



Tourist-Friendly
UIC *TopRail*

A CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION SYSTEM FOR TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES



INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS

Report Coordination

Vanessa Pérez Miranda,
Senior Advisor, Passenger Department, UIC

Authors

Ana García Pando
Rail Tourism Specialist
With the contribution of UIC TopRail Sector Members

ISBN 978-2-7461-3278-8

WARNING

No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced or distributed by any means whatsoever, including electronic, except for private and individual use, without the express permission of the International Union of Railways (UIC). The same applies for translation, adaptation or transformation, arrangement or reproduction by any method or procedure whatsoever. The sole exceptions - noting the author's name and the source - are "analyses and brief quotations justified by the critical, argumentative, educational, scientific or informative nature of the publication into which they are incorporated" (Articles L 122-4 and L122-5 of the French Intellectual Property Code).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rail travel is recovering fast from the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic, only to find important changes affecting traditional and no traditional travellers. Hybrid forms of work as well as increased environmental concerns amongst travellers fuelling interest in less carbon-intensive modes of transportation, among other factors, are transforming the way people travel for work and for pleasure.

Railways are extremely underused when it comes to leisure travel. Before the pandemic, less than one per cent of 1460 million of international trips worldwide used railways as a mode of transportation. This opens a world of opportunities for railway companies to attract new or repeat users by focusing on the requirements of leisure travellers.

Classification and Categorization systems are widely used in the Travel and Tourism Industry in order to provide trade partners and final customers with a benchmarking tool that allows comparison between services and companies. While railways use a wide set of classification and categorization systems based on the type of trains, the range covered, the speed and number of stops and the services offered, amongst others, it is the purpose of this work to explore the potential of a classification and categorization system that identifies rail operations and experiences used for tourist purposes.

The proposed system will help companies improve their tourist-oriented services and operations, and will allow trade partners in the travel and tourism industry -and end users- to identify services and experiences that are oriented to the particular needs of leisure tourists.

Building up from UIC TopRail “Guidelines on How to Increase Attractiveness for Rail Tourism” this paper explores the potential benefits of a classification and categorization of tourist-friendly rail services and experiences.

¹ [Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourism \(toprail.org\)](https://www.toprail.org/)

CONTENTS

- 1.** Introduction
Leisure tourism and railways

- 2.** Rail tourism, tourist railways and tourist-friendly railway services and experiences

- 3.** Classification and categorization systems in the travel and tourism industry

- 4.** The convenience of a classification and categorization system for tourist and tourist-friendly railways

- 5.** Suggested classification and categorization system for tourist and tourist-friendly railways

- 6.** Recommendations

- 7.** Annex: survey

- 8.** References and bibliography



Tourist-Friendly
UIC TopRail

INTRODUCTION LEISURE TOURISM AND RAILWAYS



Railways and the tourism industry flourished together during the nineteenth century, spurring each other's development and growth. With the advent of road and, later, air travel, tourism became a mass global industry while railways were displaced as the preferred mode of transportation.

Nowadays, leisure tourism presents a great opportunity for railways to speed up the post- pandemic recovery, increase passenger numbers and accelerate transition towards a more responsible, sustainable passenger transport industry.

Despite being one of the economic sectors hit the hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic² – tourism contribution in 2020 went from 10% down to 5% of global GDP, receipts fell over 60% and travellers' numbers decreased in 65%, while almost 20% the industry's jobs were lost³ - Travel and Tourism is showing a sustained recovery, currently at 60% of 2019's 1460 million international arrivals.

On the other hand, rail travel seems to be experiencing a more uneven rhythm of recovery, with passenger numbers slower to recover in some regions such as West Europe and North America, be it due to new work habits impacting commuting and business travel, or to rail services not being fully restored yet⁴. By the end of 2022, provisional data provided by several UIC members show continuous improvement of passenger numbers, which still remain below pre- pandemic levels.⁵

Shifts in living and work arrangements, with many industries embracing remote work, or new travel trends such as bleisure⁶ trips, or digital nomads taking up residence in tourist destinations, new travel trends present rail companies with opportunities to adapt systems and organizations in order to compensate for lost passengers.

Pre pandemic, 83% of international journeys were made for motives other than business or work (including leisure, vacation, recreation, visiting friends and relatives, religious and/or health motivations) Still, barely 1% of these international journeys used railways as a mode of transportation to reach the chosen destination.⁷

Regarding domestic use of railways for leisure, the European Commission⁸ reported in 2018 that over 55% of rail passengers used railways for holidays or leisure activities. While aggregated figures for worldwide domestic use of railways by motivation are unavailable, it is clear that leisure is a main driver for travel, and that the use of railways for leisure still offers ample room for growth.

Transportation itself is actually the main driver for travel and tourism, while at the same time one of the main sources of emissions – from 49%⁹ to 75%¹⁰ depending on the sources, the majority of which are due to air travel.

² [Impact assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak on international tourism | UNWTO Sept.2022](#)

³ [Travel & Tourism Economic Impact | World Travel & Tourism Council \(WTTC\) Sept.2022](#)

⁴ https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/20220728_-_uic_and_mckinsey_bossting_passenger_preference_for_rail_final_online.pdf July 2022

⁵ [Traffic trends among UIC member companies in the first half of 2022 | UIC Communications Jan 27 2023](#)

⁶ Tala, Madalina & Schiopu, Andreea & Müller, Catalina. (2011). Bleisure - a new trend in tourism industry. Forum Ware International ISSN 1810-7028.

⁷ World Tourism Organization (2021), International Tourism Highlights, 2020 Edition, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422456>.

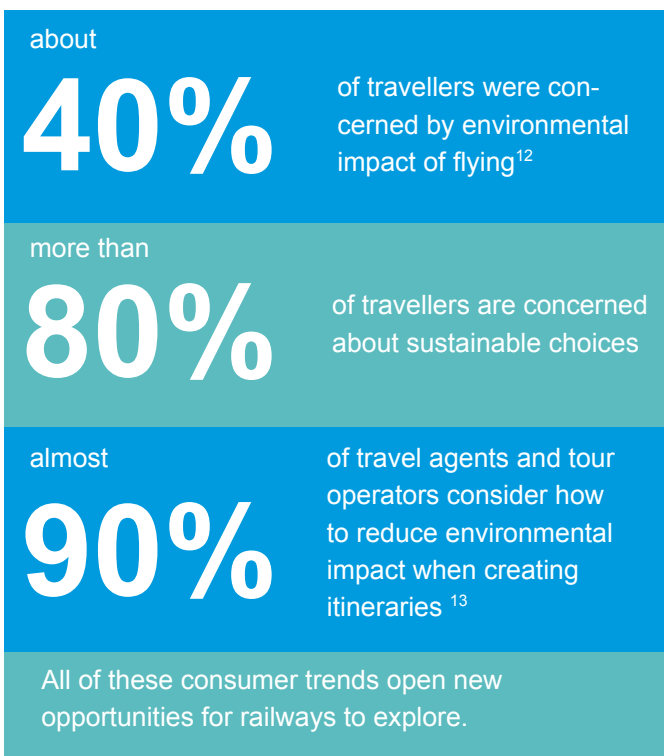
⁸ [Survey on passenger satisfaction with rail services - septiembre 2018 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁹ Sustainable Travel International. (n.d.) Carbon Footprint of Tourism. Retrieved from <https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

¹⁰ Sustainable Travel International. (n.d.) Carbon Footprint of Tourism. Retrieved from

Growing concerns regarding decarbonization of transport –currently, as a global average, emissions should be reduced in at least 45% of their current levels if the goal of staying at 1.5 degrees over pre industrial limits is to be reached by 2030¹¹ - and greater interest in more sustainable ways of travelling also create opportunities for modal shift towards railways, especially in those regions in which electrification of lines has become standard.

Research shows



Regarding specifically tourist trains, classic luxury tourist trains and routes such as the Venice Simplon Orient Express, the

Trans-Siberian, the Ghan, etc, as well as day tours in historic trains or themed rail excursions are all enjoying a notable revival in recent years.

Recent comeback of night trains in Europe, barely a decade after they seemed to have disappeared, began with ÖBB's NightJet fleet¹⁴ assuming formerly Deutsche Bahn's-operated overnight services . Following this example, new night services¹⁵ continue to appear, touting the comfort and end-to-end convenience of an environmentally sounder option for business travel.

As a part of post-pandemic recovery, some European countries, such as Germany¹⁶ or Spain, have been offering special discount fares in order to bring passengers to public transport and encourage the use of railways for commuter and tourist purposes. Spain's Renfe is also partnering with regions to create special tourist trains for the weekends while Italy's Trenitalia Promo FULL allows the use of all trains in a region for a full month, for commuter and leisure purposes. The French government, on the other hand, has abolished flights between cities that are linked by a train journey of less than 2.5 hours,¹⁷ while Canada's Via Rail or USA's Amtrak is replacing its fifty-year old fleet with new rolling stock that is faster, more fuel efficient and with enhanced comfort features.¹⁸ With China leading investment in building high speed capacity, there are currently close to 60.000 km of operational high-speed lines, 40.000 km more under construction or approved around the world and over 40.000km more in the planning stage.¹⁹

Continuous growth and diversification of rail options create new opportunities for leisure tourism to include rail travel in their plans.

