



UIC PASSENGER DEPARTMENT
UIC promotion of sustainable tourism

September 2024



INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS



DO YOU KNOW WHAT UIC DOES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

Why is sustainable tourism important?

The role of rail as a preferential partner to foster sustainable mobility and tourism.

Projects/actions

What we do to promote and improve tourism

TopRail sector

- Network of experts from the railway sector and key players from the tourism industry
- Platform showcasing various recreational activities on board trains, via website, social media and discussion forums among experts
- Creation of technical documents providing recommendations for the sector to improve the quality of services, considering the needs of customers seeking leisure experiences:
- Guidelines to measure and promote sustainable rail tourism
- Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourists
- Guidelines on how to make rail more attractive to younger generations
- Categorisation to promote Tourism Friendly trains, lines, stations and companies

Customer experience

- **CEMP**: Building knowledge and guidelines on the customer journey, laying the foundation for tools and measures for CX management
- **PRM and persons with disabilities – PASSAGE**: Enabling discussion on how to create more accessible railways for all
- **Gender equality – Train2bEqual**: Promoting trains and railway spaces as a safe means of transport for tourists of all genders
- **Station Managers Global Group Sector**: Exploring new activities to open within railway stations, e.g. tourist offices, bike rental shops

Tools

- **Booking solutions (MERITS, OSDM, eTCD)**: Make it possible to plan and purchase international and multimodal train tickets, enabling travellers to discover different parts of Europe
- **PRM ABT**: Assures assistance for PRMs on international train journeys
- **EcoPassenger**: Estimates and compares the carbon footprint of each transport mode on a chosen journey

EU research projects fostering multimodal sustainable mobility

- **Tour&Rail**: Building sustainable tourism models to apply to low-traffic railways seeking to prevent line closures
- **Modus and MultiModX**: Modelling the future of EU air and rail sustainable mobility
- **Rail4Cities**: Demonstrating the potential for stations to develop as new urban centres for regular users and tourists
- **RailtoLand**: Adapting new technologies to make train travel a cultural and educational experience

WHY IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IMPORTANT?

The International Union of Railways (UIC) recognises the pivotal role that rail transport can play in promoting sustainable tourism, thanks to its comparatively low emissions footprint. Railways are responsible for just 7-8% of global freight and passenger transport, but their emissions only account for 1-2% of total transport emissions, making them a critical ally in the transition towards more sustainable tourism.

For over a decade, UIC members have been actively engaged in advancing sustainable tourism. This effort is spearheaded through TopRail, a dedicated sector that focuses on promoting rail-based tourism, as well as indirectly through various working groups, tools and solutions that address key challenges in sustainable mobility. The resurgence of rail travel in recent years, particularly in Europe and Asia, highlights the growing preference for trains as a greener travel option. From high-speed journeys and night trains between major cities to slow-travel experiences over scenic routes, rail tourism offers a broad range of opportunities that align with economic, social and environmental goals.

Now more than ever, the railways must play a central role in facilitating sustainable choices for travellers. By raising awareness of the consequences of travel decisions, supporting sustainable mobility options and enhancing the overall travel experience, UIC is committed to fostering a competitive, environmentally friendly future for tourism. Moreover, through collaborative research, the development of tools and the creation of discussion forums, UIC continues to build knowledge and strategies that support sustainable tourism on a global scale.

The transport sector accounts for more than a quarter of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. More importantly, transport has seen higher emissions growth than any other sector over the past few decades, and this trend is set to continue.

UIC is keen to do its part by:

- Increasing awareness among transport users of the consequences of their travel choices
- Supporting decision-making on how to facilitate sustainable choices
- Increasing awareness of existing rail tourism offers
- Elaborating strategies on how to create rail tourism opportunities for railway companies and other stakeholders
- Building up knowledge on how to improve the travel experience for all types of customers, including women, PRMs, older people, families and the very young, and on how to cope with usage conflicts (e.g. needs of tourists vs commuters, or bikes and luggage vs more capacity on board)
- Carrying out research studies on different topics linked to sustainable tourism from different points of view: inclusion, gender, multimodality, new technologies, etc. Creating forums for discussion of best practices
- Developing specific tools to facilitate international leisure travel by train

THE ROLE OF RAIL AS A PREFERENTIAL PARTNER TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY AND TOURISM

Supporting sustainable tourism is not only a strategic framework for ensuring the positive image of the railways, it is also a way to respond to social concerns, create a competitive advantage and manage risk. Additionally, it can significantly contribute to promoting regional development policies and to improving the use of existing rail networks and resources, both in a rail context and in cooperation with other modes of transport.

