

## What's new this month

### WELCOME

Welcome to this year's December edition of the *European Rail Timetable* which includes new winter schedules for most European countries valid from December 13. For schedules before this date please refer to our November edition. We have been able to include new timings for the majority of trains but only partial information was available for certain countries as we went to press and readers are advised to check individual country headings to confirm validity of the timings in each section. In many cases, particularly in France and Germany, tables have been compiled using advance data which is sometimes liable to change and passengers are advised to confirm timings before travelling, especially during holiday periods. All our tables will be rechecked over the coming weeks as schedules are confirmed.

### ROUTE OF THE MONTH

Nicky Gardner and Susanne Kries, editors of *hidden europe* magazine, enjoy a journey through the Languedoc region of France on board a long-distance regional service from Avignon to Portbou. The article will be found on page 35 and the latest timings for this route are shown in Table 355.

### TIP OF THE MONTH

Our regular Tip of the Month, which will be found on page 36, offers some useful hints on the topic of booking horizons – that is to say how far ahead you can book tickets. Booking up to three months in advance is the generally accepted rule, although there are an increasing number of variations with some railways extending their advance sales period. The result is that, depending on where you book your tickets, further savings can often be made.

### CAR TRAINS

It would appear that DB Autozug has withdrawn its international car carrying trains as initial information received shows operational dates only for its routes from Hamburg to München and Basel (Lörrach). Confirmation of this is awaited (Tables 1 and 2).

### INTERNATIONAL

**Table 9** - As Christmas Day falls on a Friday this year, the first overnight departure from London to Bourg St Maurice will not be until January 1.

**Table 10** - Eurostar timings for services from London to Paris and Brussels are now available until May 28. Engineering work in the Channel Tunnel will affect services on January 16, 17, 30 and 31, but timings on these dates are still to be confirmed. Work on the line between Calais and Paris from February 1 to March 26 will also affect services; during this period trains will depart Paris 10 minutes earlier and arrive 10 minutes later than usual. Please note that no services will call at Ashford International on February 21.

**Table 11** - TGV 9860 Toulon – Brussels now starts from Nice at 0602. This replaces the existing 0905 departure from Nice which only ran as far as Lille.

**Table 13** - There have been a number of alterations to the Paris – Barcelona TGV service. Train 9713 (1007 from Paris) now runs daily, but 9711 (0715 from Paris) will only run in the summer. In the opposite direction 9704 (1320 from Barcelona) runs daily, but 9706 (1620 from Barcelona) becomes a summer only train. In addition, the Barcelona to Toulouse AVE trains 9726/9729 will not run from January 5 to April 2.

**Table 17** - The Eurostar service from London to Marseille continues to run once a week, on most Saturdays, until March 19. From March 25 the number of departures will increase to three times a week, running additionally on Mondays and Fridays. The London to Marne la Vallée service continues to run four days a week, increasing to six during holiday periods (except for a five week break from January 3).

**Table 20** - A number of Thalys services were due to be extended to serve Dortmund from the timetable change but, due to restrictions caused by the Mülheim signal box fire (see German news), these changes are not now expected until at least late March. In the meantime trains 9412 and 9473 will run from/to Essen, 9401 will terminate at Duisburg and 9484 will start from Düsseldorf. All other Thalys services will not run beyond Köln. When services return to normal the three services that currently run between Paris and Essen will be extended to Dortmund and another train pair between Paris and Köln will be extended to and from Essen meaning the Ruhr city will have four daily through services from and to Paris.

**Table 24** - Train 24/23 Paris – Moskva now runs 3 times a week and has been retimed.

**Tables 30 and 32** - These tables are only valid until April 2 as there will be major changes following the opening of the TGV Est high-speed line extension to Strasbourg on April 3. However, advance summaries of the proposed Paris to Frankfurt (Table 30) and Paris to Frankfurt (Table 32) timetables, which will be introduced following the opening of the extended high-speed line, are shown on pages 570 and 571 respectively. As well as faster journey times, there will be an additional service provided between Paris and both Frankfurt and Stuttgart with two Frankfurt services in each direction operating via Strasbourg. Please note that all timings are subject to confirmation.