<https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

11 United Nations Environment Programme (2022). Emissions Gap Report 2022: The Closing Window — Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies. Nairobi. <https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2022>

12 Booking.com's 2021 Sustainable Travel Report affirms potential watershed moment for industry and consumers," Booking.com, June 3, 2021

13 Responsible Transitions in Transport: ATTA and Switzerland Tourism Release New Research | Adventure Travel Trade Association (adventuretravelnews.com)

14 Home - Nightjet

15 Goodbye Air Travel? Imagining a Future Where Trains Replace Planes | The National Interest

16 <https://www.german-way.com/travel-and-tourism/public-transport-in-germany/about-germanys-9-euro-ticket/>

17 It's official: France bans short haul domestic flights in favour of train travel | Euronews

18 The Next Generation of Acela | Amtrak

19 20220901_high_speed_lines_in_the_world_v2.pdf (uic.org)



Tourist-Friendly
UIC TopRail

RAIL TOURISM,
TOURIST RAILWAYS AND
TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY
SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES



For the purposes of UIC TopRail work group, Rail Tourism encompasses “*all tourism trips that use railways as the main mode of transportation, or as a secondary mode of transportation during a tourist journey or within the tourist destination, as well as trips that use a railway-based tourist product, attraction or experience*”.²⁰

This definition presumes the existence of differently motivated tourists; those who choose a railway experience as the main motivator and those who use railways as a mode of transportation during their tourist trip. Tourist railways, and tourist-friendly railway services and experiences are, then, rail services oriented to fulfil those different motivations.

Tourist railways, are tourist products that are based on railways as the main attraction or main motivator of the tourist experience. Heirs to a tradition of classic luxury and nostalgic exploration, tourist railways mainly offer tourist experiences on board historical, refurbished trains, as well as themed, one-day experiences or days-long classical journeys covering longer distances with on board or off board accommodation and a series of packaged, daily tourist experiences have been booming in recent years.

Tourist companies like Belmond²¹ specialize in luxury tourist rail journeys. Rail companies, such as Spain's Renfe, have developed tourist trains and experiences,

too²². Others, like Switzerland's SBB have developed tourist-dedicated rolling stock²³, multimodal tourist products and tourist passes²⁴²⁵ within their regular operations, to cater to tourists specifically.

Heritage Railway associations and private groups, like TopRail Members, FEDECRAIL²⁶ or WATTRAIN²⁷ aim at preserving historic lines, heritage rolling stock and engines using tourism as a means to increase awareness and support the preservation of historic railways heritage.

While train tours and rail tourism-related and dedicated products and experiences are growing in popularity, the main challenge still remains how to mainstream rail travel as a mode of transportation for leisure tourism.

For the purpose of this document, **tourist-friendly railway services and experiences** are regular rail operations that have adapted several or all their services to attend to the needs of leisure clients.

To tap into the potential of leisure tourism, understood as a trip made outside the usual environment for the main purpose of entertainment, holiday, recreation, relaxation, hobby, etc.²⁸ railways need to identify and overcome several hurdles and take advantage of growing trends in leisure travel to boost passenger numbers and increase modal share.

²⁰ UIC, 2020 Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourism (toprail.org)

²¹ <https://www.belmond.com/train>

²² Luxury trains - Don't dream about travelling, travel to your dreams - Renfe

²³ Premium panorama trains | Switzerland Tourism (myswitzerland.com)

²⁴ Swiss Travel Pass – the All-in-one-Ticket for Switzerland | SBB

²⁵ JAPAN RAIL PASS | ジャパン・レール・パス

²⁶ FEDECRAIL – European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways

²⁷ The World Alliance of Tourist Trams & Trains > Home (wattrain.net)

With transportation being one of the main drivers of tourism, for rail tourism to become mainstream it needs to address pain points for tourism markets, as well as communicate the advantages and availability of its product, together with the industry's key players.

The key drivers for choosing a mode of transportation remain price, convenience -expressed in duration of trip and number of changes, frequency, end-to end conditions as well as seamless travel experience- safety and core product offering, regardless of the motivation for the journey.²⁹

Still, when travelling for leisure, there are other factors that add up to the whole decision-making process. Basic issues like reliability, safety and cleanliness remain in many cases the main concerns for travellers³⁰ when asked

to consider railways in their travel plans. Also, leisure experiences and activities are the main drivers behind a leisure trip, so it is important to highlight the potential that rail travel offers in increasing the added value of the whole trip. Improving the general travel experience end-to-end³¹, adapt pricing and offerings to leisure travellers needs and increase promotion of rail travel as the green, convenient and sustainable way of travelling will in the short-term help shift travellers' preferences.

To benefit from the huge potential of leisure tourism, rail companies must address the concerns of travellers and travel and industry partners.

Main Drivers for Selecting a Mode of Transportation

CONVENIENCE	AVAILABILITY	COMFORT
Frequencies Duration of journey Number of connections End-to-end experience Price	Itinerary creation Booking experience Ticketing experience Changes, refunds, cancellation policies	Infrastructure, Pre-boarding experience On Board On Route

Table 1 Main Drivers for Selecting a Mode of Transportation

28 UNWTO defines Leisure of statistical purposes at [SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

29 [UIC 2022 Boosting passenger preference for rail](#)

30 Adventure Travel Trade Association "Responsible Transitions in Transport Report" retrieved at www.adventuretravel.biz, Sept 2022

31 "Customer Experience by rail, State of the Art and Best Practices" UIC 2022

Amongst the main hurdles travel and tourism companies -most notably tour operators and travel agents- find when proposing railways as a mode of transportation, the following can be mentioned³²: lack of standardization of data, accessibility, interoperability, through ticketing, GDS access, flexible luggage, booking and fares, boosting of cross border operations, etc.

Accordingly, the **main challenges that need to be undertaken in order to mainstreaming rail travel for the leisure tourism industry** can be organised³³as follows:



- 
 - **Technological developments** aimed at increasing digitalisation, simplifying ticketing, enhancing availability and visibility of most convenient rates, dynamic pricing, simplification of itinerary planning, seamless travel experience including multi-modal and end-to-end travel, data standardisation and real-time accessibility, increased booking horizon, etc.
- 
 - **Deepening liberalization of rail markets** to increase competition, improve customer service, ease cooperation and facilitate multimodal integration, while improving governance of contracts, data, infrastructure, etc.
- 
 - **Harmonization of technological and safety standards** to improve cooperation, coordination, competition, cross border operation, interoperability, enhancing service levels, removing redundant national technical and operational rules, etc.
- 
 - **Development and/or upgrading of infrastructure** to improve connectivity, new destinations, cross-border services and more convenient access to tourist attractions.
- 
 - **Investment in rolling stock, enhancement of service levels, attention** to leisure tourist needs.

³² "TopRail Travel Trade Exchange" Workshop with representatives of railways and tour operators held on October 13th, 2022 in Brussels

³³ European Travel Commission (ETC) & Eurail B.V. 2020 "White Paper - Rail transport for international tourism in Europe: Towards a shared vision for a more sustainable growth".

While many of these challenges require industry-wide agreements, technological and infrastructure investments and some legal and financial framework, basic improvements in the experience offered towards leisure tourism travellers can help build up the case for rail tourism in the short-term.

Leisure tourism can help increase visibility of railways as a sustainable, convenient mode of travel as long as it increases cooperation with stakeholders at destination and travel and tourism industry. This way, awareness of the benefits of rail travel will be increased, and rail companies will also gain a clearer knowledge of the main shifts needed in order to boost numbers of leisure-oriented travellers.

While rates, convenience, frequencies, easiness of booking etc may require structural and legal changes in the industry, there are others like more service and experience-oriented features that can help increasing awareness amongst travellers as well as travel industry partners for the benefits of rail travel.

Scenic railways, better on-board service, more convenient end-to-end performance, friendlier ticketing options, better on-board and at the station service, a more sustainable way of travelling and access to more authentic experiences are amongst the benefits that railways offer to the leisure traveller, which can be highlighted in order to help increase modal shift in the short term.

Planning tourist-friendly railway services and experiences requires some focus on particular needs for these clients. The UIC TopRail 2020 “Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourism” differentiates between specifically rail-oriented tourists -those who are specifically looking for the railway experience- and general tourists that can be enticed to use railways as a main or secondary mode of transportation during their tourist trip. The Guidelines offer insights into what is expected from railway companies looking to cater to different types of leisure tourists.

The present document, on the other hand, offers guidance for railways companies aiming to boost passenger numbers by attracting leisure tourism travellers to their mainstream services.

A classification and categorization system for tourist-friendly rail services, operations and experiences may help all stakeholders identify the road to follow in order to better serve this market.

For the purpose of this document, tourist-friendly rail services are those services specifically designed to cater for the needs and requirements of leisure travellers, as differentiated from commuters, business travellers or specifically rail-oriented tourist demand.

Of course, heritage and tourist railways companies can also benefit from the guidelines in this document by checking their services against the relevant items in the categorization system presented in Chapter 5.



Tourist-Friendly
UIC TopRail

CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION SYSTEMS IN THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY



Classification and categorization systems are used in the travel and tourism industry in order to provide an indicator of the quality of services to be found at individual companies. It aims at creating trust in the market, be it intermediaries or customers, by offering comparable information. This is particularly important in an industry in which services are blind bought: cannot be assessed prior to purchase. Classification and categorization systems allow companies to showcase their services and customers to obtain a general idea of the type of service they can expect.

Classification and categorization systems usually employ a set of easily recognizable symbols -stars in hotels, forks in restaurants, membership in certain associations or groups, etc.- which represent generally acknowledged sets of standards that are accepted across the industry as acceptable benchmarking tools, creating useful frames for comparison, rate setting and type of customer.

While very diverse around the world, and with different systems of ratings and certification processes, some public, other private, some voluntary, others compulsory, classification and categorization schemes remain a useful marketing and communication tool in the travel and tourism industry.

Classification and categorization systems in the tourism industry vary depending on the type of services and the main motivations of the client.

For instance, classification systems for accommodation and food and beverage (F&B) services will take into account client motivations such as location, décor, atmosphere, type of service, as well as price.

Modes of transportation, on the other hand, use classification and categorization as tools for pricing based on items such as fastness and directness in reaching destination as well as available leg room, on board service, pre-boarding and off-boarding benefits among others.

In this work we will briefly analyze existing classification and categorization systems in the tourism industry, discuss the convenience of a classification and categorization system for tourist railways, analyze the type of features that should be itemized for a categorization and consider the methodology that should be used for eventually

establishing a categorization and classification system that would be of practical applicability worldwide.

Classification usually refers to features related to the “concept”, the way the company advertises to potential customers what type of niche market or particular client needs or travel motivation the company is focused on addressing.

