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Eurostar: Prototype & Model by Peter Marriott

An expanded Eurostar network from 1997 will introduce direct trains from Waterloo to the French Alps.

Eurostar is the brand name of the high speed passenger services which are operated by Eurostar (UK) Ltd., French National Railways and Belgian National Railways. The service commenced on 14th November 1994 linking Waterloo International with Paris and Brussels. The Eurostar trains are based on the successful French TGV sets. Eurostar (UK) Ltd. own 18 of the total 38 sets which all have a maximum service speed of 300km/h, but until the Channel Tunnel Rail Link is opened in Britain, speed within our borders will be limited on 160km/h on upgraded lines from Waterloo International to the Channel Tunnel portal via Ashford. The 'Three Capitals' sets will be two power cars (BR Class 373) plus 18 carriages but the Regional Eurostar (or 'North of London') sets (to be introduced in early 1997) will be shorter at 2 locomotives and 14 carriages. All sets are tri-voltage and fitted with two pantographs in addition to a third rail pick up for the UK lines.

The 1996/7 winter timetable contains a maximum of eight services daily to Brussels and up to 16 Paris trains a day. Some Eurostar sets have recently been converted to run on the French Railways (SNCF) 1500 V dc lines and we can expect direct Waterloo International to French Alps services in early 1997.

For passengers wishing to use rail rather than air between London and Geneva the Eurostar route between London and Paris can be used with a cross capital connection required from Paris Nord to Paris Lyon. Use the recently opened RER line D for an eight minute journey time from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon. The London Waterloo International to Geneva journey using Eurostar and TGV can now be accomplished in a little over 7 hours.

Further ahead in 1997 Nightstar sleeper services using the Channel Tunnel will hopefully serve various parts of the UK to Germany, France and Holland. The future looks good for European rail travellers at last.

Eurostar Models



Readers of this journal may wonder what interest Eurostar models have to Swiss enthusiasts? Well, originally it was not envisaged that Eurostar services would run beyond Paris or Brussels but shortly they will be run to destinations in the French Alps. Will they in due course, like the Winter Saturdays SNCF TGV services call at Aigle, Bex etc and terminate at Brig? After all the German ICE trains run to Switzerland!!!

Hornby have retailed two Eurostar models. In 1995 they released a four car HO model based on the Joeuf product. That product is no longer available in the Hornby range although it has been re-introduced in the UK (using the same running numbers) by Lima.

Hornby's latest OO model of the Eurostar has taken just nine months to develop and produce. It was officially released to dealers, the press and other interested parties at the Tower Thistle Hotel, London, on 1st October 1996. There is no common origin of the HO and OO Eurostar models. These latest OO Eurostar models have been designed and built at Margate. The initial production run is limited to two power cars plus two articulated intermediate standard class carriages. One power car is motorised with all eight wheels collecting current from the rails. In the future bar cars, first class carriages and further second class carriages will become available. The model is being retailed as four car units either as part of a set (to include an oval of track, a TrakMat and transformer/controller) or as a unit only pack.

Opposite page: Eurostar at Paris, Gare Du Nord
Above: Hornby model

There are two pantographs on each power car. Lighting is not installed on the model but the wheels are darkened and traction tyres are fitted. The minimum recommended track radius for the units is 438mm (17.25"). The cab and train interiors do not include any details but this is not readily apparent because the carriage windows are darkened as on the prototype. The painting of the model is very good and it catches the distinctive livery of the prototype units. The lettering and logos are well defined. The grills are nicely produced and the silver finish on the cab door handrails is very clean.

The units run quite smoothly when the power is applied slowly and steadily. Its performance does not match that of the German models we are known to admire and collect but there again neither is the price! The four car set can be obtained for around £75.

For N gauge modellers the Japanese manufacturer Kato manufacture a model of the Eurostar set. There is a standard 8 carriage set with the option of purchasing an 'extension pack' of another 4 vehicles comprising of a restaurant, first class and two standard class centre vehicles. The model is built in 1:160 scale and features working lights in the driving ends and tail lights at the rear together with flush glazing and full interior detail.



Above: Brig station has undergone a re-fit, all the overhead catenary masts and spans have been replaced along with the overhead wiring, Scheuchzer M625, is seen here grinding the rails after some re-alignment in August 1996,

Below: One of the Vallee de Joux sets of the PBR, seen here at Le Brassus awaiting departure for Vallorbe in August 1996.

photos: Les Heath

