

ANGLAIS

En vous appuyant *uniquement* sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

Sleeper trains across Europe and beyond: the future of traveling?

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots rédigés (titre inclus) devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

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2. 'We are full': the rebirth of Europe's sleeper trains, *The Financial Times*
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4. The carbon cost of transportation, visualcapitalist.com
5. Sleeper trains, railbook.com.au

Document 1

All Aboard The Sleeper Train - The Unexpected Renaissance Of Overnight Rail Travel In Europe

Davide Banis, *Forbes*, Nov 5, 2019

In his 2017 book *Night Trains*, British writer Andrew Martin nostalgically celebrates the bygone era of overnight rail travel. Attempting to recreate the journeys immortalized by novels like *Murder on the Orient Express*, Martin embarks on a series of nocturnal train adventures across Europe, just to realize that today's sleeping carriages are nothing but a pale shadow of the opulent "hotels on wheels" that whisked wealthy passengers from Paris to Istanbul in the first half of the 20th century. [...]

In comparison, today's night trains leaves Andrew Martin unimpressed. His couchette on an *Intercités de Nuit*, an overnight service run by France's national railway company, is "a pretty good simulacrum of a prison cell." Despite the spartan hospitality, night trains aren't particularly profitable either. "They do not make money," wrote Martin, "so their future looks uncertain in Western Europe."

In 2017, when Martin published his eulogy, overnight rail routes were being axed across Europe and sleeping carriages seemed ready to be parked at the transport museum, killed by budget airlines and high-speed trains. However, just a couple of years later, night trains may be about to undergo an unexpected renaissance.

So, are night trains the silver bullet for climate-conscious, efficient and even glamorous travel? No, or at least not yet. Hefty track access fees, infrastructure capacity constraints and high maintenance costs put the brakes on railway companies' investments in their overnight services.

And even when they do invest, things don't always turn out as hoped.

The case of the new Caledonian Sleeper is exemplary in this regard. Connecting London to Scotland, the Caledonian Sleeper is one of the two remaining overnight routes in the United Kingdom (the other, the Night Riviera, connects London to West Cornwall). The Scottish government and Serco, the company which operates the train on behalf of Transport Scotland, spent £150 million (\$193 million) to renovate the rolling stock and the overall experience.

Unfortunately, since their introduction in April 2019, the new fleet of trains has been plagued by a variety of glitches and faults, from severe delays to water problems. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the U.K.'s railways regulator, reported that, between April and June, the Caledonian Sleeper has attracted the highest complaint rate of any train operator in the country.¹

Part of the charm of *wagon-lits* is that moving them across countries amounts to an epic operation. It requires solid infrastructure, a faultless rolling stock, specialized personnel able to maintain hotel standards in difficult conditions and (often) international cooperation. [...]

The challenge now is to make this romantic and climate-friendly travel option more economically viable, both for operators and passengers. And to ensure it remains a reasonably pleasant experience.

It's an uphill struggle and there's a lot of work to do but this also means that for night trains the end of the line is still far, far away.

¹ In June 2023, Caledonian Sleeper services transferred into public control and ownership, and are now provided within the public sector.

Document 2

'We are full': the rebirth of Europe's sleeper trains

Philip Georgiadis, *The Financial Times*, March 10, 2023

Elmer van Buuren has spent 20 years waiting for night trains to come back into fashion. A former guard on the Dutch railway, van Buuren turned from enthusiast to entrepreneur and along with a business partner crowdfunded the launch of their own train company, European Sleeper.

"Until a couple of years ago, everyone thought sleeper trains were a thing of the past and something for hopeless romantics with their heads in the 19th century. That is just not the case," van Buuren said.

Europe's big rail operators have also launched new routes but the renaissance of the sleeper, long a byword for a lost age of travel, is being held back by a more modern problem: a shortage of suitable carriages.

Rail operators have complained of a rush for rolling stock as demand booms, with van Buuren saying it had been "extremely difficult" to find suitable carriages for the European Sleeper, which plans to launch this year a train linking Brussels, Amsterdam and Berlin on three nights a week. [...]