Concept, thus, refers to the type of product-service mix that is predominant in the design of the company’s services, taking into account specialization or location, type of experience, number of stops, etc.

Sometimes the classifications refer to material conditions, type of service, or the type of building. Classifications help clients -as well as travel and tourism industry partners, have a quick overview of what to expect in general terms. Categorization, on the other hand, aims at conveying a referential overview of price ranges based on amenities, comfort and service levels to be expected in higher or lower categories.

Of course, categories such as stars or diamonds in accommodation, for instance, are also a manner of classification in themselves. Nonetheless, and for the purpose of this work, we will keep the mentioned distinction between types of classification and types of categorizations at the forefront.

We will proceed with a quick – non-exhaustive- overview of existing types of classification and categorization systems for accommodation, food and beverage, cruise companies, airlines and railway companies in order to highlight the commonalities as well as differences in their classification and categorization systems.



3.1 ACCOMMODATION

Classification systems for accommodation usually take into account the motivation behind the client’s journey, as well as the location of the infrastructure, to signal the convenience of a particular establishment. Types of

classification include location -airport, beach resort, ski resort, conference hotel- target market such as family hotels, ownership, such as chain operated, etc.

Regarding categorization, according to UNWTO³⁴, the prevalent areas assessed for hotel categorization around the world -and for which the most criteria are set- are: Room, Bathroom, and General Services.

Other areas included in the assessments conducted in order for a particular category to be awarded were: Front Desk, Food and Beverage, Public Areas, Access, Exterior and General Appearance.

Of the systems assessed by the UNWTO, some appear to be voluntary, industry-led, while others are mandatory at national or regional level. The number of criteria ranges from 55 in Italy to 498 in the UK. The most used symbols to express rank are stars and diamonds, graded from 1 -lowest category- to 5, top category.



3.2 RESTAURANTS (F&B)

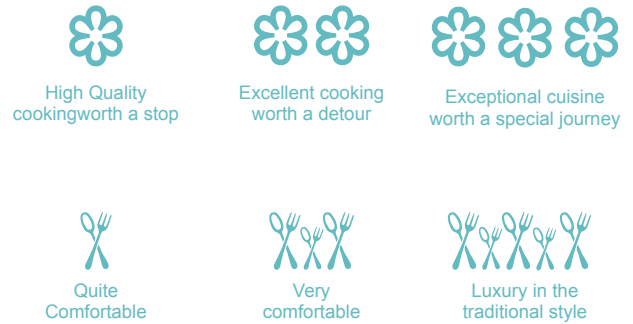
Classification systems for restaurants usually consider the type of service, atmosphere-experience offered and the food concept, specialty or technique offered, from luxury or fine dining to ethnic, casual, family, buffet, barbecue, etc.

As for Categories, same as happens with accommodation, there is not a unique, homogeneous categorization system, but in general terms categories for restaurants highlight levels of service, content of menu, type of preparations, quality of infrastructure facilities, amenities inside and outside the restaurant, as well as quality of

tableware, linens, cutlery, and so on.

Traditional, compulsory, government mandated systems use 1st to 5th category identification, with 1 being the lowest and 5th the highest. Also, some countries use a ranking based on forks instead of stars, from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest category and 5 the highest.

Other systems, like Michelin and other similar tourist guidebooks, use their own categories, identified with stars, or suns, among others.



3.3 CRUISE SHIPS

A cruise is a packaged tour including travel, meals, accommodation, on board entertainment and activities and some off-board tours. The journey takes place on board purpose-built vessels.

Classification of cruise ships, like other tourist services, is not homogeneous nor universal. Cruises are usually classified by the type of destination, the size of vessel, the type of on-board service, amenities and entertainment, the type of experience, from Ocean cruises to Adventure, Expedition, Specialty, River cruises, etc.

Categorization ranks mainly accommodation mostly by location on board, be it inside, ocean, balcony or suite. The location also defines price range, size of cabin, amenities and level of service within the same boat.

34 World Tourism Organization (2015), Hotel Classification Systems: Recurrence of criteria in 4 and 5 stars hotels, UNWTO, Madrid



3.4 AIRLINES

Classification systems for airlines, as in other systems reviewed before, depend on the features considered. From the point of view of the traveller, the most relevant types of airlines are classified according to range and type of service.

Categorization, on the other hand, ranks seats according to position within the cabin, and comfort features during a flight, such as leg room, privacy, amenities, type of food, service, and so on. These categories, which are usually Economy, Premium Economy, Business and First are used for setting rates.

In many cases different categories also include different types of pre boarding service, larger baggage franchise, priority boarding, different booking conditions and penalties, as well as priority access to airport infrastructure such as VIP lounges, parking, etc., which aren't part of the flight experience per se.

Air transportation is, no doubt, one of the most consistently standardized sectors in the travel and Tourism industry, due to its complexity and global reach, which also supported the incredible growth the industry experienced in the last decades.

Through standardization, the IATA Airline Taxonomy³⁵ was created as a shared language for companies to describe their products and services to sellers and a way for sellers to optionally request specific features when booking a flight. The taxonomy breaks down airlines' services into four main categories: flight, airport, ground and journey. Each category, in turn, is subdivided in subcategories in which all possible services are listed and coded, so as both airlines and sellers share a common, transparent ground for transactions.



3.5 RAILWAYS

Railways, too, can be classified by different types of criteria. In order to provide a common understanding and reduce potential confusion, the UIC has established standard international railway terminology and a trilingual (English-French-German) thesaurus of terms, which allows for a common framework for classification and categorization from locomotives by the axle arrangements, to passenger coaches and goods wagons.

Railways, also, can be classified by range: metropolitan, short, long distance; speed and number of stops: high speed, intercity, express, regional; by time of operation, day and night trains, etc.

Regarding categorization, both seated coaches -first, class, business class, economy class- and sleeper coaches -private compartment, couchette- differentiate categories -as well as rates- based on room, amenities, on board services as well as privacy.

A UIC categorization of stations³⁶, from A to E, has also been set, based on criteria that take into account volume of operations, size, inter-modality, among others.



ECONOMY CLASS



BUSINESS CLASS



FIRST CLASS

³⁵ <https://guides.developer.iata.org/v213/docs/conshp15-airline-taxonomy-codeset>

³⁶ UIC leaflet 180 proposes a categorization of rail stations. <https://uic.org/passenger/passenger-railway-stations/>



Tourist-Friendly
UIC TopRail

THE CONVENIENCE OF A CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION SYSTEM FOR TOURIST AND TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY



As mentioned before, classification and categorization systems help travel and tourism companies create better understanding of their services amongst potential clients. Modes of transportation, such as railways or aeroplanes, do not differentiate by motivation between leisure travellers and travellers with other motivations. Still, seats are definitely segmented and, consequently, categorized and priced by level of comfort, services and amenities.

Since it has already been stated that railways are underused as a mode of transportation for leisure journeys, we propose that a classification and categorization system for leisure tourism -friendly rail services and experiences might be a useful tool for railway companies to help travel agents and tour operators, as well as travellers, start considering railways as a potential part of their travel mix. While flights are a fixture in most tourist trips, other forms of public transportation are seldom used when planning an itinerary. The reasons are multiple, but lack of convenience, lack of understanding or access to accurate information, duration of trip, technical issues and booking conditions as well as practicalities such as safety, security and cleanliness issues are usually mentioned as the main reasons for not including more public transportation options in tourism trips.

On the other hand, companies agree that customers are increasingly worrying about making more sustainable choices during their tourist trips, while companies themselves are committed to more responsible and sustainable journeys globally. In this context, railways are seen as a potentially interesting option, which also offers opportunity for cultural experiences, landscape contemplation and a more relaxed travel experience.

Tour operators and travel agents are interested in exploring the opportunities offered by rail travel and to start a conversation in order to identify the main pain points and look for solutions together with the rail industry partners.

As noted, while the main drivers for selecting a mode of transportation are basically the same, regardless of motivation, it is important for rail companies to be aware of how to ease the pain points in each of these drivers and how to highlight benefits in order to create a successful strategy to attract leisure tourist travellers on board.

Creating strategies -together with partners in the travel and tourism industry- in order to minimize those pain points and increase awareness of the benefits of rail tourism must be an ongoing conversation in order to attract new passengers to railways.

Benefits of a Classification and Categorization System for Tourist-Friendly Railway services and experiences






-  Tourists and Travel and Tourism companies can easily identify rail services and experiences that cater to leisure tourists' needs
-  Offers guidelines for companies aiming at attracting leisure tourists to their regular services
-  Allows rail companies to increase frequentation by attracting a differentiated segment
-  Serves as a benchmarking tool for tourists and tourist companies when comparing alternative modes of transportation for a tourist journey
-  Offers clear information about availability of services most valued by tourists

Table 2 Benefits of a Classification and Categorization System for Tourist-Friendly Railway services and experiences

Considering then that a classification and categorization system for tourist-friendly railways might work as a road map for railway companies and travel and tourism industry partners to increase cooperation, a series of workshops and seminars on the subject took place during 2021 and 2022, between TopRail and the European Tourism Association, ETOA, members³⁷.

