”. Off duty at Grand Central Station, he then guided us onto a Derry-bound intercity train he was taking the short distance to Lanyon Place Station, where he directed us onto a Bangor train which would take us to Titanic Quarter Station, a 15-minute walk from our hotel.



2020's-44: TITANIC (left) & OLYMPIC on the stocks at Harland & Wolff, 1910/10/01
(en.wikipedia.org) [WIKIPLYM] [ROBERT JOHN WELCH] [LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION cph.3b14835].

22 MAY:

TL 1010 BELFAST GRAND CENTRAL-DERRY

Cmd [8]

To **DERRY** (also called Londonderry) for the day on a Translink train which departed at 1010 and arrived 1222, including stops at Antrim, Ballymena and Coleraine (access to Grand Central by a Bangor-originating commuter train); * Apart from the ancient walls ringing the centre city, Derry was interesting for a number of projects financed by the European Union before the United Kingdom voted to leave, including an impressive bridge over the River Foyle (Northern Ireland did vote to remain); * 151 km in 2 hrs 12 mins, or 69 km/h (114 mls/43 mph).



[Translink (Northern Ireland Railways) logo, 2025]



2020's-45: Translink Belfast-Derry train approaching Derry Station (2025/05/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

TL 1638 DERRY-BELFAST LANYON PLACE [GRAND CENTRAL]

Cmd [8]

Returning, depart 1638, arrive five minutes late at 1845, our car running hot, the toilets malfunctioning and no soap provided (onward by a Bangor commuter train to Titanic Quarter Station and our hotel).



[Translink's Titanic Quarter Station sign, Harland & Wolff crane in the background, 2025] [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-46: Northern Irish pastoral scene near Newry, taken from Translink's 1638, Derry-Belfast train (2025/05/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

THAT'S NORTHERN IRISH RAILWAYS FOR YOU

Translink staff continued to have problems scanning our phones for the Eurailpass QR codes, one of our guards shrugging and saying, "That's Northern Irish Railways for you!". In fairness, we had to input our trips manually, because the app kept telling us (correctly) that Northern Ireland was part of the U.K. and (incorrectly) that our all-Ireland passes were invalid in the north.

23 MAY:

TL-IÉ-0900 BELFAST GRAND CENTRAL-DUBLIN CONNOLLY *Enterprise*

Cmd [5] [22037]

To **CORK** via Dublin, departing 0900 (accessing Grand Central on a Bangor commuter train), arriving Connolly Station pretty much on time at 1113 on an Irish Rail, Diesel Multiple Unit train built by Hyundai Rotem; * The friendliness of Iarnród Éireann staff continued, the guard offering to take a photo of me standing by the train while we were waiting to depart Grand Central Station; * 183 km in 2 hrs 13 mins, or 82 km/h (114 mls/51 mph) * No. 22037 (HR, 2008).



2020's-47: Translink-Irish Rail's 0900 *Enterprise* service waiting to depart Belfast Grand Central Station for Dublin, made up of an IÉ Diesel Multiple Unit set (2025/05/23) [PETER DAWES].

IÉ-1200 DUBLIN HEUSTON-CORK

Cmd [5] [22137]

Cmd* [5] [21338]

Depart 1200, arrive 1433 (accessing Heuston Station by Luas Red tram), arrive on time at 1433, including stops at Thurles, Limerick Jct., and Mallow, on a Class 22000 DMU – two, 5-car sets hooked together (by foot up to the Montonette Hotel for two nights); * All 1st Class seats had been reserved by others on this packed Friday afternoon train, forcing us into a very crowded Standard Class; * Train and station announcements were made in both English and Gaelic, “Iarnród Éireann” (Irish Rail) sounding to us like “Here nor there”; * 266 km in 2 hrs 33 mins, or 104 km/h (166 mls/65 mph); * Nos. 22137, 21338 (HIT, 2008).

THANK YOU, MA'AM!

