



VERY HIGH SPEED TRAIN TRAVEL 50 YEARS AND COUNTING

Since 1955, the story of very high-speed rail transport has been one of records being broken one after another. 1955, 1981, 1990, 2007, records that serve as milestones in the history of the French railway industry, each of them bringing with it visible changes to the landscape, the economy or for the travelers.

Real-life tests of capability and reliability of the lines and equipment, each of these records has led to long-term customer benefits in the design of systems, both in terms of performance and safety. Bringing people closer together, improving comfort at high speed, making the regions more accessible... all these advances - and more - have been made possible by test programmes within which attempts on rail speed records have served as milestones.

Beyond the pure technical achievement, these records represent the culmination of a major human adventure. A fascinating experience for those working directly on the project, they also contribute to enhancing the image of France around the world.

KEY MOMENTS IN VERY HIGH-SPEED FRENCH RAIL TRANSPORT

The origins of very high-speed French rail transport

27 & 28 March 1955: SNCF sets a double world record on the line between Bordeaux and Dax. An Alstom CC 7107 and a Jeumont-Schneider BB 9004 power car reach a speed of 331km/h...

Prototypes years ahead of their time

1967: SNCF publishes an invitation to tender for the production of a prototype high-speed powered trainset. In July 1969, it selects the project proposed by Alstom.

25 October 1971: the prototype trainset for the TGV^{TM1} 001 “turbotrain” leaves Alstom’s workshops at Belfort. The spirit of the TGVTM is already evident, even if for power it still uses gas turbines to feed electricity to the motors.

1974: at the height of the oil crisis, the “turbotrain” steps aside in favour of an electrically powered one: the electric “Train à Grande Vitesse” (TGVTM) is born!

¹ TGVTM. Train à Grande Vitesse, is a trademark of the SNCF



The record-setting TGV™

26 February 1981: a Paris Sud-Est trainset (reduced to a 7 car bodies) breaks the world rail speed record by reaching 380km/h...

After just 18 months in operation, the TGV™ welcomes its 10 millionth passenger! Very high speed by rail has become a firm fixture in French daily life.

1989: the more powerful, second-generation TGV™ (TGV™ Atlantique) is unveiled, taking commercial operating speed to 300km/h.

18 May 1990: following a series of tests, TGV™ Atlantique trainset no. 325 breaks the world rail speed record by reaching 515.3 km/h, a record that stands to this day!

Today, Réseau Ferré de France, the new owner and manager of the network, Alstom and SNCF will attempt to set a new world rail speed record on the East European high-speed line.

Chronology of the Record

- 27 & 28 March 1955: double world record
An Alstom and a Jeumont-Schneider Locomotive reach a speed of 331 km/h.
- 26 February 1981: a TGV™ Paris Sud-Est trainset breaks the world rail speed record on reaching 380 km/h.
- 18 May 1990: 1990, after a testing programme, the TGV™ Atlantique trainset reaches 515.3 km/h, a record that stands to this day.
- April 2007 attempt to set a new world rail speed record by RFF, ALSTOM and SNCF