Many old carriages were sold off as night trains fell into decline decades ago because of competition from high-speed rail and airlines. The remaining carriages, some up to 60 years old, are increasingly unsuitable for modern travellers, who are less inclined to spend the night sharing a small compartment with strangers and expect modern facilities such as an *en-suite* toilet.

Only an average of six new carriages per year were ordered between 2001 and 2017, meaning it would take 250 years to replace the continent's nearly 1,500 dedicated night train carriages with more suitable modern equipment, according to a 2021 European Commission report. But things have since picked up and some national rail companies have placed new orders. [...]

Jon Worth, a railway commentator and campaigner, believes there is a "large number of new routes" that could be launched to meet the "enormous unmet potential" across Europe. He said that only Europe's state railway companies had the financial muscle to order new trains, but they were focused on growing daytime and high-speed services, while smaller entrants did not have the money to make a large order." [...]

In Brussels, the commission is working to promote rail travel as part of a drive to cut the bloc's transport emissions and has estimated there are several untapped new routes that could provide effective competition with air travel. It has offered technical assistance to help several pilot projects with the logistics of gaining access to the maze of tracks across Europe, but has given no specific funding for new carriages.

Yet passenger demand is so strong that it has outstripped supply even on ÖBB²'s sprawling network, where there have been complaints from customers who assume the company's website is broken because every single train is sold out. "We get so many remarks that your system is down," an ÖBB spokesperson said. "We are full, we are full, we are full."

² ÖBB is the Austrian national railway company.

Document 3

Europe Is Undergoing a Sleeper Train Renaissance

J.R. Patterson, *Condé Nast Traveler*, December 11, 2021

Night trains like the Caledonian Sleeper—most featuring glamorous design and spacious cabins—were once everywhere in Europe. Among these overnight rail routes were the likes of the Blue Train through the south of France, the Elipsos from Paris to Madrid, and the Night Ferry from London to Paris. But with the advent of air travel and cheap flights, many iconic sleeper routes were discontinued; what few remained were indeed opulent, but out of reach for the average tourist (think the Belmond Venice Simplon Orient Express, which costs around \$4,000 per night).

Recently, however, a renewed interest in rail travel—particularly sleeper routes—seems to be taking root. The last couple years have seen a flurry of new projects that will restore sleeper train service in Europe and will likely usher in a new era of rail travel in the region.

One newcomer, Paris-based Midnight Trains, plans to operate two newly built sleeper trains along its first route by the end of 2024. While the route isn't yet set, it's predicted to be between Paris and either Italy or Spain. Four more routes are planned to be unveiled before 2030. The company's goal is to make the comfort of the most lavish sleeper trains accessible to a wider sect of travelers, eliminating what they see as three major issues facing modern affordable train travel: compartment sharing with strangers, poor catering services, and few digital services to enhance the experience.