**Table 31** - The Lille to Genève service operated by Lyria has been discontinued.

**Table 43** - Trains 91/90 Vauban and 97/96 Iris between Brussels and Basel will be withdrawn from April 3 following the opening of the TGV Est high-speed line.

**Table 44** - On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays Milano to Paris train 9250 departs 90 minutes earlier, at 1440, and is renumbered 9248. The overnight Paris – Milano – Venezia Thello services 221/220 have had their journey times extended in France and thus depart earlier and arrive later in Paris.

**Table 50** - ICE 38/35 København – Hamburg – Berlin no longer runs between Hamburg and Berlin.

**Table 51** - A new international service, operated by Arriva, has commenced between Berlin and Torun Gł. via Kostrzyn and Bydgoszcz.

**Table 54** - Overnight services EN 447/446 Jan Kiepura and CNL 457/456 Kopernikus no longer run between Oberhausen and Köln.

**Table 56** - The twice weekly train 116BJ/115BJ Warszawa – Minsk has been withdrawn.

**Table 60** - Significant changes have been implemented on the Hamburg – Berlin – Praha – Budapest axis with all daytime services from Germany only running as far as Praha hlavní (except for train EC173/172 Hungary which will continue to provide a through service to and from Budapest). Good connections are available at Praha for journeys to and from Bratislava and Budapest. The number of direct services between Hamburg and Praha has increased to four in each direction. Please note that some train names have been switched.

**Table 61** - Train 383/382 Bulgaria Express București – Sofia has been withdrawn. Train 481/480 Serdica Budapest – Vidin – Sofia has been retimed in both directions. IC 343 Ivo Andrić Budapest – Beograd departs Budapest Keleti two hours earlier at 0805.

**Table 75** - Certain EuroCity services between München and Zürich have been extended to and from Basel.

**Table 91** - EC 246 Citadella Budapest – Ljubljana is retimed to run five hours earlier and the return train, EC 247, runs 90 minutes earlier from Ljubljana.

**Table 95** - Russian Railways has restored a daily Moskva to Budapest service running via Warszawa. The train also conveys daily through sleeping cars to Sofia and our friends at *hidden europe* magazine noted that the Sofia cars – which travel over 3,333 kilometres – serve seven European capital cities en route; they suggest this is a record unequalled in railway history. Also re-introduced are twice weekly cars between Moskva and Cheb, conveyed in train 22/21 Vltava.

**Table 99** - A number of changes have been implemented on the Warszawa to Praha and Wien routes. Warszawa to Praha gains an additional EuroCity service, although the current EC 110/111 has been retimed considerably as a result. A new Warszawa to Ostrava EuroCity service has also been introduced. Please note that Wien services now start from/terminate at Wien Hbf and no longer serve Westbahnhof.

Another new service is EC131/130 Varsovia which runs between Warszawa and Budapest via Katowice and Břeclav. This connects at Břeclav with the Praha to Wien service RJ77/74.

### GREAT BRITAIN

Owing to engineering work, most Great Western operated weekend services in our tables are valid from January 9 (Tables 131 to 140).

A number of services in Table 113 now also serve Yeovil Pen Mill station by using the chord from Yeovil Junction.

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## What's new this month (continued from page 3)

### FRANCE

The most significant rail event in France in 2016 is due to take place on April 3 with the opening of the TGV Est high-speed line extension to Strasbourg. This will result in some significant alterations to many long-distance and local services and, for that reason, most tables in the French section are only valid until April 2. Please note, however, that following the tragic accident on November 14 when a test train derailed at high speed, it has been reported that the opening may be delayed. We will obviously be monitoring the situation closely so we can provide the correct schedules from April 3.

The section of line between Langeac and Langogne was damaged by a landslide earlier this year and bus replacement services have been in place to allow repair work to be carried out. The good news is that through services will start running again from December 18 (Table 333).

### BELGIUM

The new Schuman-Josaphat tunnel in Brussels was to have opened with the December timetable change, but we understand this has been delayed until April. This will enable direct services between Brussels Airport and Brussels Luxembourg station in the European Quarter, home to the European Parliament. The new service will run every 30 minutes on Mondays to Fridays (Table 401). Trains will continue beyond Brussels Luxembourg to either Charleroi (a slow service not shown in our tables) or to Namur and Dinant by extending existing trains (Table 440).