The Eurailpass app showed Irish Rail trains when entered, but the QR codes would never work at the gates, including this time when we disembarked at Cork station. Normally, there was a railway employee there to sort out problems, but not this time. Fortunately, a nice lady saw our predicament and held open the gate she had just passed through, just for for us. (A few gates over, a young man was holding his gate open for a number of passengers, which possibly resulted in a free trip for the lucky ones.)



2020's-48: Luas (meaning "Speed" in Gaelic) tram in Dublin, operated by French company Transdev for Transportation Infrastructure Ireland (2025/05/20) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-49: Sandra's favourite corner in Cork, close to our hotel, a busy pub front & centre (2025/05/24) [SANDRA DAWES].

24 MAY:

IE 1030/1330 CORK-COBH & RETURN

Cmd [2] [2603; ?]

To **COBH** for a quick visit, departing 1030, arriving 1056, including stops at Fota and Rusbrooke, on veteran, 2-car DMU's built by Tokyu Car Corp. (occupying No. 2603 on the outward train); * Cruise ship **CELEBRITY ECLIPSE** was in port, many of her passengers joining us in touring the excellent museum located in the old dock-side railway station (named at the time Queenstown, this was the last call made by **TITANIC** on her fateful voyage); * 19 km in 26 mins, or 44 km/h (12 mls/28 mph) * No. 2603 (TCC, 1993); * Returning, depart 1330, arrive 1356.



[Irish Rail logo, 2025]



2020's-50: Irish Rail's "Driving Van Trailer" No. 4001 at Cork, on the 1025 Sunday morning service to Dublin (2025/05/25) [PETER DAWES].

25 MAY:

IE 1025 CORK-LIMERICK JCT. [DUBLIN]

CabC [4001], C, CfeC, C*[6], Ed [8208]

To **DUBLIN** via Limerick Jct. and Galway, the purpose being to see more of rural Ireland and briefly visit the latter place; * Depart 1025, arrive Limerick Jct. 1122, behind another Canadian-built Class 201 diesel-electric, this one possibly owned by Translink but running on IE; * 94 km in 57 mins, or 99 km/h (59 mls/62 mph) * No. 8208 (GMD, 1994-5; ex-208); * No. 4001 (CAF, 2006).

IE 1137 LIMERICK JCT.-GALWAY

Cmd [4]

Depart 1137, arrive 1430, including stops at Limerick proper, Gort and Athenry (reversing at the last-mentioned); * We spent a few hours between trains in Taaffes Bar being taught, over Guinesses, the intricacies of the Irish game of hurling – the local team beating up on Dublin on the television; * 152 km in 2 hrs 53 mins, or 53 km/h (95 mls/33 mph).



2020's-51: Atlantic Ocean in the distance, taken upon departing Galway on Irish Rail's 1800 service to Dublin (2025/05/25) [SANDRA DAWES].

IE 1800 GALWAY-DUBLIN HEUSTON

Ed, C*[3], CfeC, C, CabC

Depart 1800, arrive 2025, including stops at Atheny, Athlone and Portarlinton; * By a very crowded Luas Red tram back to our Address Connolly hotel for one last night in Ireland; * 208 km in 2 hrs 25 mins, or 86 km/h (130 mls/54 mph).

26 MAY:

AWC-1248 HOLYHEAD-CREWE

Cmd [4]

To **ERSKINE** (Scotland) via Holyhead, Crewe, London, Glasgow and Bishopton, the purpose of this routing being to pick up the Caledonian Sleeper *Lowlander* train to Glasgow, now that we had activated our old-fashioned, hard-copied, 2nd class, 15-consecutive days, Britrailpasses; * We started with Irish Ferries ULYSSES from Dublin to the Welsh port (access to the ship by taxi); * Depart Holyhead on Avanti West Coast's 1248 service, arriving Crewe at 1452, this Diesel Multiple Unit train including stops at Llandudno Jct., Bangor and Chester – showing in the *European Rail Time Table* as going through to London but terminating this “Bank” holiday Monday at Crewe; * 170 km in 2 hrs 4 mins, or 106 km/h (82 mls/51 mph).