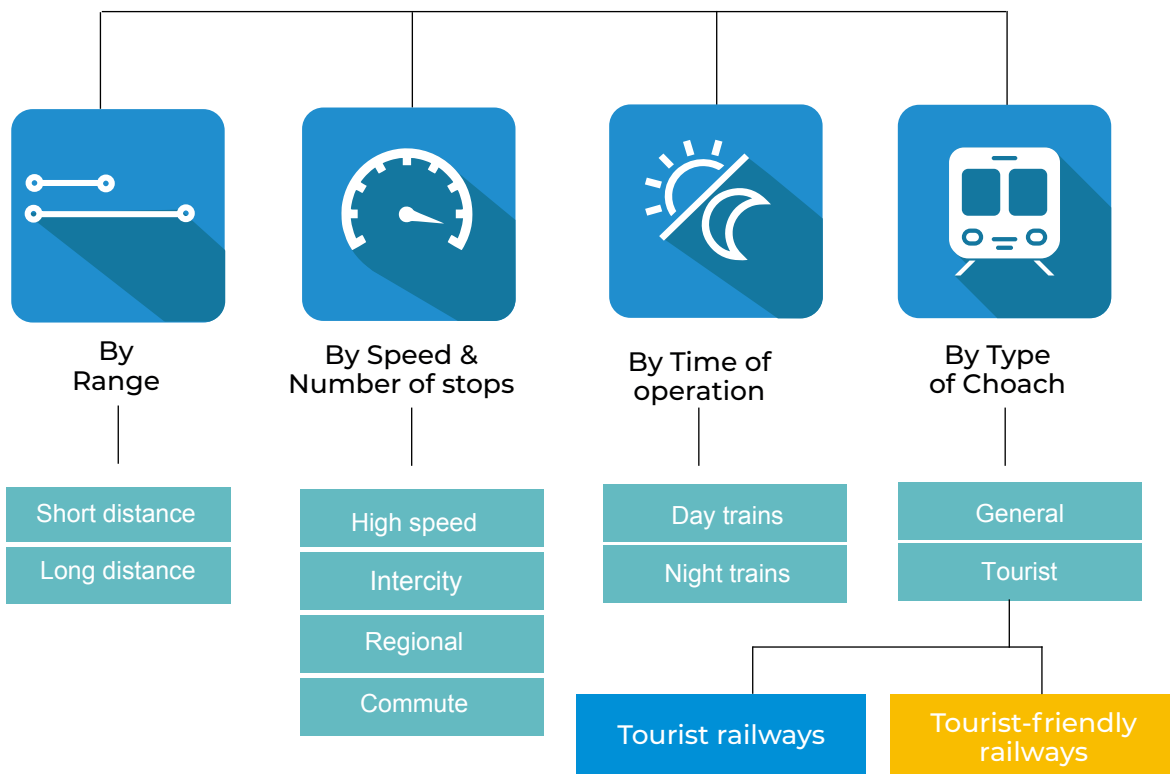
A classification and categorization system for tourist-friendly rail services and experiences might definitely help increase awareness towards railways as a potential mode of transportation for leisure travel, and to ease some of the existing concerns regarding rail travel convenience for tourist purposes.

The aim of these meetings was to identify the main pain points and the most important tourist-friendly features that rail companies intent on boosting their share in the leisure tourism niche should develop, implement or improve.

4.1 METHODOLOGY FOR PROPOSING A CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION SYSTEM FOR LEISURE TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAYS

After a quick assessment of existing classification and categorization systems in the travel and tourism industry, as summarized in chapter 3, a “Tourist purpose” class was proposed, in order to identify rail services and experiences that cater to tourist motivations.

CLASSIFICATION OF PASSANGER RAILWAYS



³⁷ <https://uic.org/com/enews/article/uic-toprail-members-and-etoa-european-tourism-association-held-an-online>

A separate classification by purpose allows for a clearer segmentation of niche markets. It is important to remember that the classifications are not mutually exclusive, but rather an indication of particular features of the operation that are relevant for the company and the traveller.

Also, within the “Tourist Purpose” classification, two sub classes can be identified:

<h3 style="margin: 0;">Tourist railways</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">rail services and experiences that are developed first and foremost for tourist purposes.</p>	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Tourist-friendly railways</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">identifying rail services and experiences that consistently address pain points and intentionally offer certain services that are attractive for leisure travellers.</p>
--	--

Acknowledging the wide range of experiences involved in a railway operation, the “tourist-friendly” class is in turn split into: tourist-friendly cars or trains, tourist-friendly lines, tourist-friendly stations and tourist-friendly railway companies, in order to offer companies a series of levels of commitment as well as guidelines for upscaling their efforts according to their priorities.

Figure 1 Proposed Classification of Passenger Railways

TOURIST RAILWAYS

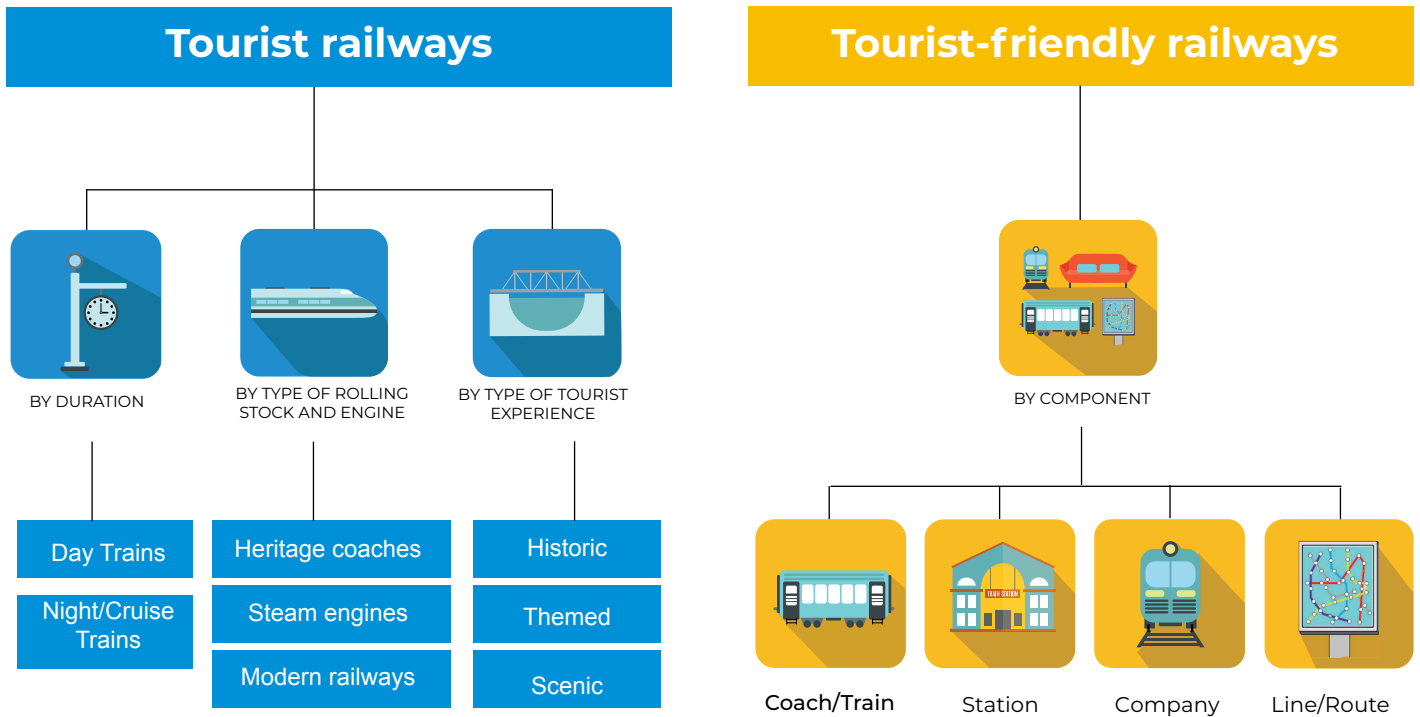


Figure 2 Proposed Classification for Tourist and Tourist-friendly railways

Within classification, categories were also considered relevant in order to offer more in-depth information for the potential customer.

Based on literature review, a set of features was created for each component of the classification: coaches and trains, routes, stations and companies.

The list was revised by TopRail members, who added new features. It was also checked against outputs of UIC TopRail-ETOA Travel Trade Exchange, in which the main pain points, requirements and aspirations from the travel and tourism industry regarding rail travel were presented.

A final list of features for each component was drafted with this information and submitted then in survey form to members of ETOA and other organizations such as United States Tour Operators Association, USOA, and Adventure Travel Trade Association, ATTA.

Participants were asked to rank the importance that availability, convenience and comfort-related features hold in making rail travel more attractive for tourist purposes, from “Very Important” to “Least Important”.

Then they were asked to rank features for each element: coach/trains, lines, stations and rail companies’ infrastructure, services and policies regarding leisure tourists, again from “Very Important” to “Least Important”.

With the resulting scores, a two-tier categorization system was created:

The methodology used for this categorization is as follows:

For Standard Requirements: the highest ranked items for each element of service/operation were considered.

Also, criteria that are an essential, differential part of a leisure tourist experience and that are more service than infrastructure oriented were prioritized, considering that changes in service will be easier for companies to implement in the short term.

When relevant, a distinction between short-distance and long-distance services was considered. (e.g., food and beverage are less relevant in a half-hour train ride while very important in a six-hour ride).

When a feature was suggested in the comments, it was assessed and included if considered relevant (regarding its weight on the availability, convenience or comfort categories).

An extra Standard Requirement for railway companies was included, the issuing of the yearly Sustainability Report³⁸ created by UIC TopRail, to cater to travellers’ preference for more sustainable choices.

Generally speaking, the criteria have been selected aiming for simplicity and clarity, in order to contribute to an increased visibility of railways as a choice, and to encourage rail companies to improve cooperation with the travel and tourism industry partners. While structural changes will take time and investment, these criteria and the classification and categorization system are conceived as a road map and a signal towards the industry of an ongoing process.

A detail of the contents and results of the survey and the sample size can be found in Annex 1.

It is important to note that this is a qualitative rather than quantitative approach.

The detail of the proposed classification and categorization system for tourist-friendly rail services and experiences can be found below.

Standard Tourist friendly
for those services or operations complying with basic requirements.

Excellence Tourist-friendly
for those services or operations complying with basic and at least 50% of the extra requirements.

³⁸ https://www.toprail.org/IMG/pdf/uic_guidelines_on_sustainable_tourism_2017_def.pdf



Tourist-Friendly
UIC TopRail

SUGGESTED CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION SYSTEM FOR TOURIST AND TOURIST- FRIENDLY RAILWAYS



As already explained, a classification and categorization system for tourist-friendly railways would contribute to increasing awareness amongst stakeholders- tourist-industry partners, railway companies, public institutions and travellers- about the importance of railways in accelerating the modal shift towards a greener, more sustainable travel and tourism industry.

