

YOUR JOURNEY LONDON TO CANNES...



LONDON WATERLOO INTERNATIONAL

Welcome to Eurostar, the high-speed passenger rail service from the United Kingdom to Lille, Paris, Brussels and, today, uniquely, to Cannes. Eurostar first began services in 1994 and has since become the air/rail market leader on the London-Paris and London-Brussels routes, offering a fast and seamless travel experience. A Eurostar train is around a quarter of a mile long, and carries up to 750 passengers, the equivalent of two jumbo jets.

09:40 Departure from London Waterloo station. The first part of our journey runs through South-East London following the classic domestic line out of the capital.

10:00 KENT REGION

Kent is the region running from South-East London to the white cliffs of Dover on the south-eastern coast, where the Channel Tunnel begins. The beautiful rolling countryside and fertile lands of the region have been the backdrop for many historical moments. It was here in 55BC that Julius Caesar landed and uttered the famous words "Veni, vidi, vici" (*I came, I saw, I conquered*). King Henry VIII first met wife number one, Anne of Cleves, here, and his chief fruiterer planted the first apple and cherry trees, giving Kent the title of the 'Garden of England'. Kent has also served as the setting for many films such as *A Room with a View*, *The Secret Garden*, *Young Sherlock Holmes* and *Hamlet*.

10:09 Fawkham Junction. This is the moment we change over to the high-speed line. From now on Eurostar can travel at a top speed of 186mph (300km/h).

10:11 On your left you will see Rochester Castle dating from 1087, and the Medway Viaduct over the River Medway.

10:25 Ashford International station. Currently the only other UK station served by Eurostar.

10:35 Channel Tunnel. We are now approaching the Channel Tunnel which links the UK with mainland Europe. Running time through the tunnel is around 20 minutes. The tunnel, at its deepest point, is 150 feet below the sea-bed and is 31 miles long, of which 24 miles are under the sea.

11:59 Welcome to France! Please put your watches forward one hour to reflect Central European Time.

12:00 NORD-PAS-DE-CALAIS REGION

This region, at the northern-most tip of France is very close to the France-Belgium border. Defined by wide open spaces, rolling green fields and punctuated with sprawling forests, this is a typically rural region.

12:25 Lille Europe Station. Lille is the regional capital and fourth largest city in France. Lille itself is a vibrant mixture of French and Flemish architecture and culture, which reflects the close proximity of neighbouring Belgium. The city's charm undoubtedly lies in the historic old town with cobbled squares and narrow streets packed with stylish shops and brasseries offering the traditional dish of moules-frites washed down with good Belgian beer. Lille's most famous son is General Charles de Gaulle.

12:40 PICARDIE REGION

Historically, France was born in the Picardie region when Clovis made Soissons the capital of the Francks in AD 486. The forests and fields were the setting for the bloody Battle of the Somme in 1916 during WW1.

12:44 On your right you may be able to catch a glimpse of the battlefields of the Somme.

13:00 ILE DE FRANCE REGION

Surrounding the city of Paris, the Ile de France (Island of France) is so called because so many rivers flow through it, the most famous being the River Seine. The Ile de France is home to much of France's royal heritage, including the Château de Versailles and Château de Fontainebleau. Like many of the French regions, the Ile de France produces several cheeses, including Brie de Meaux and Coulommiers. Brie de Meaux is also known as the '*cheese of Kings*' as it was favoured by Charlemagne and Henry IV. The French eat more cheese than any other nation, an amazing total of 45 lbs (20.4kg) per person per year. In fact, an incredible 400 different kinds of cheeses are made in France.

13:00 On your left you can see the Compiègne Forest.

13:15 Charles de Gaulle airport.

13:23 Marne la Vallée-Chessy station. At this point in the journey the French train drivers take over the controls.

13:35 The Forest of Fontainebleau is on the right. The Château de Fontainebleau, hidden from view, was home to Henry II, Catherine de Medicis and Louis XIV over the years.

13:45 BURGUNDY REGION

Spanning from the southern point of the Ile de France to the medieval city of Mâcon, Burgundy is the largest region in France. Historically the home of the powerful Dukes of Burgundy in the Middle Ages, there are many beautifully preserved Norman abbeys dotted throughout the area. Vézelay Abbey in particular was an important destination for pilgrims, including King Richard the Lionheart who stopped to pray there before going to the Crusades in 1190. Allegedly, the abbey once held the relics of Mary Magdalene, delivered from the Holy Land by the 9th-century Saint Badilo.

Burgundy is most famous for its vineyards, especially Chablis, its most famous appellation, and the Côte d'Or (golden slopes) which produces world-famous vintages such as Côtes de Beaune and Côtes de Nuits.

13:50 On the right, although not visible, are the towns of Auxerre and Chablis, and further to the south, the town and abbey of Vézelay.

14:42 The monastic town of Cluny is now on the right, where the ancient Benedictine abbey might just be visible. You may also be able to catch sight of a large white house on the hill on the right, almost hidden behind the trees. This used to be the country retreat of François Mitterrand, the longest serving President of France (14 years).

