
Trenitalia launches French domestic high speed services

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Trenitalia launched its first French domestic open access high speed service between Paris-Lyon and Lyon-Perrache on April 5.

The Italian state-owned operator plans to run three trains each way per day, making one intermediate stop at Lyon Part-Dieu. However, the service has started with just one evening train each way, because of what Trenitalia France CEO Roberto Rinaudo described as ‘technical constraints’. The remaining trains are expected to begin running from June 1.

The launch of domestic services is Trenitalia’s second step into the French high speed market, following the launch of twice-daily Paris – Milano Centrale trains on December 18.

From June, Trenitalia France will offer five trains each way per day between Paris and Lyon, of which two will continue to and from Milano.

Rinaudo insisted that Trenitalia France was providing ‘additional’ services to complement those run by SNCF Voyageurs, pointing out that the paths had been allocated by SNCF Réseau without the need to remove any TGV Inoui or Ouigo workings.

Marketing & Commercial Director Fabrice Toledano added that Trenitalia was not looking for hard competition with the national operator, but rather to increase the volume of passengers using rail. Trenitalia France was not looking to launch any other open access services for the time being, he said. The current focus is on consolidating the initial trains and improving the quality of service being offered to customers.

All services are operated using a sub-fleet of five ETR 1000 Frecciarossa trainsets built by Bombardier Transportation and Hitachi Rail Italia, offering 462 seats per train.

The five sets have been modified to run in France, being fitted with KVB train protection for use on conventional lines and TVM 300 and TVM 430 for the high speed lines. This has been supplied by Hitachi, along with ETCS Level 2 for use when the interoperable train control system is rolled out on the LGV Paris-Sud-Est.

The Zefiro trainsets are maintained in Italy, but with some cleaning and servicing undertaken in France.

Simple pricing, strong demand According to Rinaudo the international trains have been extremely successful, carrying 150 000 passengers since the December 18 launch with an average load factor of 87%. Around 75% of all users were making an international trip, he reported, notably Paris – Torino and Lyon – Milano. He added that around 60% of passengers travelling from Paris to Milano had bought their ticket a month before travelling.

Trenitalia France offers four classes on its services: Executive, Business, Standard and Sala Meetings. In order to provide an ‘easy’ pricing structure, without discount cards, it has adopted a yield management system, with Serenità tickets offer a starting price of €23 in Standard class and €29 for Business.

Toledano told Railway Gazette International that Executive class was appreciated by many French travellers. However, the Sala Meetings was only offered for shorter journeys, such as Paris – Lyon, Lyon – Torino or Lyon – Milano, but not for the entire Paris – Milano trip.

FS Group Chief International Officer Carlo Palasciano explained that the path allocation process was the same as in Italy, where operators put their bids in to infrastructure manager RFI and the paths are assigned according to demand.

Toledano commented that SNCF and FS had a similar organisational structure with a holding group, train operating company and infrastructure manager, but in France all three businesses carried the SNCF brand, whereas that was not the case in Italy.

(Railway Gazette)