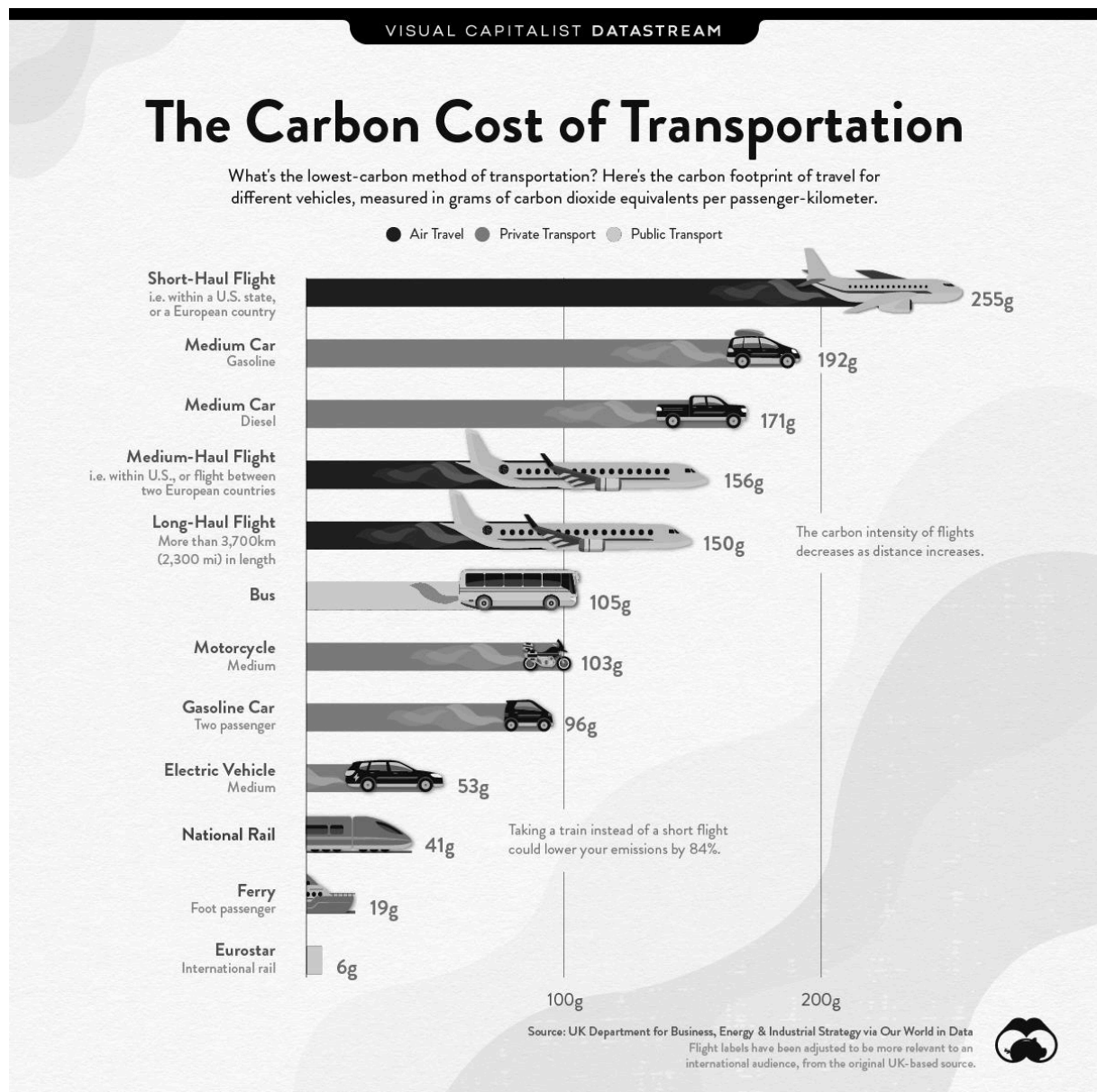
The company is still purchasing carriages, but promises that all its rooms will be private with en-suite bathrooms. The dining car will feature seasonal fare, handmade cocktails, and craft beers.

"Transportation is seen by travelers as a commodity, but with night trains the journey is as important as the destination," says Romain Payet, co-founder of Midnight Trains.

It's not just private companies betting big on the return of Europe's overnight trains, either—governments across the continent are also investing in the idea. The most notable initiative is a revival of the Trans-Europe Express, the first-class overnight service that connected 10 western European countries at its peak in the 1970s. Service on the original route was terminated in 1995. The new project, a joint effort between Germany, France, Spain, and Poland, is hoped to align international schedules so that high-speed and night trains can more easily travel across European borders and connect major cities including Paris, Warsaw, Munich, and Barcelona. A proposed opening date, as well as a conceptual look at the trains, has yet to be unveiled.

Additionally, a growing number of European countries, including Austria, France, and the Netherlands, are enacting bans on short-haul flights where a train journey can be made instead. Those bans have been an incentive for existing train companies to up their connectivity and add longer, overnight routes.

Document 4



The Carbon Cost of Transportation, Visualcapitalist.com, February 15, 2022. Source: UK department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy via Our World in Data

Document 5

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Sleeper Trains

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Sleeper trains can be a great way to travel long distances overnight as you rest up in comfort, arriving ready for action the next day. We recommend you book your sleeper train early to secure your cabin, as there is limited sleeper train availability.

A webpage on Railbookers.com.au, an Australian travel agency specialized in booking train holidays across the world. Accessed February 2024.

The caption reads, “Explore Options for Sleeper Trains Vacations – Sleeper trains can be great ways to travel long distances overnight as you rest up in comfort, arriving ready for action the next day. We recommend you book your sleeper train early to secure your cabin, as there is limited sleeper train availability”.