STAND UP IF YOU HATE UNITED

Our Dublin to Crewe journey was enlivened by happy Liverpool Football Club supporters heading to the city for a day-long celebration of winning the 2024-25 English Premier League title. Given the strong connection with the port of Liverpool, a lot of Irish have long supported that club, and these people were: • all over the Dublin ferry terminal; • on ULYSSES across the Irish Sea (lots of good-natured chanting and singing as we gathered for disembarkment, including the above regarding big rivals, Manchester United); • on our Holyhead-Crewe train (most of them off at Chester to take another train to Liverpool), and • at Crewe station (fans changing there from other parts of England). *(Note: It was estimated that half a million fans converged on the city that day, requiring extra trains and transit to be run; alas, someone drove a car into the crowd, injuring 130-plus.)*

AWC-1545 [GLASGOW] CREWE-LONDON EUSTON

Cme [11] [390 116 Railway 200]

Depart 1545, arrive on time at 1809, non-stop, on a very busy 9-car, Avanti West Coast *Pendolino* EMU; * Our attempt to make last-minute seat reservations failed, but after a long search, we were able to find two together (after directing two anxious ladies from Lacombe AB, encountered on the platform just before the train arrived from Glasgow, to the most likely open seats); * 253 km in 2 hrs 24 mins, or 105 km/h (158 mls/66 mph); * No. 390 116 (ALS, 2001-5).

MODERN YOU SAY?

The average speed of this non-stop, Avanti West Coast *Pendolino* was a disappointing 105 km/h (66 mph) – proving again how backward Britain was compared to France, Germany and a bunch of other continental countries. Ironically, this Class 390 set was named “Railway 200” in honour of two centuries of “modern railways” in Britain.

SEE IT. SAY IT. SORTED!

This slogan was repeated endlessly on British trains and in stations, as part of a public awareness campaign. Passengers and others were encouraged to report unattended bags, persons trying to get through “No Entry” doors, and so on, directly to station or train staff, or by text to the British Transport Police.



2020's-52: Our Avanti West Coast 1545 service fom Glasgow via Crewe newly arrived at London Euston, consisting of *Pendolino* set No. 390 116 (2025/05/25) [SANDRA DAWES].

26-27 MAY:

CS-2140 LONDON EUSTON-GLASGOW CENTRAL *The Lowlander*

Ee		[92033]
S	[6]	[15333]
CfL		
C		
S	[6]	LONDON-EDINBURGH
CfL		"
C		"
Ee		" [92023]

Depart 2140, arrive 10 minutes early next morning at 0720, powered by GB Railfreight Class 92 electrics and normally including stops at Watford Jct., Carlisle and Motherwell but rerouted this night; * We occupied 2-berth Cabin 8 in Sleeper K; * No calculation, given an unknown rerouting (*usual distance 643 km [401 mls]*); * Nos. 92023, 92033 (*ABB/BT, 1994-5; ex-BR, EWS*); * No. 15333 (*CAF, 2019; 10dc*).



2020's-53: Caledonian Sleeper Sleeping car No. 15333 at Glasgow Central on the newly arrived *Lowlander* service from London Euston (2025/05/25) [SANDRA DAWES].

THE LOWLANDER

Our Caledonian Sleeper train to Glasgow, with an Edinburgh section, was now called *The Lowlander*, as opposed to the other overnight train to Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William, *The Highlander*. Locomotives were owned by GB Rail Freight but painted in CS colours. As for the Spanish-built (Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles) cars, which were introduced in 2019, the smaller British loading gauge meant that they were narrower than those we'd taken on the Continent. Our compartment featured little headroom in the upper bunk, there were no pouches at either level to store a watch, pen or logbook (let alone a phone), and the water splashed out of the sink with no encouragement. (Sad to see such deficiencies in cars placed in service only six years ago.) On the positive side, the "Club Car" did provide a wide range of meals, snacks and drinks



[From the side of Sleeping car No. 15333, Euston Station, London 2025/05/27 [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-54: Room 8 in Car K of Caledonian Sleeper's *The Lowlander*, London Euston-Glasgow Central (2025/05/26) [SANDRA DAWES].