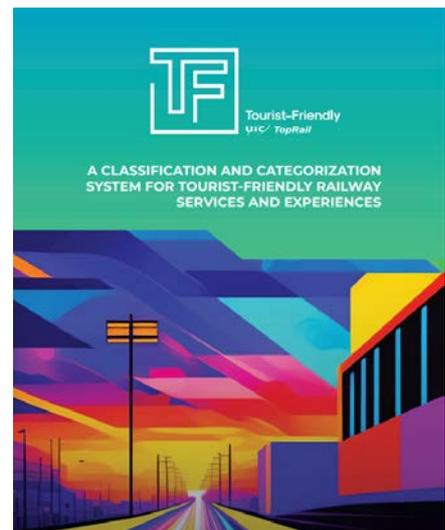
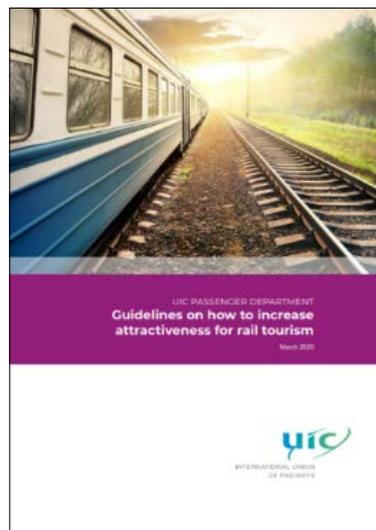
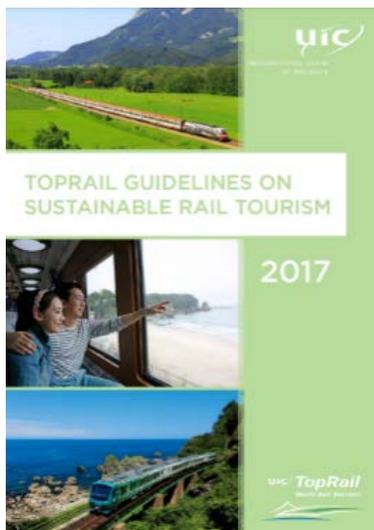
WHAT DOES UIC DO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE TOURISM?

Did you know? The [TopRail website](#) can be used for inspiration when planning your next holiday by train in more than 10 different countries. It provides information and links to their booking platforms and a Night Train Atlas will also be available very soon.

In the context of steadily growing international tourism, [TopRail](#) is a UIC sector that actively promotes railway tourism products by increasing the visibility of service offerings. This is accomplished by fostering close collaboration between stakeholders and customers to encourage railway tourism opportunities. Railway tourism is able to offer a wide range of tourism alternatives combining exclusivity, technology, luxury and sustainability whilst contributing to the development of sustainable tourism and regional development from an economic, social and environmental perspective.

Over the last 10 years, the TopRail sector has created:

- A network of experts from the railway sector and key players from the tourism industry that hold meetings and forums to facilitate the discussion of rail tourism trends and challenges
- A platform showcasing leisure options by rail, via website, social media and discussion forums among experts
- A series of deliverables to build knowledge of rail tourism through papers, guidelines and technical documents providing recommendations for the sector to improve the quality of services, considering the needs of customers seeking recreational experiences:
 - Guidelines to measure and promote sustainable rail tourism
 - Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourists
 - Guidelines on how to make rail more attractive to younger generations
 - Categorisation to promote Tourism Friendly trains, lines, stations and companies



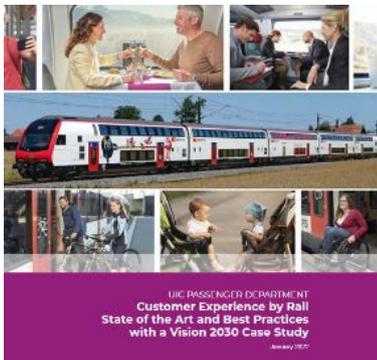
CUSTOMER-ORIENTED APPROACH

Did you know? UIC hosts the biggest group of experts on rail accessibility: PASSAGE, which boasts more than 27 experts from railways in Europe, Africa and North America.

The UIC group of experts on Customer Experience (CEMP) regularly discusses best practices on how to improve and measure customer satisfaction across the entire journey, taking a holistic approach and transforming this information into useful guidelines.

For example, working together with Commuter and Regional Trains Services (CRTS) and TopRail experts, the group researched [how to improve the attractiveness of Commuter and Regional Train Services in the post Covid-19 era](#). As a result, [the Cool Rail project](#) was launched in 2022 to better understand the needs of the younger generations, and is one of several major projects that demonstrate the growing importance of sustainable rail travel leisure offers.

UIC has also specific working groups to improve the customer experience. For persons with reduced mobility or disabilities, there is [PASSAGE](#), or for women on stations and on board trains, there is [Train2bEqual](#), which promotes trains and railway spaces as an inclusive and safe means of transportation for tourists of all genders.