While the main drivers for travelling by train seem to be no different between general travellers and leisure tourists -price, frequency, duration of journey- it can be argued that with leisure tourists having complementary motivations for their journey, a higher visibility of tourist friendly features in railways would be useful in creating greater awareness amongst travel industry partners and travellers themselves.

The current scheme, then, proposes a single classification of “Tourist-friendly” and a double category: Standard and Excellence, for coaches and trains, lines, stations and railway companies.

The categories are ranked based on a set of criteria that identify critical points of infrastructure and service that are considered of importance for a leisure tourist, which have been identified and assessed in the survey and by secondary sources.

The criteria apply separately to individual coaches or trains (rolling stock), routes, stations and railway companies as a whole, acknowledging that there are different points of contact with the rail experience, and also that companies may need a step-by-step approach towards a more leisure tourism-friendly policies and services.

Classification and categorization are designed to be voluntary and self-assessed, reflecting the will of companies to have a more tourist-oriented policy, as well as their compliance with the requirements.

The criteria are divided into standard and excellence and can be used as guidelines for companies in order to assess their current performance and decide what type of tourist-oriented strategy they want to undertake.

Since some of the criteria may require gradation to actually reflect the current situation of railway infrastructures and rolling stock, an Implementation Guide will follow, detailing the extent of each feature and eventual options or waivers that may take into account, for instance, limitations affecting heritage, historic or older rolling stock in rail-tourism products.

The categorization system will be implemented through a self-assessment system followed by a statement by the company. A “tourist-friendly” stamp in the corresponding category will be awarded, and the railway company will be encouraged to make use of this seal in order to make their tourist-friendly services more visible and appealing to the market.

Below, the different charters for the tourist-friendly services and operations are shown. Standard and excellence requirements are colour-coded for easier identification.

The results of the survey are presented in Annex 1, as well as the suggestions and comments made by participants.

5.1 TOURIST- FRINDLY ROLLING STOCK (COACHES/ TRAINS)



A “Tourist-friendly” train or car is one that complies with 100% of the requirements categorized as “Standard” in the charter below.

The “Excellence Tourist-friendly” category requires complying with at least 50% of the extra criteria beside the basics.

The requirements are split between short and long distance.

First category cars, as already existing in many long-distance services, may possibly qualify as tourist-friendly as well. Still there are other basic services, like panoramic windows, available group tables, regional or typical on-board food, public announcement in foreign languages, clear wayfinding systems, etc., that can improve the tourist experience for any price category.



CRITERIA FOR TOURIST-FRIENDLY ROLLING STOCK COACHES/TRAINS

	Short Distance (up to 2.5 hours)		Long Distance	
	Standard	Excellence	Standard	Excellence
Free Wifi on board			●	
Charging station for electronic devices available in every seat			●	
Individual reading lamp		●		●
Enough toilets for train capacity, always supplied with essentials (monitoring system in place)	●		●	
Ensured cleanliness (monitoring system in place)	●		●	
Comfortable seats (soft material, reclining, etc)	●		●	
Group, family seats with table	●		●	
Swivel seats (or ensured forward-facing seats)	●		●	
Observation car and/or panoramic windows		●		●
Handy, safe store areas near to seats for baggage			●	
On board guest relation manager (tourist oriented, beyond purser, or ticket conductor)			●	
Kids play area		●		●
Bike rack		●		●
Sports equipment rack		●		●
Tourist info on screens and/or stops announced in Public Announcement system (PA) in at least 1 foreign language	●		●	
Downloadable tourist digital audio guide in at least 1 foreign language		●		●
Extra space for baggage			●	
Facilities for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities	●		●	
Restaurant car with table service		●		●
Food & Beverage service to the seat			●	
Cart with snacks and beverages			●	
Vending machines with snacks and beverages		●		●
Local/typical cuisine/ options		●		●
Vegetarian/vegan/allergy/other dietary restrictions options			●	
Quiet Car			●	
Clear wayfinding system for coach/seat	●		●	
Pre booked seat assignment enforced	●		●	
Welcome kit for premium class		●		●
Historic, singular, themed, branded coach/engine		●		●

Table 3: Criteria for Tourist-Friendly Rolling Stock (Coaches and Trains)

5.2 TOURIST- FRIENDLY RAIL ROUTES



Many railways run along attractive scenery, historic places or link tourist destinations. Regional, underused trains sometimes have tourist attractions along the line or scenic landscapes that are worth visiting. Highlighting these routes can be a way of improving frequentation by making potential customers aware of the tourist potential of certain services in a manner that makes it easier for them to add the rail experience into their travel planning.

Charities such as Britain’s Community Rail Network with their “scenic rail”⁴⁰ project, for instance, aim at growing the numbers of passengers in regional,

secondary lines by suggesting tourist opportunities set along chosen lines. Rail companies can improve this practice by assessing the tourist potential of their lines and creating awareness and content in partnership with Destination Management Organizations and tourist partners. Experience oriented features, as well as information have the greater weight in this category.

A Standard Tourist-friendly line complies with 100% of basic requirements.

An Excellence Tourist-friendly line complies with at least 50% of extra requirements.



CRITERIA FOR TOURIST-FRIENDLY LINES/ROUTES

Short Distance
(up to 2.5 hours)

Long Distance



Standard



Excellence



Standard



Excellence

	Standard	Excellence	Standard	Excellence
Prevalence of scenic landscape	●		●	
Notable tourist attractions connected by the line	●		●	
The tourist line is highlighted with a separate colour scheme in stations/ stops, schedules, all types of information	●		●	
Tourist descriptions of tourist attractions and of the general attractiveness of the line are available in any or several media (digital, panels, printed, etc)		●		●
Tourist stops in the line are announced by digital media or Public Announcement System (PA) upon arrival	●		●	
Convenient schedules and frequencies, compatible with visit hours to tourist attractions	●		●	
Possibility of obtaining access to tourist attractions integrated in the ticket, including public transportation at destination		●		●
Affordable rates compared with other modes of transportation		●		●
Door to door baggage service available		●		●
Facilities for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities	●		●	
The route/line is operated with tourist-friendly trains/coaches		●	●	

Table 4: Criteria for tourist-friendly lines or routes

5.3 TOURIST- FRIENDLY RAILWAY STATIONS



5.3.1 TOURIST FRIENDLY STATION MAIN HALL

As with airports, the pre boarding and off boarding experience as well as last-mile are an important part of the decision-making process. Rail stations that are tourist-friendly must take advantage of their location especially in relation to airports in order to ensure a tourist-friendly experience for arrivals and departures.

Accessibility, wayfinding, comfortable wait areas, easy access to downtown and tourist attractions, multimodal transportation, as well as basic safety and cleanliness, are among the features highlighted in our survey.

For a station to be categorized as leisure tourism-friendly, it must comply with the basic criteria.

The extra category can be obtained by fulfilling at least 50% of extra criteria.



CRITERIA FOR TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY STATION ACCESS, MAIN HALL AND PLATFORMS

Short Distance
(up to 2.5 hours)

Long Distance



Standard

Excellence

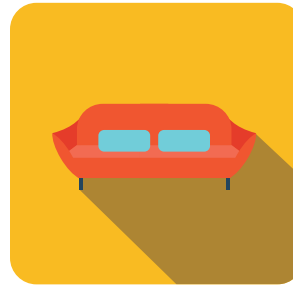
Standard

Excellence

	Standard	Excellence	Standard	Excellence
Organized, clearly identified, hassle-free cab and public transportation stops	●		●	
Clearly identified, conveniently placed drop on-drop off parking areas for tourist buses, hotel transfers and tour guides, included facilities for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities		●	●	
Clearly identified parking areas with easy-to-follow wayfinding system to main hall and platforms	●		●	
Charging docks for electric vehicles		●		●
Parking areas for bikes		●		●
Comfortable waiting areas with sufficient sitting places inside the main hall	●		●	
Facilities for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities	●		●	
Clean, well-stocked, free restrooms in sufficient amount for the station (monitoring system in place)	●		●	
Ensured cleanliness of all areas (monitoring system in place)	●		●	
Sufficient charging stations for electronic devices	●		●	
Baggage lockers		●	●	
Clear, large screens with arrival/departure information in at least 1 foreign language	●		●	
Free WiFi	●		●	
Tourist Assistance and information booth with staff fluent in at least one foreign language			●	
Concession stands selling typical food, souvenirs, tourist literature	●	●	●	
24/7 convenience store selling basic travel essentials		●	●	
Wayfinding system and printed or digital info about main tourist services in the station, tourist routes departing from the station and schedules in at least one foreign language	●		●	
Information about multimodal connections to main tourist attractions in town from the railway station in at least one foreign language	●		●	
Information about multimodal connections to other tourist destinations from the railway station in at least one foreign language	●			
Clear, easy-to-find meeting point inside the main hall	●		●	
Clear, easy-to-follow wayfinding system to multimodal transportation stops	●		●	
On-line and/or printed tourist information about the area in at least 1 foreign language	●		●	
Station as a tourist attraction with tourist information about the station, itineraries in printed, digital or downloadable audio guide format in at least 1 foreign language		●		
Cultural activities in the hall: music, exhibitions, other		●		
Clear wayfinding system to platforms	●		●	
Easiness of access to platforms, trains (trolleys, escalators, lifts, porters)	●		●	
Sheltered areas, awnings in platforms	●		●	
Public announcement system and clear wayfinding for arriving and departing trains on platforms, at least in one foreign language	●		●	

Table 5: Criteria for tourist-friendly railway station access, main hall and platforms

5.3.2 LOUNGE AREA



Our survey found out that Lounge areas in railway stations were the less relevant feature for a tourist experience, provided that stations offered basic comforts. When thinking of multimodal, long-haul travel, though, the availability of tourist-oriented lounge areas at railway stations can be an important feature.



