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Paris-London train sets rail speed record

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading / Listening	7
Student Survey	8
Discussion	9
Language Work	10
Writing	11
Homework	12
Answers	13

6th September, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Paris-London train sets rail speed record

A half-full passenger train has broken the rail speed record between London and Paris. The 18-carriage Eurostar train sped through the English countryside along a new \$11 billion track, shaving 32 minutes off the regular time. The train reached speeds of 330kph to reach London in a time of two hours, three minutes and 39 seconds. British rail chiefs took delight in the achievement as for the very first time, the train was faster in England than it was in France. The traditional route went through the commuter rail networks south of London. Maintenance works in France did mean the train arrived three minutes late. The new track includes a 19-km-long tunnel which means the train can speed under London, before arriving at the remodelled St. Pancras International Station.

Regular services are due to begin from the 14th of November. Eurostar has scheduled the journey to take two hours and fifteen minutes – 20 minutes quicker than at present. Railway bosses believe the time saving will make the train a much more competitive option than taking the plane. Departing from and arriving in city centres will be much more appealing to business people who want to avoid airports outside of cities. The train also means they can work on their computers and online. With return fares to be set at less than \$120, it is likely that there will be a price war among airlines. Eurostar's chief executive Richard Brown said the record marked Britain's "entry into the European high-speed rail club." It also makes London to Paris day trips much more doable.

WARM-UPS

1. TRAINS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about trains and train journeys. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

passengers / rail speeds / countryside / shaving / delight / commuter networks / schedules / airplanes / city centres / business people / price wars / day trips

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. SPEED HEADLINES: Do you think these headlines might come true one day? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- Man runs 100 metres in under five seconds
- Airplanes fly 50% faster
- Ten movies downloaded in two seconds after high-speed cable revolution
- Banks serve all customers within ten seconds
- Speeding limit on roads reduced to 30 kph
- New teaching technique means people learn English ten times quicker

4. TRAINS: What is good and bad about train travel? Discuss these things with your partner(s):

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| • price | • punctuality |
| • convenience | • staff |
| • comfortable seats | • railway stations |
| • speed | • other _____ |

5. SPEED RECORDS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with speed records. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think flying is better than taking the train. Students B think the opposite. Change partners often. Share your findings.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A Paris-London train broke the world rail speed record. T / F
- b. The train shaved over half an hour off the normal journey time. T / F
- c. The train arrived in London dead on time. T / F
- d. There is a new tunnel that goes under London. T / F
- e. Regular services on the new route will begin next year. T / F
- f. Railway bosses still believe flying is a better option. T / F
- g. The shorter train journey time will start a price war among airlines. T / F
- h. More people will probably take day trips between London and Paris. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. carriage | a. signalled |
| 2. shaving | b. repairs |
| 3. delight | c. revamped |
| 4. maintenance | d. choice |
| 5. remodelled | e. clipping |
| 6. due | f. feasible |
| 7. option | g. scheduled |
| 8. avoid | h. car |
| 9. marked | i. steer clear of |
| 10. doable | j. pleasure |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. A half-full | a. 32 minutes off the regular time |
| 2. sped | b. delight in the achievement |
| 3. shaving | c. set at less than \$120 |
| 4. rail chiefs took | d. networks south of London |
| 5. through the commuter rail | e. much more doable |
| 6. services are due | f. passenger train |
| 7. much more | g. club |
| 8. return fares to be | h. to begin from the 14th |
| 9. the European high-speed rail | i. through the English countryside |
| 10. ... makes London to Paris day trips | j. appealing to business people |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Paris-London train sets rail speed record

A half-full passenger train has _____ the rail speed record between London and Paris. The 18-carriage Eurostar train _____ through the English countryside along a new \$11 billion track, _____ 32 minutes off the regular time. The train reached speeds of 330kph to reach London in a time of two hours, three minutes and 39 seconds. British rail chiefs took _____ in the achievement as for the _____ first time, the train was faster in England than it was in France. The traditional route went through the _____ rail networks south of London. Maintenance works in France did _____ the train arrived three minutes late. The new track includes a 19-km-long tunnel which means the train can speed under London, before arriving at the _____ St. Pancras International Station.

