

Rail companies unite to run Climate Train to Cop26

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In October, ProRail, NS, Eurostar, Avanti West Coast and Youth for Sustainable Travel will join forces to run a special 'Climate Train' to the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow. Almost six years after the Paris Climate Agreement was signed, more focus on 'sustainable mobility' including rail is needed according to European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans who consciously chooses to take the train to Glasgow.

Achieving a better climate through sustainable mobility

"Six years after the Climate Summit in Paris, many countries have still taken too few concrete steps to limit global warming," according to Mara de Pater, from Youth for Sustainable Travel,

"If we continue at this rate, the earth will have warmed up by 3 degrees by the year 2100, according to research by the UN climate panel IPCC. This will lead to a sharp rise in sea level and more extreme weather, with all its consequences. This can and must change, and the travel industry is an important sector in this respect, where many sustainability steps can still be taken."

CO2 savings

Travelling to London by Eurostar instead of plane emits up to 93 percent less CO₂¹ per passenger and a freight train can replace an average of 56 trucks². Despite the sustainable advantage of trains, only seven percent of all passengers and 11 percent of all goods in Europe travel by rail³. Yet, with its 200,000 kilometres of track, Europe has one of the most intricate networks in the world.

With the 'EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy', Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans wants to give sustainable transport in Europe a boost. Setting a good example is part of this, with hundreds of passengers choosing to travel by train from the continent to Scotland for the COP26 climate summit.

Frans Timmermans, European Commissioner, said: "What could be nicer than travelling by train to an international climate summit? The train is sustainable and provides a lot of comfort, whether you travel for work or pleasure. More and more passengers in Europe are recognising the advantages of travelling by rail. We want to increase this number in the coming years by, for example, doubling the amount of high-speed train traffic and making international rail travel even easier. I am really looking forward to leaving for Glasgow by train with our delegation."

From sailing ship to train

The idea to travel to COP26 through Europe by rail started as a successful grassroots movement by Youth for Sustainable Travel in cooperation with rail operator ProRail. The Climate Train then became a reality thanks to collaboration with carriers Eurostar, NS and Avanti West Coast (who were planning a service to the conference in Glasgow). The initiative is also supported by CER – the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies.

In 2019, young people from Youth for Sustainable Travel, with the participation of ProRail, organised a sailing trip to the Climate Summit that was to be held in Chile. After the summit was moved to Madrid, they successfully called on other young people in Europe to visit the climate summit by train. This initiative, called 'Sail to the COP', is now followed up with 'Rail to the COP' (where COP stands for the UN climate summit / Conference of the Parties) and comes in support of the EU Year of Rail 2021, in line with the European Union's ambitions to promote the train as the sustainable alternative for travel and transport.

The 'Climate Train'

Rail to the COP will bring together as diverse a group as possible from all over Europe. Young people, official delegations, mobility experts, NGOs and representatives of the railway sector are invited to travel by Eurostar from Amsterdam, Rotterdam or Brussels to London, where they will change to an Avanti West Coast train to Glasgow.

During the trip, Youth for Sustainable Travel and the rail partners will organise a series of debates and seminars to draw attention to the important role that rail and sustainable travel can play in achieving the global Climate Change Goals.

For more information visit www.railtothecop.com

1. Based on 2019 CO2e emissions. More info at <https://www.eurostar.com/uk-en/tread-lightly>
2. www.prorail.nl
3. https://europa.eu/year-of-rail/index_nl

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