CRITERIA FEATURES FOR A TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY STATION LOUNGE



Standard



Excellence

	Standard	Excellence
Clear wayfinding system from/to main hall and platforms	●	
Facilities for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities	●	
Free Wifi	●	
Screens with departure/arrival information	●	
Waiting area with comfortable seats and tables in sufficient number for lounge capacity	●	
Charging points for electronic devices in each seat	●	
Food and beverage service available during operation areas, with options for dietary restrictions	●	
Local, regional food specialties available		●
Ensured cleanliness of all areas (a monitoring system in place)	●	
Well-supplied toilets (monitoring system in place) in sufficient numbers for lounge capacity	●	
Shower area (monitoring system in place)		●
Sleep/quiet area		●
Kids play area		●
Tourist information about the area available	●	
Staff fluent in at least one foreign language	●	

Table 6: Criteria for Tourist-friendly railway station lounge

5.4 TOURIST- FRIENDLY RAILWAY COMPANY



Railway companies aspiring to be “tourist-friendly” must necessarily incorporate tourist-oriented staff, departments, activities having to do with connecting with the industry, supporting clients and trade partners, communicating regularly and receiving feedback and acting on it.

In order for companies to obtain the “Tourism-Friendly” categorization the basic features must be fulfilled.

For an upgraded category of tourism-friendliness, at least 50% of the extra criteria must be completed.



CRITERIA FOR A TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY COMPANY



Standard



Excellence

	Standard	Excellence
Extended booking horizon	●	
In-advance seat booking available for tourist-friendly lines		●
Coordination between carriers to offer support in case of cancellation, disruptions	●	
Availability and flexibility in forward sending, door to door baggage service		●
Easy, clear access to optimal fare in Booking System		●
Leisure tourism-friendly booking system (clear, user-friendly, tourist options easily available)	●	
Multimodal ticketing easily available	●	
Cooperation with tourist destination management partners for leisure tourism purposes	●	
Cooperation with tourism trade partners (travel agents and tour operators)	●	
Tourism industry-friendly policies for bookings, payments, commissions, cancellations etc	●	
Easiness, flexibility for group booking		●
Availability in Global Distribution Systems	●	
At least 10% of trains, lines, stations qualify as tourist-friendly	●	
Continuous monitoring of tourism-related satisfaction: feedback from industry partners and travellers is received and processed in a structured manner		
Ongoing Commitment to seamless travel experience	●	●
Increased levels of digitalization for tourist services		
Multiple payment options	●	
Tourist dedicated support services (chats, bots, staff) in at least one foreign language	●	
Travel agent and tour operator dedicated staff/department with staff fluent in at least one foreign language		●
Continuous training and detailed information to tourism industry partners	●	
Continuous training to staff on tourist customer relations	●	
Commitment to reporting on sustainable tourism practices following UIC TopRail Guidelines on Sustainable Tourism ³⁹	●	

Table 7 Criteria for a tourist-friendly railway company

³⁹ <https://uic.org/passenger/tourism-opportunities-for-railways/#TopRail-Publications>



tourism
friendly
UIC TopRail

RECOMMENDATIONS



The fragmentation of the railway industry is one of the greatest huddles in the way of mainstreaming solutions that would dramatically increase the modal shift in transportation. Technological, digital, infrastructure, investment and policy challenges remain structural barriers that will require decisive actions from stakeholders.

On the other hand, the travel and tourism industry is experiencing an unprecedented, demand motivated shift towards greener, more sustainable ways of travel. Railways are emerging as part of much desired Sustainable Mobility solutions that can help increase prosperity while taking care of the planet.

While the structural barriers, policies and protocols are overcome, there are a number of circumstantial, easier-to-adopt measures that can help both railway companies and travel and tourism industry begin making rail travel more tourist-friendly.

Cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders in both sectors are key in order to create awareness and find solutions that improve a seamless travel experience for tourists.

Setting up joint marketing efforts between tourist destinations, tourist companies in the destination and railways serving the destination will help increase awareness of rail travel opportunities

Clear, detailed information of itineraries, frequencies but also amenities and services that are of importance for tourist purposes.

Continuous training of travel and tourism industry partners to improve the mutual understanding of needs and requirements.

Joint information and communication campaigns to give visibility to railway leisure tourism-friendly options will increase interest and awareness towards rail options.

Setting up a permanent conversation between stakeholders in order to identify -and accelerate adoption of- policies and changes directed to improve tourist customers satisfaction.

Engaging in regular training of tour operators and travel agents in order to create a wider network of industry partners and advocates.

Creating visibility of the tourist-friendly classification and categorization, and encouraging quick adoption by companies will increase attention of media, travel and tourism companies and tourists themselves

A design contest for creating the seal identifying tourist-friendly rail services can be a way of creating expectation and visibility for the initiative, encouraging companies to engage in the scheme and travellers to start looking for tourist-friendly categorized rail services and options.

First steps towards mainstreaming the modal shift towards a more intensive use of railways are being taken, and the road maps are being drawn currently with new policies, infrastructures, technologies and commitments. A strong partnership with the Travel and Tourism Industry can only increase the speed of adoption while at the same time benefiting railway companies.



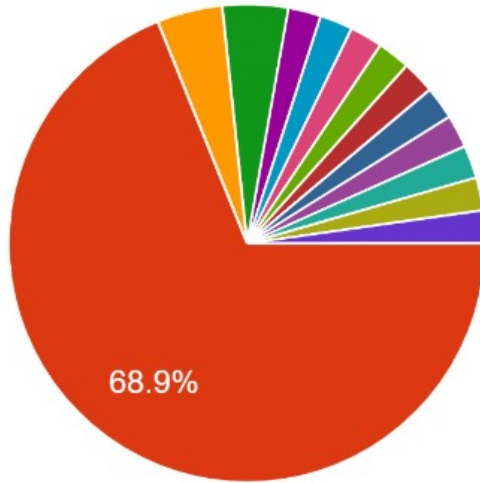
tourism
friendly
UIC TopRail

ANNEX: SURVEY



First, let us know what part of the industry you belong to

45 responses

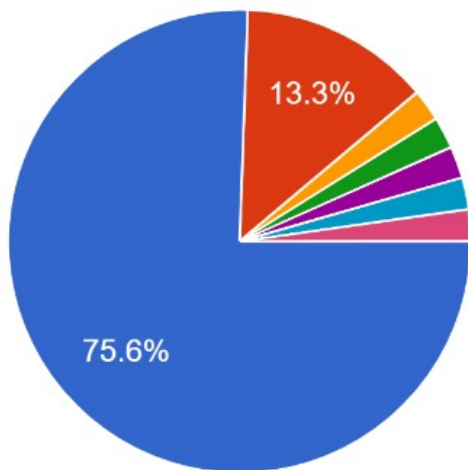


- Railway Industry
- Tour Operator
- Travel Agent
- DMO
- Convention Bureau
- DMC
- Tour guide
- national tourism organisation

▲ 1/2 ▼

Where are you based?

45 responses

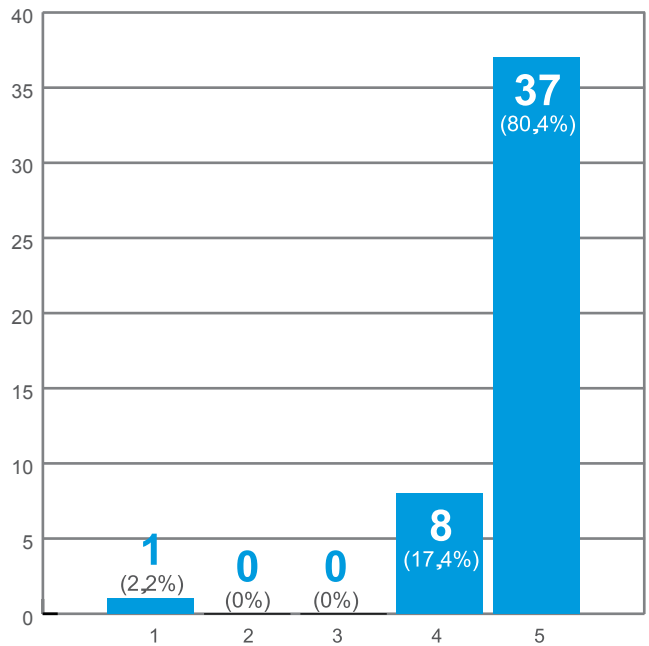


- Europe
- North America/Canada
- Japan
- ASIA
- South Africa
- India
- Australia

CRITERIA FOR RAILWAY COMPANIES

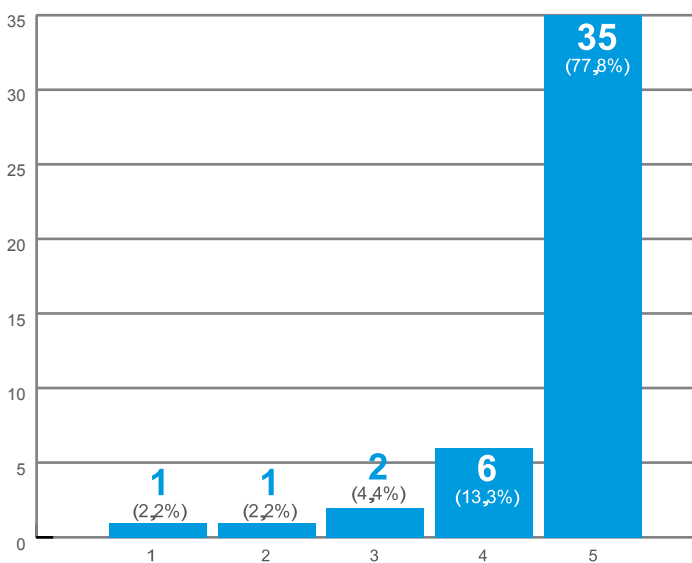
Planing domestic routes is easy

46 responses



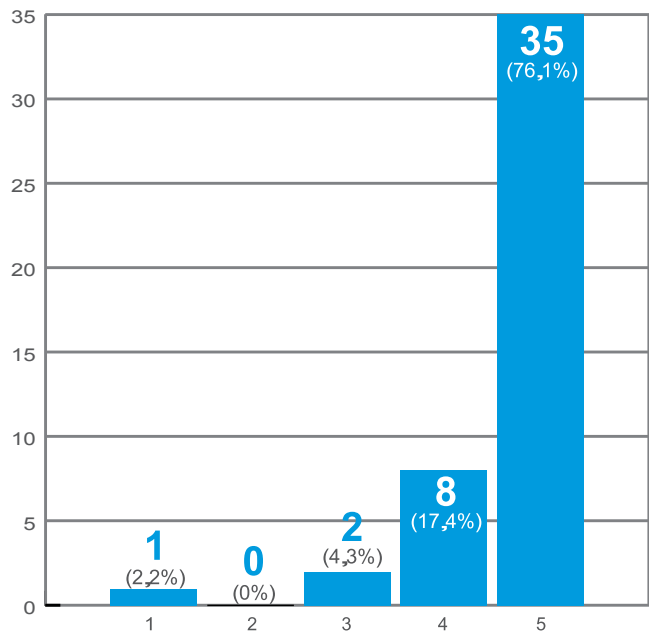
Planing international routes is easy to create and book the A and B itinerary with connections, stops, etc, for cross border itineraries