### SWITZERLAND

The most significant timetable change for some years has resulted in a restructuring of services. Some routes show an increase in frequency and many trains that previously operated Mondays to Fridays now also run on Saturdays. In addition, there are earlier starts and later finishes to service patterns.

With the opening of a new flyover giving access to the underground platforms at Zürich HB, there are considerable changes to the stopping patterns of services in Tables 510 and 530. Basel – Zürich HB *IR* trains are extended to St Gallen. Basel – Zürich Flughafen (via Baden) *IR*'s call additionally at Zürich HB and Genève – St Gallen *IC* services now run non-stop between Winterthur and St Gallen reducing the journey time by approximately eighteen minutes.

Elsewhere, services between Biel/Bienne and Delle continue running three hours later than previously (Table 515). Basel – Biel/Bienne – Lausanne *ICN* trains will operate only on the northern section from Basel to Biel/Bienne (new Table 505a), and Biel/Bienne – Zürich – Konstanz *IR*'s are restricted to Zürich – Konstanz (Table 535).

### ITALY

Only partial information for the new timetable was available from Trenitalia as we went to press, although it does include all *Frecciarossa* and *Frecciargento* services, along with most *Frecciabianca*, *InterCity* and night trains. Consequently, all services shown with a train number within the Italian section have been checked but passengers are advised to recheck timings locally. However, new schedules have not been received for the *Italo* services of Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori (NTV) shown in Table 600.

### SPAIN

Two of the three *Incaexpres* services between Palma and Inca, on the island of Mallorca, have been retimed (Table 674).

### GERMANY

The fire damaged signal box at Mülheim continues to affect services between Duisburg and Dortmund and various alterations are expected to continue until late March. We are only able to show the normal timings in our tables but have included a panel on page 367 with a summary of the latest known alterations.

Private operator *Hamburg-Köln-Express* has introduced an amended timetable running just four times a week in each direction Thursdays to Sundays. However, the northbound train on Thursdays and Saturdays together with the southbound service on Fridays and Sundays will be extended to serve Bonn, Koblenz and Frankfurt. Previously shown in Table 800a, these trains have now been incorporated into the main Table 800.

There have been alterations to some of the *Regional Express* routes that operate via Berlin. Services from Rostock in Table 835 now run to Elsterwerda. In Table 845 the revised routings are Stralsund to Falkenberg and Schwedt to Lutherstadt Wittenberg. Due to space constraints, it is no longer possible to show services between Angermünde and Szczecin in Table 845 and these trains will now be found in a new Table 949 at the end of the German section.

The most eye-catching change in Germany is the opening of a new section of high-speed line between Erfurt and Leipzig/Halle which has reduced journey times between these cities by approximately 30 minutes (Table 850). As well as offering faster journeys on the hourly services between Frankfurt and Leipzig/Dresden, it has also resulted in some faster journeys between Frankfurt and Berlin (compared to the route via Braunschweig). These new *ICE* services between Frankfurt and Berlin call only at Erfurt and Halle and complete the journey in under four hours. Please note that the service via Braunschweig in Table 902 continues to run as normal, including the limited stop *ICE Sprinter* trains. With the re-routing of *ICE* services via the new line, Weimar is served by far fewer long distance trains. However, a new fast regional service, operated by *Abellio Rail Mitteldeutschland*, has been introduced between Leipzig and Erfurt via Weimar and details of this will be found in Table 849.

The line between Bamberg and Lichtenfels will be closed from January 11 to September 3 which will result in some major alterations to both local and long-distance services that use this stretch of line. Services between Berlin and München in Table 851 will run every two hours and are diverted via Erfurt and Fulda. Alternative train/bus connections are available via the Saalfeld route and these are shown in Table 851. All regional services will be replaced by bus over the affected section resulting in extended journey times. Tables 851 and 875 show the amended timings valid from January 11, although versions of these tables valid until January 10 will be found on page 572. There will be a knock-on effect to services in many other tables and, where this occurs, the service from January 11 is shown. Unfortunately it is not possible for us to show all variations until January 10 but services that may have amended timings or train numbers are clearly indicated.