A MYSTERIOUS REROUTE

The departures board in Euston Station unexpectedly showed consecutive destinations for *The Lowlander* as “Edinburgh 0540, Carstairs 0628, Motherwell 0700 and Glasgow Central 0730”. Normally, this train departed at 2345 and arrived at both Glasgow and Edinburgh on the same 0730 timing. An online notice from Grand Central Railway (GC) (an “Open Access” company running services between Bradford & Sunderland and London King’s Cross) stated that, on the night of 26-27 MAY, Caledonian Sleeper (CS) trains would be rerouted. Where *Lowlander* was concerned, it would not call at Watford Jct. or Carlisle, suggesting that perhaps both sections ran together all the way to Edinburgh, then the Glasgow section rejoined its normal route at Carstairs. Not long out of Euston, the train reversed directions, indeed suggesting a temporary rerouting. (CS had advised by email, long before, that the Euston departure time would be going back to 2140, and perhaps had posted something online about this rerouting. (The role of GC in the rerouting is unknown to this writer.)

27 MAY:

SCR 0747 GLASGOW CENTRAL-BISHOPTON [WEYMSS BAY]

Cme [3]

Depart 0747, arrive 0809, on a Class 380 Electric Multiple Unit train, including a stop at Paisley Gilmour Street Station; * ScotRail was one of the “Train Operating Companies” that had become “nationalized” because the private owners could no longer make a go of it; * Onward by automobile to **Erskine**, courtesy good friends Alison & David (two nights at their place; also an afternoon walk and drive taking in Gourock, Largs, a view of Ailsa Craig (still the only source of curling rocks, including those used in Canada), and a wonderful evening meal in Glasgow; * 20 km in 22 mins, or 56 km/h (12 m/s/35 mph). * **28 May:** Next day, they drove us up to beautiful **Loch Katrine**, which feeds freshwater to Glasgow and hosts the preserved, 1900-built steamboat, SIR WALTER SCOTT (owned by the Sir Walter Scott Trust), upon which we sailed.



[scotrail.co.uk]



2020's-55: Preserved steamboat SIR WALTER SCOTT at its
Lake Katrine wharf (2025/05/286) [DAVID STIRLING].

29 MAY:

SCR 0850 [WEYMSS BAY] BISHOPTON-GLASGOW CENTRAL

Cme [3] [380 001]

To **KEITH**, via Glasgow and Inverness (Alison driving us back to Bishopton Station); * Depart 0850, arrive 0917, on another Class 380 Electric Multiple Unit train, stopping only at Paisley Gilmour Street Station.

SCR 1007 GLASGOW QUEEN STREET-IVERNESS

Ed, C*[4], Ed [43035]

Depart 1007, arrive five minutes late at 1330, on an ancient, diesel-electric HST (High Speed Train), including stops at Stirling, Perth, Kingussie and Aviemore (by foot for the 10-minute walk from Central to Queen Street Station); * Fortunately, I had phoned to reserve seats on this busy train; * 291 km in 3 hrs 23 mins, or 86 km/h (182 mls/54 mph); * No. 43035 (BREL, 1975-82; ex-BR,GW).



2020's-56: ScotRail's 1007 service to Inverness, waiting to depart Glasgow Queen Street Station, HST No. 43035 at the rear (2025/05/29) [SANDRA DAWES].

MISSED CONNECTION

Our 1007 Glasgow Queen Street to Inverness train waited for 20 minutes at Kingussie, then met the southbound Belmond *Royal Scotsman* private train at Aviemore. (The Belmond train ran train excursions around the Highlands, and an annual one around Great Britain beyond.) Our train made up time and arrived Inverness only five minutes behind schedule at 1330. Waiting there was the 1335 to Kyle of Lochalsh, with its ferry and bus connection to the Isle of Skye. Perhaps half a dozen passengers from our train were switching to the Kyle train, and when they did, they watched it already pulling out of the station! Either they did not inform the guard on the Glasgow train of their intended connection (and perhaps about restricted mobility), or the guard failed to let his counterpart on the Kyle train know that there were connecting passengers coming. (Surely, this should not have happend: this was not a busy station in Scottish or any other terms.)