46 responses



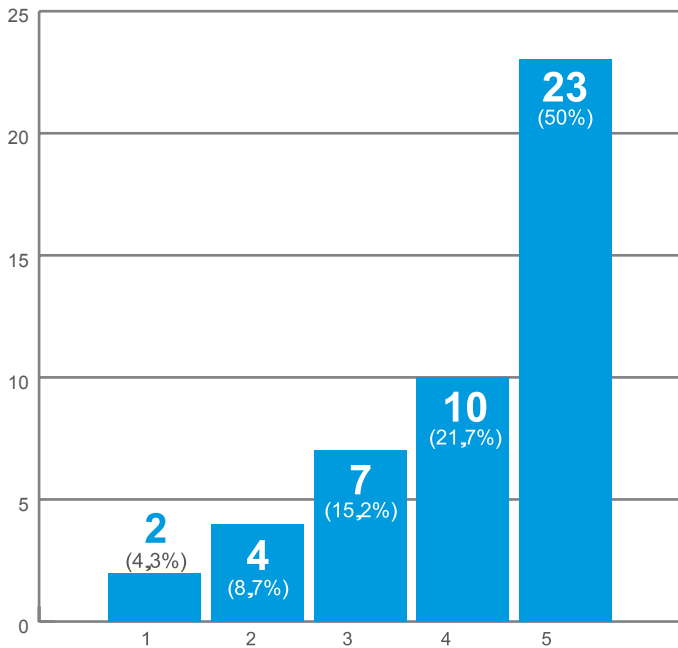
Finding the optimal tickets is easy

46 responses



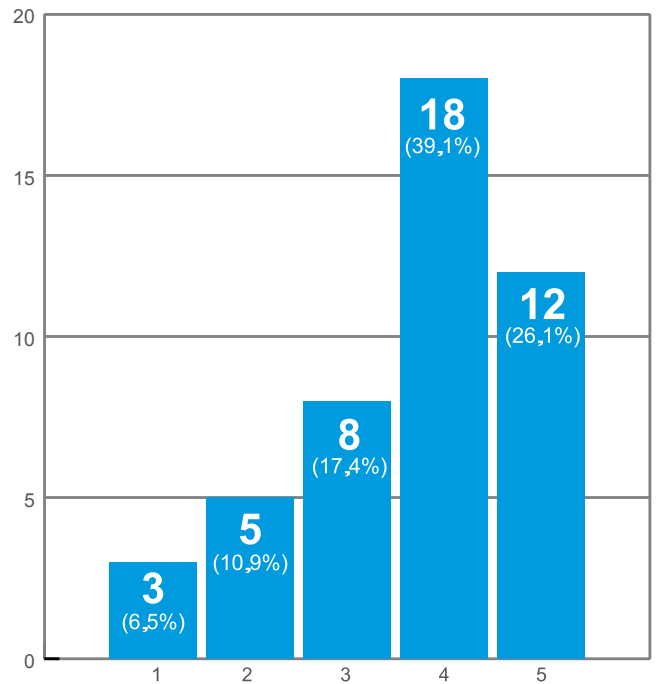
Booking available across different platforms

46 responses



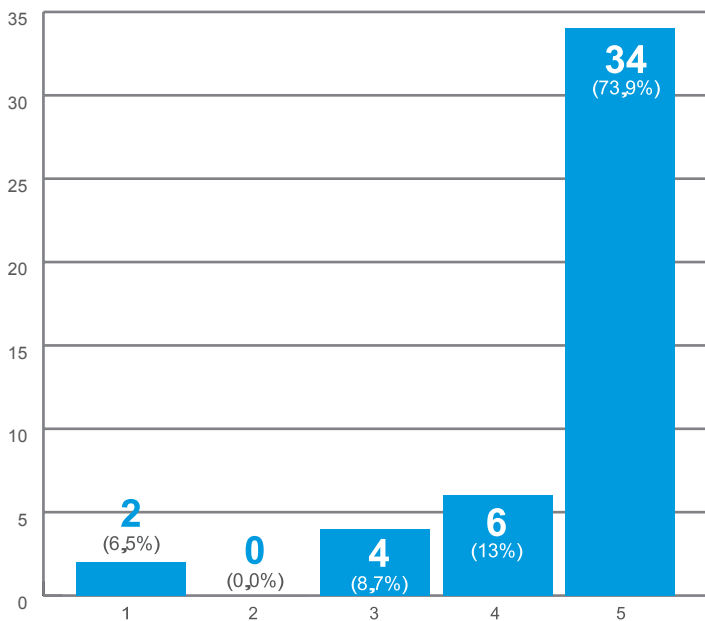
Different payment Methods available

46 responses



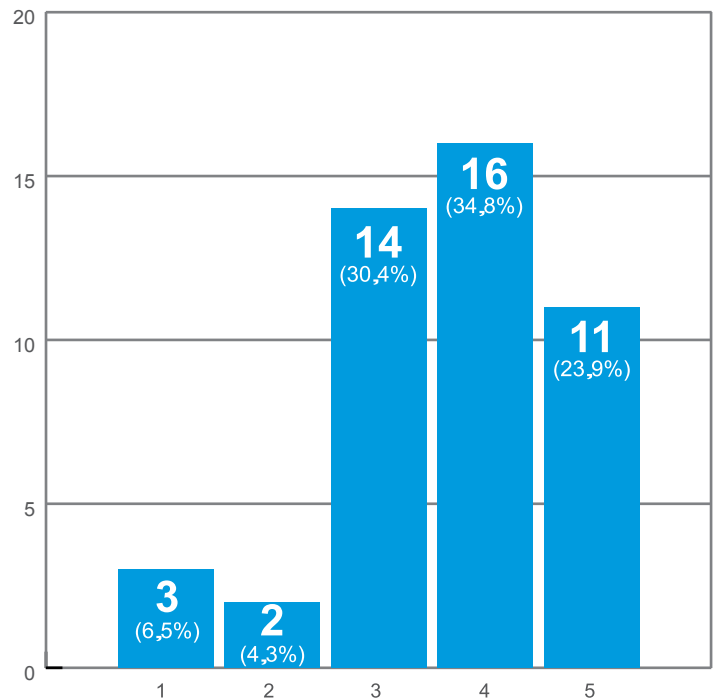
Cancellation, change and refund policies are business-friendly

46 responses



Multimodal options available in a one stop shop

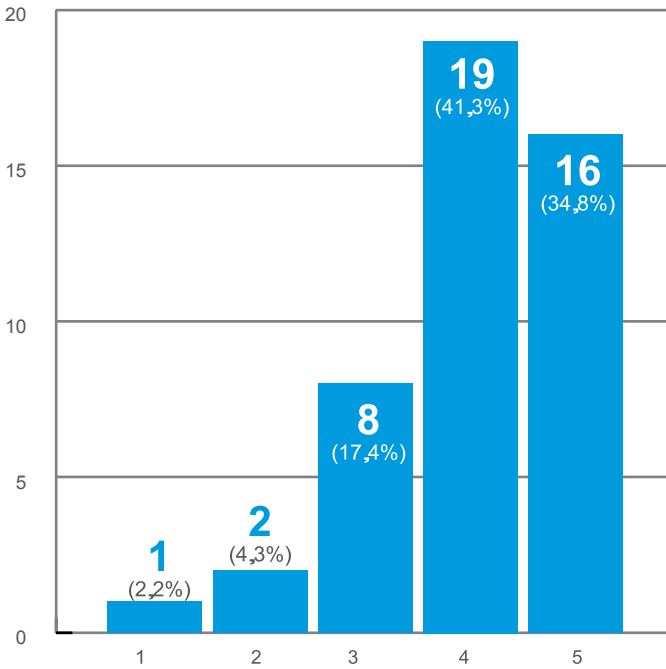
46 responses



CRITERIA FOR TOURIST FRIENDLY RAIL ROUTES

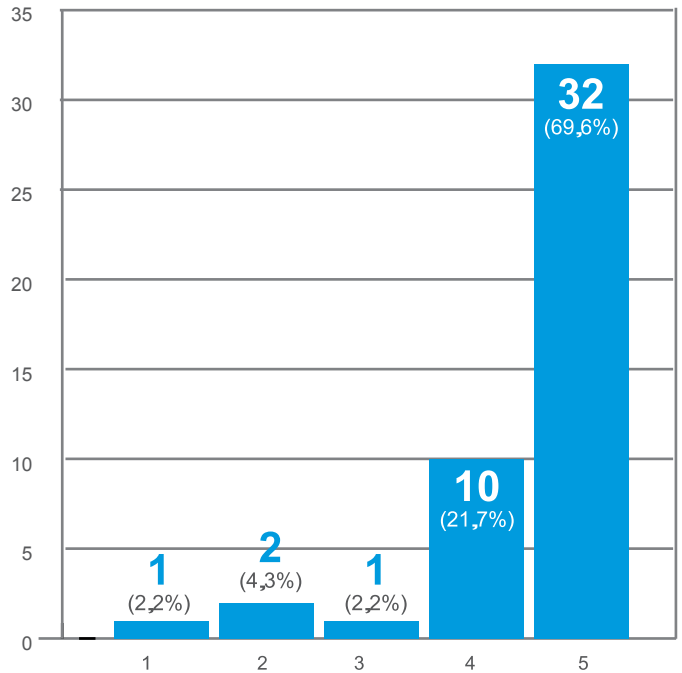
The railway route crosses scenic landscape, tourist attractions