Please note that, due to their complexity, we have not been able to show any variations to days of running during the Christmas and New Year period in the German section. Instead we have included a panel on page 367 which outlines how services are affected. This panel is only intended as a general guide and readers travelling during this period are strongly advised to check their travel plans locally.

### AUSTRIA

Wien Hauptbahnhof has become fully operational from the timetable change and most long-distance trains that previously ran to Wien Westbahnhof now serve the new rail hub instead. A feature of the revised schedules is the extension of two *RJ/IC* trains an hour from the Hauptbahnhof to serve Wien Flughafen. This means that many cities, including Linz, Salzburg and Innsbruck, now enjoy regular through services to and from Austria's principal airport (Table 950).

The only trains that now use Wien Westbahnhof are regional services and *Westbahn* trains to and from Salzburg. *Westbahn* have added a morning limited stop service in each direction with the eastbound train taking just 2 hours 16 minutes to complete the journey between Salzburg and Wien with just two intermediate stops.

### POLAND

Polish Railways' schedules have been updated and are now valid until March 12. Many *TLK* services are rebranded as *IC*, including some Gdynia to Poznań (Table 1020) and Katowice (Table 1060) trains.

Travel into Lithuania is now possible, once again, with the extension of the Warszawa – Suwałki train (*Hanicza*) to the border town of Mockava. The train also starts back at Kraków (Table 1042).

### CZECH REPUBLIC

The Praha – Ostrava service in Table 1160 has once again been recast and includes a new early morning *IC* train from Píseň to Praha, returning just after midnight. In order to expand this table, the section between Olomouc and Žilina via Vsetín and Horní Lideč has been split off into separate Table 1158. The Polish village of Szklarska Poreba Górna is now served by through trains from Liberec (Table 1141).

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## What's new this month (continued from page 34)

### SLOVAKIA

The two-hourly Bratislava – Zvolen trains now all continue to Banská Bystrica (Table 1170); Zvolen to Banská Bystrica trains are therefore now shown in this table rather than 1185. Trains from Žilina to Banská Bystrica no longer run through to Zvolen, with one exception. Table 1172 Nové Zámky to Nitra has been combined with Table 1187 Nitra to Topoľčany, as most trains run through.

Private operator *Regiojet* has increased its daytime offering on the Bratislava to Košice route from three trains each way to five, whilst its Praha to Košice overnight service now runs daily. *Leo Express* has diverted its afternoon train from Praha to run to Prešov, reversing there and continuing to Košice (Table 1180); the train returns to Praha overnight, again diverting to serve Prešov. *Regiojet's* Praha – Žilina – Martin train has been extended to and from Zvolen (Table 1185).

### HUNGARY

The Budapest – Győr service (Table 1250) has been completely recast with more frequent *IC* trains continuing either to Sopron or Szombathely rather than splitting at Csorna for both destinations. *Hortobágy*, the Wien – Debrecen train, has been extended to Nyíregyháza and now runs via Budapest Keleti rather than skirting the southern suburbs. Similarly, *Avala*, the Wien – Beograd train, now also serves Budapest Keleti rather than Ferencváros.

### SERBIA

The new timetable brings a welcome return of a daytime service between Beograd and Sofia. Train 490/1 *Balkan* will depart Beograd at 0735 (combined with train 337 as far as Niš) and arrive in Sofia at 1815. The opposite direction sees an 1130 departure from Sofia and 1935 arrival in Beograd (Table 1380).

### ESTONIA

The Tallinn to Moskva sleeper service (34/33) has been accelerated in both directions and no longer calls at Rakvere (Table 1870).

### RUSSIA

Train 6/5 Vilnius – Moskva is withdrawn but train 29 Moskva – Vilnius – Kaliningrad is retimed to depart Moskva three hours later at 1720, arriving Vilnius at 0633 (Table 1950).

### BELARUS

The twice weekly train 815/816 Vilnius – Hrodna has been withdrawn. Some services between Minsk and Vilnius have been retimed and additional trains between Minsk and Hrodna have been added to Table 1950.