MULTIMODAL SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY RESEARCH

Did you know? UIC has been working closely with IATA to enable multimodal air + rail travel by developing a centralised ticketing system, and with the European Cyclists' Federation to promote and empower intermodal transport, specifically cycling + train journeys.

Railways are not alone; they are part of a transportation chain that takes leisure travellers to their dream destinations. Consequently, UIC plays a key role in European research projects that foster a better understanding of the future of multimodal mobility.

AIR + RAIL

Despite their inherent competition, the air and rail transport modes have demonstrated a desire to synchronise and collaborate, aiming to provide integrated services within their respective industries.

The **Air+HSR** project analyses the current global state of coordination and cooperation between air and rail transportation, with a particular focus on Europe, USA and China. The integration of high-speed rail (HSR) and air travel presents a promising opportunity for creating a sustainable and efficient transportation network that prioritises both environmental impact and passenger experience. Air + HSR integration offers numerous advantages. First and foremost, it has the potential to significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions, especially for short-haul flights, as high-speed trains are ordinarily more energy-efficient than airplanes. Furthermore, by connecting remote regions with major airports, this integration enhances regional development and boosts tourism, offering travellers alternative routes and reducing dependence on a single mode of transport. Additionally, seamless transfers, integrated ticketing and real-time information systems can transform multimodal journeys into more convenient and enjoyable experiences, attracting more passengers to both HSR and air travel. This synergy can also drive economic growth by lowering transportation costs for businesses and improving market access. While the path to air + HSR integration may present challenges – including the need for substantial infrastructure investments and effective coordination among transportation providers – the potential benefits are considerable. Successful examples from various countries illustrate the viability and advantages of this approach. Looking to the future, the evolution of transportation hinges on the harmonious integration of HSR and air travel. By investing in infrastructure, technology and collaborative efforts, we can forge a sustainable and efficient network that serves both passengers and the planet effectively.

For instance, to make **air + rail** journeys possible, main actors from the air sector collaborate on a regular basis with UIC to define common standards for multimodal ticket distribution systems and new business models for intermodal transport solutions.

Modus and **MultiModX**, modelling the future of EU air + rail sustainable mobility

- **Modus:** Focuses on creating a seamless and inclusive mobility system within Europe, emphasising multimodality and enhancing the passenger experience. By integrating the air and rail transport modes, Modus aims to offer efficient, user-friendly solutions that cater to the diverse needs of all travellers. These efforts align with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, as Modus is committed to reducing emissions and fostering sustainable mobility for a greener future in the European transport system.
- **MultiModX:** Envisions a multimodal European transport system where air and rail networks are seamlessly coordinated to enhance the efficiency, predictability and environmental sustainability of door-to-door passenger journeys. By focusing on the integration of these transport modes, MMX aims to strengthen the resilience of the system, while minimising environmental impact. The project's goal is to develop innovative multimodal solutions and decision support tools that will enable better planning and management of transport networks across Europe.



BIKE + RAIL

UIC aims to facilitate and improve infrastructure and services for passengers who wish to combine train and bike travel in their journey. From policy to infrastructure retrofitting, UIC's members play a key role in facilitating multimodality by letting passengers bring bikes on board. This includes fares that allow bicycles to be brought free of charge, dedicated bike spaces in trains, multilingual information about bike policy, online rail route planners that include bicycles as a filter category, and secure and covered bike parking at stations.^[1] Better integrating bicycles into the wider rail transport system makes trains more attractive for passengers and helps avoid potential emissions on the "last mile". As an example, in October 2024 CEMP is hosting a workshop on "Optimising bike and luggage transportation in railway systems" to delve into the relevant challenges and opportunities, bringing together representatives from industry, railways, customers and policy makers. By enhancing customer experience and addressing issues related to accessibility, capacity and sustainability, this workshop aims to make rail travel more accommodating and eco-friendlier. This is a vital step towards promoting sustainable tourism, reducing the carbon footprint and fostering an environmentally conscious travel culture.



[1] European Cyclist Federation, "Report: Cyclists Love Trains – An Analysis of the Bicycle Friendliness of European Railway Operators".

Other research projects focus on the design of future stations to meet the needs of cities' inhabitants and visitors ([Rail4Cities](#)), on new technologies applied for leisure tourism on all types of trains ([RailtoLand](#)), or on the impact of rail tourism in developing low-traffic lines to have a positive impact on their region ([Tour&Rail](#)).

[Rail4Cities](#) has three main objectives:

- Turn railway stations into vital new urban centres to stimulate sustainable cities.
- Focus on the development and publication of an EU-wide methodology and tool.
- Focus on activating the ecosystem for replication and sustainability after the end of the project.

