

THE  TIMES

## Eurostar goes Dutch with direct service to Amsterdam



Eurostar is hoping to poach some of the three million passengers who travel by air between London and Amsterdam Gareth Fuller/PA

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**Marcus Leroux**

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Rail passengers will be able to travel to Amsterdam directly from 2016, after Eurostar reached an agreement with Dutch railways.

The service, which Eurostar plans to introduce in December 2016, will take about four hours from London — about half an hour shorter than the journey from London to Glasgow.

Eurostar intends to run two trains a day via Brussels, stopping at Antwerp, Rotterdam and Schiphol Airport. It is hoping to muscle in on an air route that carries more than 3 million passengers annually.

Nicolas Petrovic, Eurostar's chief executive, said: "We have long been ambitious for expansion to new destinations so today's announcement marks a major advance in our growth plans.

"With over three million passengers travelling by air between London and Amsterdam, this is one of Europe's most popular routes. Our fast, comfortable, point-to-point service will greatly enhance the links between the UK and the near Continent."

The route will use new rolling stock that is compatible with the Dutch network's high-speed track.

Eurostar became a standalone entity in 2010, owned by SNCF, SNCB of Belgium and London and Continental Railways. In the past year it has added new services to the Swiss Alps and Aix-en-Provence in France.

Separately, Britain and France are set to reject an EU request that charges for passenger and freight trains that use the Channel Tunnel are lowered, according to the chief executive of Eurotunnel.

The European Commission asked in June that Britain and France respond to a request for lower fees on the tunnel, which is operated by Eurotunnel.

Jacques Gounon, the chief executive of Eurotunnel, said: "I met both ministers in person a couple of hours ago and they told me that both France and Britain would jointly reject the EU's request."

The EU believes that high charges lead to the tunnel being used below its capacity, at 57 per cent.

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Text

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No doubt the Davies Commission will factor this in and perhaps also London St. Pancras International - German rail services once DB start these. A great pity perhaps that unlike Schipol & Frankfurt, Heathrow does not have an Inter-City railway station! A serious lack of strategic transport planning!

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