### BEYOND EUROPE

This month's Beyond Europe section features Africa and the Middle East with tables numbered 4000 to 4650.

Since this section last appeared in June, Tanger Ville station has reopened and replaces Tanger Morora (Table 4000).

Israeli tables 4500 and 4510 have been recast and a new table 4515 added so that the country's Intercity services can be shown more clearly.

### HAPPY CHRISTMAS

from the European Rail Timetable team

and thank you to all the operators and correspondents  
who have supplied information to us this year

## Robert Foster's Column

*Robert Foster is a long-standing customer and supporter of the European Rail Timetable who played a key role in its rebirth in 2014. In an occasional column Robert shares some of his own thoughts based on his recent travel experiences.*

The value of the European Rail Timetable (ERT) is immense for those who require more information than is available from a website, because it gives an overview of all times on all possible routes and a map for each country. On some of my six or so annual journeys from North Yorkshire to St. Raphael – which is 1050 miles (1680 km) and is capable of being accomplished in 12 hours – I return over two days by a slower route via Torino and/or Milano, then Switzerland and over one of the lines through central France, a favourite being the threatened Nîmes – Clermont Ferrand route, the central section of which is currently closed by a landslide. Therefore my next return journey is via Toulouse and the 1305 through train then to Clermont. You could not easily, if at all, find these routes by internet.

The internet also has lacunae particularly at this time of year when the booking period is sometimes substantially less than the customary 3-month window, even in that country whose railways are an inspiration and an example to us all: Switzerland. On one of my annual journeys from Bellagio (on Lake Como – the boat/hydrofoil timetable for which appears in Table 599) and wanting to detour to Vitznau for the Rigi railway, the internet routed us on a postbus, yet the timetable showed that I could reach Vitznau at the same time by changing onto a lake steamer at Brunnen – moreover steam-operated (Table 506). Normally that journey to and from Como is done by air to Genève or Basel, and then train using the Swiss Transfer Ticket although I have done it in a day from Bellagio to North Yorkshire. In their Route of the Month column earlier this year, Nicky Gardner and Suzanne Kries, stated that they preferred the older rolling stock on the RhB compared with the newer stock. The Glacier and Bernina Expresses have been sanitised and the former no longer has an independent restaurant car, meals being served at your seat. Yet my route to Bellagio normally involves the 1158 Chur – St Moritz, lunch in the restaurant car of which – the last vehicle of a 10-coach train – is an exotic experience winding up to the Albula tunnel.

Travelling recently from Nice to Ventimiglia, I met a large group of Americans destined for Firenze via Pisa, who had received from the internet a most unsatisfactory itinerary on a succession of local trains. I rearranged their itinerary for them, amidst amazement that something like the ERT existed. I asked them why they had not taken the 0805 *Thello* Nice – Genova (– Milano) train which they said was showing fully booked. That could not be. Worse, the *Thello* Milano – Marseille train which accomplishes just one single trip daily (and is substantially slower than the TEE Ligure of 40 years ago which did a return trip to Avignon in the day). As Nicky and Suzanne state in the November issue of the ERT, this provides a connection out of the 0719 St. Pancras – Marseille train, yet it is not featured at all on the SNCF website.

Another major failure of the internet applies to trains which run on certain days only. If you happen to search a day when the train does not run – this applies particularly to the diminishing band of SNCF overnight trains – then without the ERT, you would be unaware that the train runs on other dates.

The ERT has already given advance notice of timings on the LGV Est when the final section to Strasbourg is opened in April 2016. To my disappointment the through Paris – München train maintains its existing timings at München (2136/0625) and so departs far too early westbound. Any potential passenger getting up in the small hours for a train at that time is more likely to fly. Other trains which depart too early and return too late are the 0806 from Marseille to Madrid and the 0814 from Marseille to Frankfurt, both of which narrowly fail to make a connection in either direction from/to Nice and stations on the Cote d'Azur. I shall be travelling on the latter in May in order to reach Switzerland (changing at Mulhouse), but I shall have to drive to Aix-en-Provence TGV station to catch it at 0818.

ROBERT H. FOSTER