Regular services are _____ to begin from the 14th of November. Eurostar has scheduled the journey to take two hours and fifteen minutes – 20 minutes quicker than at _____. Railway bosses believe the time saving will make the train a much more competitive _____ than taking the plane. Departing from and arriving in city centres will be much more appealing to business people who want to _____ airports outside of cities. The train also means they can work on their computers and online. With return fares to be set at less than \$120, it is likely that there will be a _____ war among airlines. Eurostar's chief executive Richard Brown said the record _____ Britain's "entry into the European high-speed rail _____." It also makes London to Paris day trips much more _____.

very
sped
remodelled
delight
broken
commuter
mean
shaving

avoid
present
club
marked
due
price
option
doable

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Paris-London train sets rail speed record

A half-full passenger train _____ speed record between London and Paris. The 18-carriage Eurostar train _____ English countryside along a new \$11 billion track, _____ the regular time. The train reached speeds of 330kph to reach London in a time of two hours, three minutes and 39 seconds. British rail _____ the achievement as for the very first time, the train was faster in England than it was in France. The traditional route went through the _____ south of London. Maintenance works in France did mean the train arrived three minutes late. The new track includes a 19-km-long tunnel which means _____ London, before arriving at the remodelled St. Pancras International Station.

Regular services _____ the 14th of November. Eurostar has scheduled the journey to take two hours and fifteen minutes – 20 minutes _____. Railway bosses believe the time saving will make the train a much more competitive _____ plane. Departing from and arriving in city centres will be _____ business people who want to avoid airports outside of cities. The train also means they can work on their computers and online. With return fares _____ than \$120, it is likely that there will be a price war among airlines. Eurostar's chief executive Richard Brown said the record marked Britain's "entry into the European high-speed rail club." It also makes London to Paris day trips _____.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'speed' and 'record'.

speed	record
--------------	---------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• half• sped• delight• south• late• remodelled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• due• present• appealing• set• marked• doable
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STUDENT TRAINS SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about TRAINS in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'train'?
- c) Do you like travelling by train?
- d) Do you like the idea of high-speed trains?
- e) What new transport records would you like to see broken?
- f) When was the last time you took delight in something?
- g) What do you think of rail enthusiasts (train spotters)?
- h) What was the best train journey you've ever taken?
- i) Would you prefer to fly between London and Paris or take the train?
- j) What do you think British people think about the new record?



STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Which is the better city, London or Paris?
- c) Is it important to arrive in a city centre train station rather than an out-of-town airport?
- d) Do you like airports?
- e) What are the rail services like in your country?
- f) Which of the world's great rail journeys would you like to take?
- g) Do you think it's worth visiting a city for a day trip?
- h) Which two world cities would you like to see connected by a rail link, and why?
- i) What questions would you like to ask Eurostar's boss?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Paris-London train sets rail speed record

A half-full passenger train has broken the rail speed record between London and Paris. The 18-carriage Eurostar train (1) _____ through the English countryside along a new \$11 billion track, (2) _____ 32 minutes off the regular time. The train reached speeds of 330kph to reach London in a time of two hours, three minutes and 39 seconds. British rail chiefs (3) _____ delight in the achievement as for the very first time, the train was faster in England than it was in France. The traditional route went through the (4) _____ rail networks south of London. Maintenance (5) _____ in France did (6) _____ the train arrived three minutes late. The new track includes a 19-km-long tunnel which means the train can speed under London, before arriving at the remodelled St. Pancras International Station.