2020's-57: Our Isla Bank House Bed & Breakfast
in Keith (2025/05/29) [SANDRA DAWES].

SCR 1428 INVERNESS-KEITH [ABERDEEN]

Cmd [2]

Depart 1428, arrive 1534, including stops at Nairn, Elgin and Forres, on a 2-car Diesel Multiple Unit train; * As a general comment, the toilets on ScotRail trains were functioning and clean, which was not always the case on the many trains taken during this holiday; * Two nights at the Isla Bank House Bed & Breakfast, a 5-minute walk from the station; * 88 km in 1 hr 6 mins, or 80 km/h (55 mls/51 mph); * **30 MAY:** To **Cullen Bay** on Moray Firth, having met up at our bed-and-breakfast with Sandra's first cousin, Eugene, from Saskatoon, his daughter Leah and granddaughter Sarah – Leah driving a rented vehicle with the goal of tracking down various distant ancestors (also joined by Alistair, a distant relative from Stonehaven, and wife June for part of the afternoon).



[keith-dufftown-railway.co.uk]



2020's-58: Keith & Dufftown's 1130 service at Keith, waiting to depart for Dufftown (2025/05/31) [PETER DAWES].

31 MAY:

K&D 1130/1530 KEITH-DUFFTOWN & RETURN

Cmd [2] Spirit of Banffshire; **Spirit of Speyside**

To **DUFFTOWN**, on the Keith & Dufftown (K&D) preserved railway line, following the "Whisky Trail"; * Depart 1130, arrive 1210, including a stop at Drummuir, on a Class 108, 2-car, Diesel Multiple Unit train – Eugene, Leah and Sarah along; * Taking the tickets were two young boys, the sons of a lady who was a big-time volunteer on the K&D, and "Jack", a 15-year-old Jack Russell terrier, was assistant driver; * 18 km in 40 mins, or 27 km/h (11 mls/17 mph); * Spirit of Banffshire (M50623); ex-Mid-Norfolk Railway; Ecclestone Valley Railway; * Spirit of Speyside (M54224), ex-East Anglian Museum (both BR, 1958-61); * We had lunch in the Siding Café, located in a preserved British Rail Dining car, followed by a visit to the Glenfiddich Distillery (which included an expensive whisky tasting session), and a tour of the Balvenie Castle ruins; * Returning, depart 1530, arrive 1610.



[Old British Rail logo (from a 1976 Britrail Pass)]



2020's-59: Keith & Dufftown's 1530 service to Keith, assistant driver "Jack" on the job (2025/05/31) [SANDRA DAWES].

1 JUN:

SCR 1103 [INVERNESS] KEITH-ABERDEEN

Cmd [3]

To **STONEHAVEN**, via Aberdeen; * Depart 24 minutes late at 1127, arrive 10 minutes late at 1225, including stops at Huntly and Inverurie; * This was a very busy Sunday morning train, running late but making up some time; * Eugene, Leah and Sarah were already on board, having returned their rental at Elgin, but found themselves in standing room next to a "farting dog"!; * When I asked the guard about our chances of making a particular connection at Aberdeen, he replied, "I'll check with Aberdeen if they're not having tea"!; * 85 km in 58 mins, or 88 km/h (53 mls/55 mph).

SCR 1244 ABERDEEN-STONEHAVEN [EDINBURGH]

Cmd [3]

Depart 1244, arrive 1304, making a single stop at Portlethen (one night at the Station Hotel, right across the street); * After an automobile trip to the preserved Dunnottar Castle (courtesy, Alastair and family), Eugene and family members left for Edinburgh, he and Leah flying home to Canada next morning, Sarah off to Italy; * 26 km in 18 mins, or 87 km/h (16 mls/54 mph).



2020's-60: Scottish countryside between Keith & Cullen Bay (2025/05/29) [SANDRA DAWES].