For example, the main objective of the study case in Toulouse-Matabiau railway station is to transform it into a "green mobility hub" using intermodal solutions between active modes of transportation. It aims to encourage current car users, both regular users and tourists, to use bicycle + train instead. This is especially important as the Canal du Midi is a major attraction for bike tourism, especially at weekends and during the summer holidays.



TOOLS

Booking solutions (MERITS, OSDM, eTCD)

Make it possible to plan and purchase international train tickets, enabling travellers to discover different parts of Europe by train

MERITS is a single database containing timetable data for many different railway companies. It is designed to provide rapid access for each railway company to all the data required to produce timetables and to operate with a single source of data, thereby doing away with large volumes of multilateral exchanges.

Merits is used by many European railways and online platforms, including Eurail B.V., Rome2Rio and Trainline, to provide their customer information, journey planning, ticket booking and mobile applications with information on timetables for international journeys.

The **OSDM** (Open Sales and Distribution Model) has two aims:

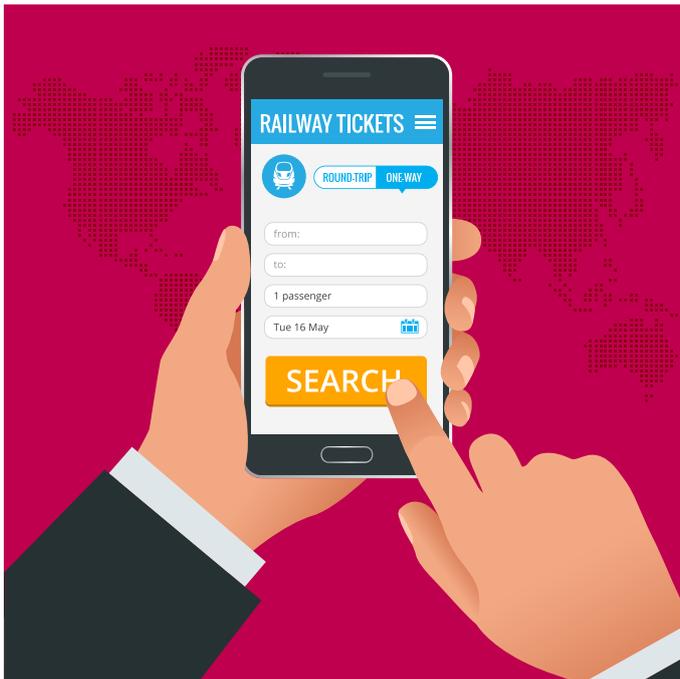
To substantially simplify and improve the process for customers booking public transport trips. To lower complexity and distribution costs for retailers, distributors and carriers.

The OSDM strengthens rail and public transport as a convenient and ecological mode of transport by simplifying distribution. It provides a solid foundation which can be extended to the distribution of other means of transportation.

The OSDM API and documents are Open Source and freely available to all interested parties. The OSDM-Online API is modelled in YAML, fully supporting the REST paradigm.

The **eTCD** (electronic Ticket Control Database) is a centralised, real-time passenger ticket management system offered as a service by UIC and used by railway companies around the world. The eTCD helps railway companies to manage non-reservation barcode ticket information on board trains for all rail travel.

Ticket issuers receive up-to-date information on railway ticket verification and usage, and railway carriers receive complete information on the lifecycle of tickets, including when tickets are checked by other organisations and/or cancelled by the issuers.



The eTCD service enables full paperless ticketing, thus marking the end of paper train tickets. This increases ticket security, prevents fraud and reinforces electronic ticketing capabilities.

In addition, this smart ticketing technology facilitates seamless multimodal door-to-door mobility, combining rail journeys with urban and local transport modes, and giving passengers a wider choice of multimodal travel options.

The service enables faster boarding, helps cancel and refund tickets more easily, and informs passengers of changes to their tickets in real-time, thus enhancing the overall travel experience and more effectively meeting customer needs.

PRM ABT

Assures assistance for persons with reduced mobility or disabilities on international rail journeys

This tool, designed and developed within the UIC **PASSAGE** accessibility group of experts, is a web-based application that helps call centres from different railways to facilitate and ensure the booking of assistance services for PRMs on international journeys throughout Europe.

Persons with disabilities or reduced mobility can find the call centre information for each country on this website: <https://railprmassistance.uic.org/>



EcoPassenger

Helps calculate your travel carbon footprint

This is a user-friendly online tool based on a sound scientific methodology that can be used to calculate and compare the energy consumption, CO₂ and exhaust atmospheric emissions of planes, cars and trains for passenger transport.

The [EcoPassenger](#) tool can be integrated into other websites to highlight the impact of personal choices on energy consumption, carbon emissions and local air pollution. Several railways in Europe use EcoPassenger information to include the carbon footprint on their railway tickets.





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