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The New Way to Switzerland

With the Channel Tunnel open, a new route to Switzerland is available to members, several of whom have been able to use the test runs to investigate the system. Whether it will prove an attractive alternative to flying to Zürich or Genève remains to be seen, since details of fares and onward connections remain sufficiently vague to create doubt. Certainly so long as the operator's believe that, in order to compete with airlines, they must try to emulate their inconveniences, even to the point of insisting on booking in an hour before departure time and providing "luxury airline type

seats", rather than "Orient Express style opulence", Eurostar will be working at a needless disadvantage.

Bearing in mind that at all other internal frontiers in the European Union, passports are unnecessary, the bureaucratic insistence on their continuance should be dumped forthwith. Doubtless we will need to look to Brussels to get this put into effect.

We have received accounts of two member's experiences with the trial runs which we feel worth putting on record

Le Shuttle overture service

by Geoffery Bryson

One and a half hours in the car from home brought us to the tightly laid out terminal at Cheriton. After stopping at the toll booth, we looked at the tent-roofed terminal building and drove through both British and French Passport Controls and Customs and onto the allocation area. This consists of long lines for cars, each of which take an upper or lower deck load for one train. Lorries, coaches and caravans are kept separate throughout.

The two lines of cars soon move forward down to the platforms on each side of the double-deck Le Shuttle. One line drives onto the train and up the internal ramp, the other stays on the level through the brightly lit wagons and on through - ten wagons in all. Each wagon has room for five cars, and when they are in place fireproof doors with their frames swing out and a roller door comes down between each wagon.

Very helpful staff explain the method, put car in first gear, handbrake on, open window to hear announcements and, if so desired, get out and walk about. Every other wagon has stairs to the other deck and airline type toilets.

Departure is very smooth and from the small windows one can see the openwork lorry wagons being laded and unloaded. We are soon in the tunnel itself, with very little to see other than a few lights speeding past. The run

is smooth and fast, very soon we were in the open air and negotiating the 180° curve into the platforms of the French terminal, which, with an area of 450 hectares is three times the size of the British installation and is well spread out. Soon we were on the Autoroute, just an hour after leaving the M20 motorway. The Terminal Area includes Calais-Fréthun TGV Station with TGV connection to Paris Nord via Lille, taking 1 hr 30 min for the journey, rather than the 3 hours on the shorter classic route.

On our return trip we were soon through the French and British formalities and into the Allocation area. A slight delay here led to our car train following a slower HGV lorry train into the North Tunnel ie, "wrong line". Brakes were applied twice, my enquiry to a helpful lady staff member resulted in the Chef du Train (in the rear locomotive cab) and the driver telling me, via her radio, that we would be using the British crossover in the massive Cavern. We could just see along the tunnel and the massive doors all brightly lit. Speed soon picked up again and we were in the open and round the covered curves into the platform. The fireproof doors opened and after a moment's checking we were waved off straight onto the M20 motorway and home. Our Eurotunnel certificate says History was Made.