2 JUN:

LNE 1011 [ABERDEEN] STONEHAVEN-EDINBURGH WAVERLEY [LONDON]

Cmb [9] [800 101]

To **EDINBURGH**, departing 1011, arriving 1225, including stops at Montrose, Dundee and Kirkcaldy; * This was a London North Eastern Class 800 "Bi-mode Multiple Unit" (BMU) *Azuma* train, built by Hitachi Rail with electric traction but also diesel generators for unelectrified track, as here, Aberdeen to Edinburgh by diesel traction, Edinburgh to London by electric (one night in a Caledonian Sleeper); * LNE was a play on the old London & North Eastern Railway that occupied this territory between the wars up to 1948, when British Railways took over; * The brand name "Azuma" means "East" in Japanese, and east of Britain is primarily where LNE operates; * One of the cab cars featured a "Micro Buffet", also called a "Café Bar"; * We spent the afternoon with Harry, another of Sandra's distant relatives and an Edinburgh native, touring Registry House and Carlton Hill; * 184 km in 2 hrs 14 mins, or 83 km/h (115 mls/51 mph); * No. 800 101 (HT, 2018).



[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_North_Eastern_Railway]

3 JUN:

LNE 0548 EDINBURGH WAVERLEY-DONCASTER [LONDON]

Cmb [5]

Cmb* [5] [800 209]

To **SCUNTHORPE**, via Doncaster; * Depart 0548, arrive Doncaster 0855, including stops at Berwick-upon-Tweed, Newcastle and York, possibly with two, 5-car, Class 800/2 *Azumas* hooked together; * 381 km in 3 hrs 7 mins, or 123 km/h (238 mls/76 mph); * No. 800 209 (HT, 2018).

JUST LIKE STAYING IN A HOTEL!

On the night of June 2-3, we were booked on Caledonian Sleeper (CS)'s *Lowlander* train from Edinburgh to London. The plan was to take this train to London Euston, then board a northbound train to Doncaster, then another one over to Scunthorpe to visit friends – the beauty of the Britrailpass! We boarded our Sleeping car (No. 15321, CAF, 2019; 10dc) at 2300 hours, with departure set for 2340. Having had a busy day, then a long wait in Waverley Station, we both fell asleep quickly, although I did notice – around midnight – that our departure had been delayed somewhat. At 0500 hours in the morning, the train's public address system wakened us with the news that, due to a malfunctioning electrical system around Beattock, Scotland (close to the English border), *Lowlander* had never left the station! Sure enough, a look outside our window revealed an "Edinburgh Waverley" sign on the platform. Turning on my phone, I checked the *European Rail Time Table* and discovered that a London North Eastern train would be leaving at 0548 from the next platform and would take us directly to Doncaster, where we could catch the next train over to Scunthorpe. Offering no assistance in making alternative arrangements, CS staff did provide a few croissants and some water from the Club car for us to take along. The malfunctioning electrical system meant that the Glasgow-London service that ran combined with ours nightly, and the Aberdeen/Inverness/Fort William *Highlander* service, both had been cancelled. (The company did quickly provide a full refund.)



*[From the side of a London North Eastern Azuma train,
Doncaster (2025/06/03) [PETER DAWES].*



2020's-61: House boats moored along the Trent Canal near Scunthorpe (2025/06/03) [SANDRA DAWES].

TPE 0939 [LIVERPOOL] DONCASTER-SCUNTHORPE

Cmd [3] [185119]

Cmd* [3]

Depart 0939, arrive 1005, on a, 2-set, Class 185, non-stop, TransPennine Express *Desiro* train (replacement buses were running onward to Cleethorpes due to engineering works); * Two nights at Eva and Margaret's place, highlights being a walk along the Trent river and canal, and over a railway swing bridge, then a drive back to Doncaster for dinner; * 37 km in 26 mins, or 86 km/h (23 mls/54 mph); * No. 185119 (SMS, 2005-6).

5 JUN:

TPE 0909 SCUNTHORPE-DONCASTER [LIVERPOOL]

Cmd* [3] [185104]

Cmd [3] [185184]

To **SOUTHAMPTON** via Doncaster and London; * Depart 0909, arrive Doncaster 0938, non-stop, on a 2-set Class 185 DMU train.



2020's-62: London North Eastern 0947 *Azuma* service originating at Leeds & coming to a stop at Doncaster on its way to London (2025/06/05) [SANDRA DAWES].

