

Release no 35/02
Date 17 July 2002

EUROSTAR HEADS SOUTH TO AVIGNON

Holidaymakers will be able to take Eurostar direct to Avignon in the south of France from this Saturday (20 July) and more than 600 passengers have already booked to travel on the first train.

The 715 mile trip from London Waterloo to Avignon Centre will take just 6 hours 15 minutes at an average of 114 miles an hour through the beautiful scenery of Burgundy and the Rhone valley. It is a unique way to travel to a beautiful part of France, less tiring than the car and more scenic than the plane.

The service will run on Saturdays through the summer until 7 September and fares start at a very attractive £115 return for a standard class ticket booked at least fourteen days in advance ("Leisure 14"). First class service, which will include one full meal and one light snack on board in each direction, provides excellent value with fares starting from £195 for Leisure 14.

The weekly service will leave Waterloo International at 07.22 calling at Ashford in Kent at 08.27 and arriving in Avignon Centre station at 14.37. The return trip leaves Avignon at 17.05 arriving at Ashford at 21.44 and London Waterloo at 22.51.

Avignon Centre station lies in sight of the walls of this historic city, famous for its ruined bridge ("le pont d'Avignon") and its medieval "Palace of the Popes". It is also an ideal base for exploring this perennially popular area of France. Car hire is available at Avignon Centre station to give the visitor complete freedom to explore this charming region including the vineyards of the Côtes du Rhône and Châteauneuf du Pape, the Pont du Gard, Arles, the mountains of the Vaucluse and the Camargue.

The weekly frequency is ideal for anyone taking a week's or fortnight's summer holiday but those wishing to travel to Avignon or back on a different day can "mix and match" bookings with the existing Eurostar Plus tickets.

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These provide travel by the French high speed trains (TGVs) which connect with Eurostar services at either Lille or Paris. Lead fares combining the direct service in one direction with a "Eurostar Plus" service in the other direction are the same in standard class, £115, and slightly lower in first class at £185.

Bertrand Guillon, Eurostar's Marketing Director, said: "More and more passengers are travelling by TGV Med, the new high speed rail service to the south of France. Now UK holiday makers will not only be able to enjoy the speed and comfort of Eurostar but they will also have the convenience of a door-to-door journey.

"With more than 600 people on the first train this Saturday it looks like this new direct service is a winner

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Notes to editors

The direct Avignon service can be booked by the following methods:

1. Telephone to Eurostar direct on 08705 186 186
2. Telephone to Rail Europe Direct on 08705 848 848
3. Authorised travel agents
4. In person at Waterloo International or Ashford International ticket offices
5. In person at the Eurostar shop at 102-104 Victoria Street, London SW1
6. In person at the French Travel Centre at 178 Piccadilly London W1
7. By internet on www.eurostar.co.uk
8. By internet on www.raileurope.co.uk

Travellers using the TGV in one direction will normally use the futuristic Avignon TGV station on the new line, which is linked to the city centre by shuttle bus, at a fare of approximately 3 Euros.

Eurostar Group determines the commercial direction and service development of the overall Eurostar business. Eurostar services are jointly operated by Eurostar (UK), French Railways (SNCF) and Belgian Railways (SNCB).

For further information please contact:-

Eurostar Press Office on 020 7922 4494 or email
press.office@eurostar.co.uk.

Avignon is well located as a gateway for the south of France and the Mediterranean