Regular services are (7) _____ to begin from the 14th of November. Eurostar has scheduled the journey to take two hours and fifteen minutes – 20 minutes quicker than (8) _____ present. Railway bosses believe the time saving will make the train a much more competitive (9) _____ than taking the plane. Departing from and arriving in city centres will be much more (10) _____ to business people who want to avoid airports outside of cities. The train also means they can work on their computers and online. With return fares to be (11) _____ at less than \$120, it is likely that there will be a price war among airlines. Eurostar's chief executive Richard Brown said the record marked Britain's "entry into the European high-speed rail club." It also makes London to Paris day trips much more (12) _____.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) sped | (b) slide | (c) spud | (d) speed |
| 2. | (a) shaves | (b) shaver | (c) shaved | (d) shaving |
| 3. | (a) sent | (b) took | (c) received | (d) gave |
| 4. | (a) computing | (b) computer | (c) commuter | (d) commuting |
| 5. | (a) workings | (b) workers | (c) works | (d) worked |
| 6. | (a) mean | (b) meant | (c) meaning | (d) meaner |
| 7. | (a) dew | (b) due | (c) duo | (d) duet |
| 8. | (a) with | (b) for | (c) on | (d) at |
| 9. | (a) opening | (b) opinion | (c) option | (d) optician |
| 10. | (a) appalling | (b) appealing | (c) appearing | (d) peeling |
| 11. | (a) set | (b) setting | (c) sets | (d) settle |
| 12. | (a) do | (b) doer | (c) doing | (d) doable |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about Eurostar. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. TRAINS POSTER: Make a poster comparing the different trains around the world. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the differences between rail and air travel. Include imaginary interviews with the CEOs of an airline and a railway company.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of an airline. Ask him/her three questions the Eurostar record. Give him/her three pieces of advice about how to make flying more attractive to passengers. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. carriage | a. car |
| 2. shaving | b. clipping |
| 3. delight | c. pleasure |
| 4. maintenance | d. repairs |
| 5. remodelled | e. revamped |
| 6. due | f. scheduled |
| 7. option | g. choice |
| 8. avoid | h. steer clear of |
| 9. marked | i. signalled |
| 10. doable | j. feasible |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. A half-full | a. passenger train |
| 2. sped | b. through the English countryside |
| 3. shaving | c. 32 minutes off the regular time |
| 4. rail chiefs took | d. delight in the achievement |
| 5. through the commuter rail | e. club |
| 6. services are due | f. to begin from the 14th |
| 7. much more | g. appealing to business people |
| 8. return fares to be | h. set at less than \$120 |
| 9. the European high-speed rail | i. networks south of London |
| 10. ... makes London to Paris day trips | j. much more doable |

GAP FILL:

Paris-London train sets rail speed record

A half-full passenger train has **broken** the rail speed record between London and Paris. The 18-carriage Eurostar train **sped** through the English countryside along a new \$11 billion track, **shaving** 32 minutes off the regular time. The train reached speeds of 330kph to reach London in a time of two hours, three minutes and 39 seconds. British rail chiefs took **delight** in the achievement as for the **very** first time, the train was faster in England than it was in France. The traditional route went through the **commuter** rail networks south of London. Maintenance works in France did **mean** the train arrived three minutes late. The new track includes a 19-km-long tunnel which means the train can speed under London, before arriving at the **remodelled** St. Pancras International Station.

Regular services are **due** to begin from the 14th of November. Eurostar has scheduled the journey to take two hours and fifteen minutes – 20 minutes quicker than at **present**. Railway bosses believe the time saving will make the train a much more competitive **option** than taking the plane. Departing from and arriving in city centres will be much more appealing to business people who want to **avoid** airports outside of cities. The train also means they can work on their computers and online. With return fares to be set at less than \$120, it is likely that there will be a **price** war among airlines. Eurostar's chief executive Richard Brown said the record **marked** Britain's "entry into the European high-speed rail **club**." It also makes London to Paris day trips much more **doable**.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - a 2 - d 3 - b 4 - c 5 - c 6 - a 7 - b 8 - d 9 - c 10 - b 11 - a 12 - d