LNE 0947 [LEEDS] DONCASTER-LONDON KING'S CROSS

Cmb [9] [801 103 front]

Depart 0947, arrive 1130, including stops at Grantham and Stevenage, on another crowded London North Eastern train, this one originating at Leeds as a pure, Electric Multiple Unit, Class 801 *Azuma*, two sets back-to-back; * As usual with these modern trains, the status of empty seats was shown as reserved or unreserved from X to Y, but in many cases (thankfully) for passengers without a reservation, seats were empty over the segments for which they were ostensibly reserved; * LNE staff we encountered were friendly and helpful, and an announcement said that they would deliver food and drinks right to your seat, if ordered by phone using their app; * Onward to Waterloo Station via Hammersmith to pick up our "Ship Bag" at the Brook Green Hotel, using the Hammersmith & City, then District and Jubilee lines; * 251 km in 1 hr 43 mins, or 146 km/h (157 mls/91 mph); * No. 801 103 (HIT, 2017-20).



[tpexpress.co.uk]



2020's-63: Concourse of the seriously modernized King's Cross Station, London, concourse (2025/06/02) [SANDRA DAWES].

LUMINOSITY AND MOTION

At Doncaster, there was plenty of evidence of the British “open-access” policy, with trains of companies such as Lumo (Edinburgh-London), Hull Trains (Hull-London) and Grand Central Railway (Bradford-London and Sunderland-London) calling in addition to franchised operators such as London North Eastern and TransPennine Express. Lumo (“Luminosity” and “Motion”) was interesting, being an attempt by FirstGroup to crash the Scottish-London market, with up to five trains per day offering just one standard class, using Hitachi 803 Electric Multiple Unit trains. (FirstGroup also owned Hull Trains, but not Grand Central.)



[[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lumo_\(train_operating_company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lumo_(train_operating_company))]



2020's-64: Cunard's QUEEN MARY 2 at Mayflower Cruise Terminal, Western Docks, Southampton (2025/06/06) [SANDRA DAWES].

SW 1405 LONDON WATERLOO-SOUTHAMPTON [POOLE]

Cme* [5] LONDON-BOURNEMOUTH [WEYMOUTH]

Cme [5]

Depart 1405 on a South Western train, arrive 1525, including stops at Clapham Jct., Basingstoke and Winchester, on the usual *Desiro* EMU's, leading set to Weymouth, rear to Poole, separated at Bournemouth;

* Five minute walk to our Ibis Centre hotel for one night; * 128 km in 1 hr 20 mins, or 96 km/h (80 mls/60 mph);

• **6-13 JUN:** Home to **EDMONTON**, starting with a walk down to the central docks to take photos of QUEEN MARY 2, only to find that she now docked up the River Test along the old Western Docks; back to the hotel to gather our bags and another walk to the Mayflower Cruise Terminal; docked at Brooklyn Cruise Terminal six days later; by New York Ferries, Red Hook to Wall Street, then No. 5 subway to Grand Central Terminal, and by foot to the Hotel Gotham for one night; • **14 JUN:** by taxi to LaGuardia to catch an Air Canada Airbus 320-200 to Toronto (experiencing an aborted landing there, due to something on the runway), and finally an Airbus 321-200 to Edmonton.



2020's-65: QUEEN MARY 2 at Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, New York,
from Red Hook ferry (2025/06/13) [SANDRA DAWES].

QUEEN MARY 2

This was a follow-up to our 2007 crossing, and we spent six busy days on board this 148,000 Gross Registered Tonnes ship. Ropes having been cast off at 1630, we sailed down Southampton Water and out into the ocean, this still being the only true liner now regularly plying the Atlantic. Seas generally were calm throughout, in contrast to our 2007 voyage when just moderate seas were enough for many of the 2,500 passengers (including Sandra) to require the ship's doctor. Our table mates for dinner were two American couples (one of them originally South African and British), and, thankfully, not a word was spoken about the U.S. president and his global trade war and threats to annex Canada!

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CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION

[None, as this is VERSION 1.]