14:47 On your left you may see the southern-most Burgundian town of Mâcon as you cross the river Saône. Pouilly Fuissé wine is a famous product of this area.

14:50 THE RHONE REGION

The Rhône region is home to the famous Saint-Marcellin cheese, and the Beaujolais vineyards as well as the Gallo-Roman city of Lyon. The US is one of the three largest markets for Beaujolais wine. In a typical year 30 million gallons of wine are produced – this is more than 190 million bottles. The region's '*pièce de résistance*' however, is its famous cuisine. Five of France's 19 three-star chefs work their magic here, citing the quality of local produce, fish and game as the key to their success.

14:50 We are now travelling down towards Lyon, following the course of the River Saône to its meeting point with the River Rhône. If you look to the left you will see the imposing peaks of the French Alps. You may even get a glimpse of Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak at 15, 771 feet that marks the borders with Switzerland and Italy.

15:03 LYON ST EXUPÉRY TGV

Lyon, capital of the Rhône region, is situated on the banks of the Rhône and Saône rivers. It is said that the first ever book printed in French (a copy of the Bible) was produced here in 1476. Many illustrious French chefs, such as Bocuse, Lacombe and Orsi, began their careers in Lyon; and with 40 or so food markets held each day here, it is no surprise that the city is also considered the culinary capital of France.

15:10 THE DROME REGION

Between Lyon and Avignon, the Drôme area is where the mountains become plains and the green fields give way to the drier lands of the South of France. It is also known as the Gateway to Provence.

15:26 The Roman town of Valence boasts one of the largest collections of footwear in the world. The International Shoe Museum contains some 8000 shoes, spanning from ancient times to the present day and includes examples from all cultures and civilisations as well as contemporary designers such as Stéphane Kélian and Charles Jourdan.

15:33 The town of Montelimar is surrounded by almond trees. Almonds are the key ingredient for nougat, the famed product of this town.

15:45 Orange, with its magnificent Roman amphitheatre also boasts its very own Roman Arc de Triomphe.

15:50 LES BOUCHES DU RHONE REGION

We are now in the heart of Provence with its dramatic backdrop of mountains, and rolling meadows of lavender, sunflowers, and poppies. Look out for hilltop Provençal towns, medieval fortresses and Roman ruins. Provence was the inspiration for artists such as Van Gogh, Pagnol and Mistral, as well as Cézanne. The striking towns of Avignon, Aix-en-Provence and the port of Marseille are all found in this region.

15:51 Avignon TGV station. The town of Avignon was once the Papal residence. From here you can see the Chaîne des Alpilles (little Alps) on the right, surrounded by olive groves. The River Durance flows through Avignon and a few kilometres to the right is the town of Saint Rémy de Provence, where Van Gogh painted *Starry Night*.

15:58 If you look to the right, you may see the hilltop village of les Baux de Provence, officially the most beautiful village in France.

16:08 Far on your left, at the foot of the mountains, is the town of Aix-en-Provence lying in the shadow of the Mont Sainte-Victoire, one of Paul Cézanne's favourite subjects, which he painted over 60 times. This year is Cézanne's centenary and art museums across France are celebrating with numerous retrospectives.

16:15 Marseille. France's oldest city is a bustling port with a lively atmosphere. At this point we leave the high-speed track for a more sedate run along the beautiful Mediterranean coast. To the right you can see the stunning inlets of Les Calanques carved into the impressive limestone cliffs along the coast from Marseille to Cassis. According to the legend of Les Trois Maries, three saints, all called Mary, came ashore here in order to convert ancient Provence to Christianity. One of them is said to have been Mary Magdalene.

16:20 THE COTE D'AZUR REGION

The glitziest, ritziest region in France, the Côte d'Azur runs along the south-eastern coast of France. Here you will find dazzling beaches, clear seas and towns such as St-Tropez, St-Paul de Vence and Nice.

16:25 You are now passing through the town of Aubagne, birthplace of Marcel Pagnol, famous French author of *Jean de Florette* – made famous by the film starring Gérard Depardieu – *Manon des Sources* and *La Gloire de Mon Père*. On your left is the Sainte Baume mountain range.

16:30 The ancient fishing port of Cassis is on the left.

16:43 The town of Bandol, is a seaside resort. To the left you can see the Ile de Bendor, bought in 1950 by Paul Ricard, inventor of Ricard Pastis, the region's favourite drink. It is now an exclusive holiday resort.

16:52 The French Naval base of Toulon. The author Victor Hugo lived here while he researched *Les Misérables*. The Mont Faron is visible to the left.

17:08 The Massif des Maures mountain range is to the right, temporarily blocking out the view of the sea.

17:35 The mountains of the Massif de l'Estérel are to the left, with spectacular views of the coast on the right.

18:05 CANNES

Host of the International Film Festival, and destination of the world's biggest movie makers and shakers, film stars and the international jet set, it is no surprise that Cannes is also the sister city of Beverly Hills; in fact the two cities were twinned in 1986. The festival began in 1946, although it was actually created in 1936 to counter Mussolini's fascists' propaganda film festival in Venice.