46 responses



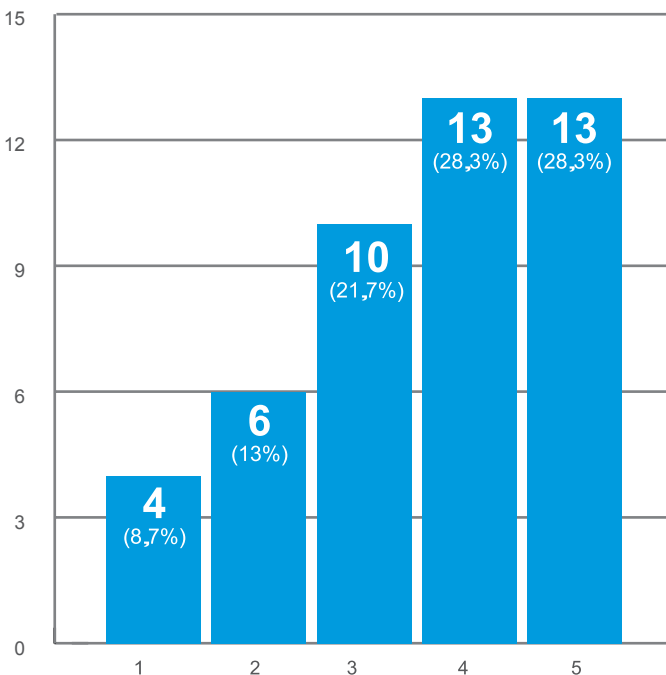
The railway route connects tourist destinations

46 responses



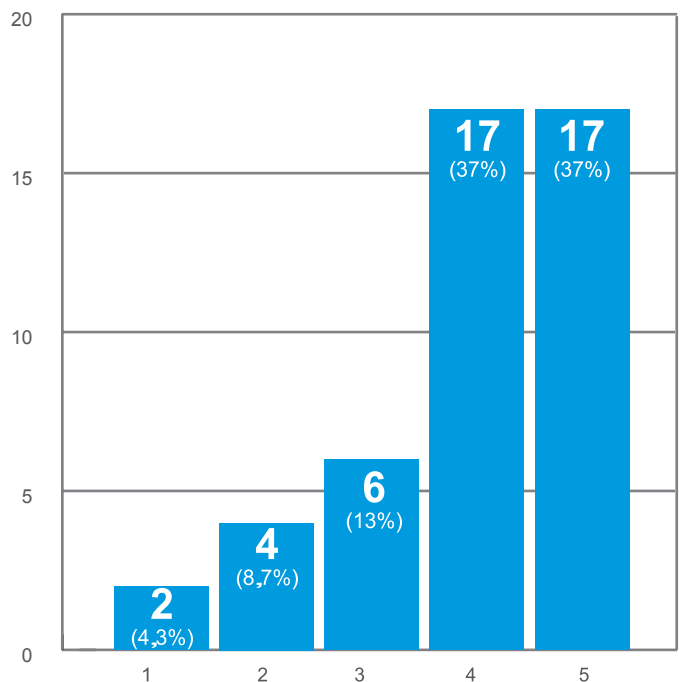
There is tourist information on board on screens, in at least 1 foreign language

46 responses



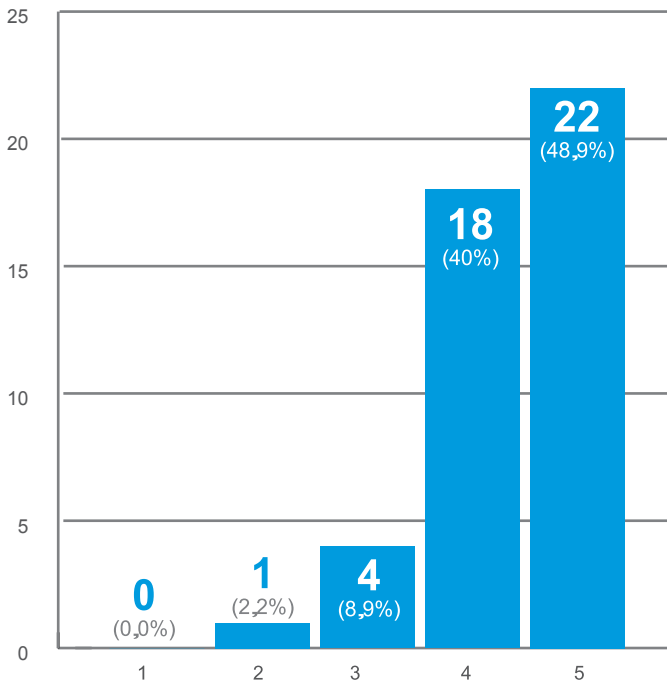
Food & Beverage on board

46 responses



Duration of trip is acceptable compared with other modes of transportation

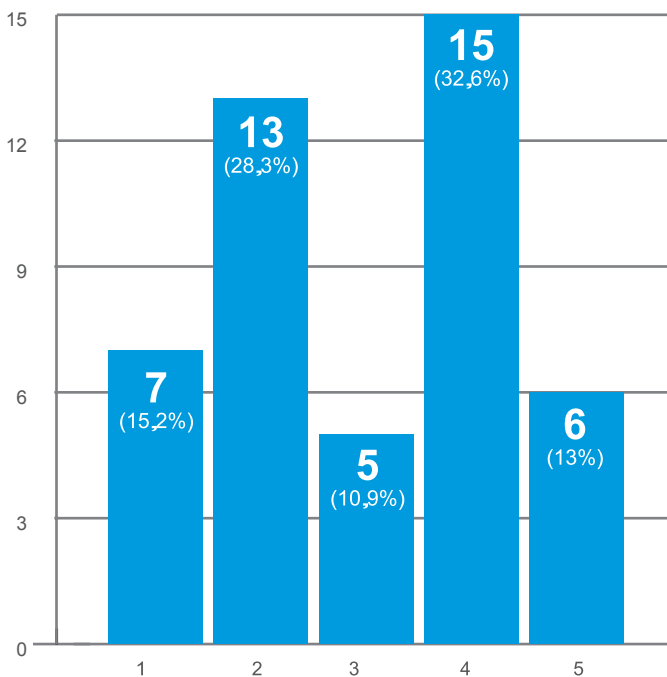
46 responses



TOURIST-FRIENDLY RAILWAY STATION

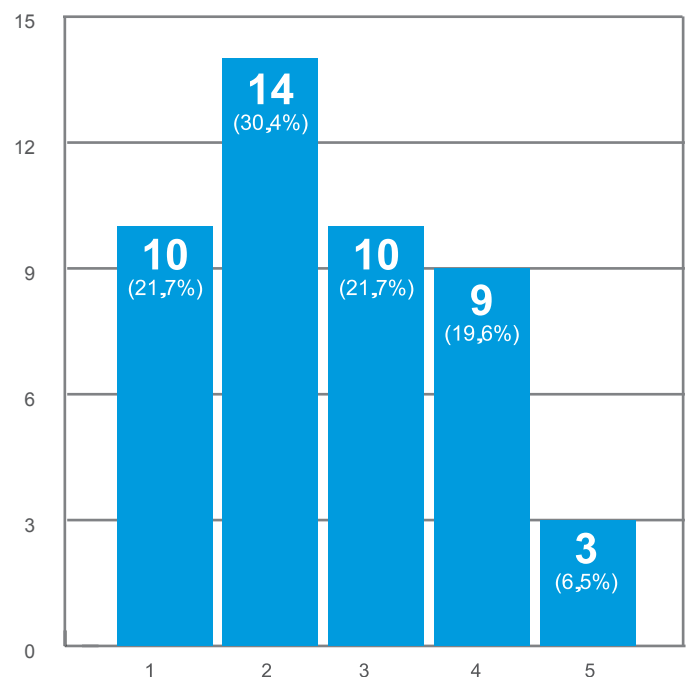
VIP Lounge with bilingual staff

46 responses



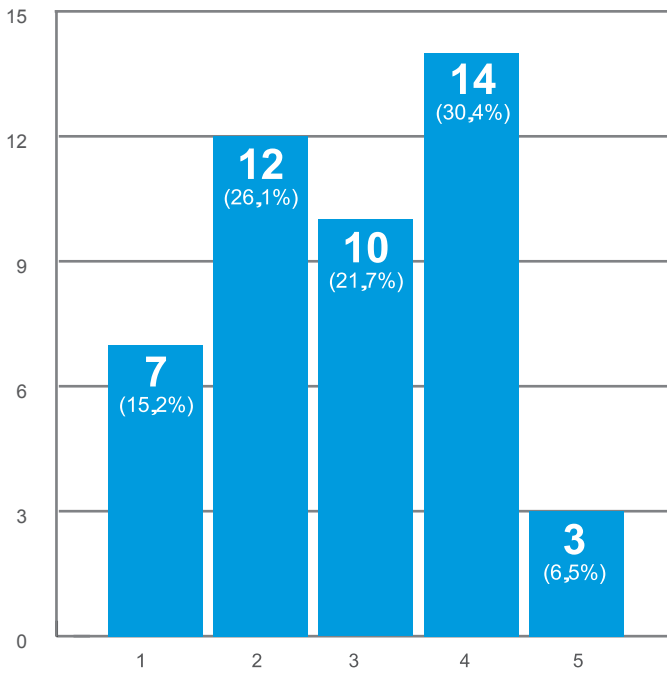
VIP Lounge with tourist literature available

46 responses



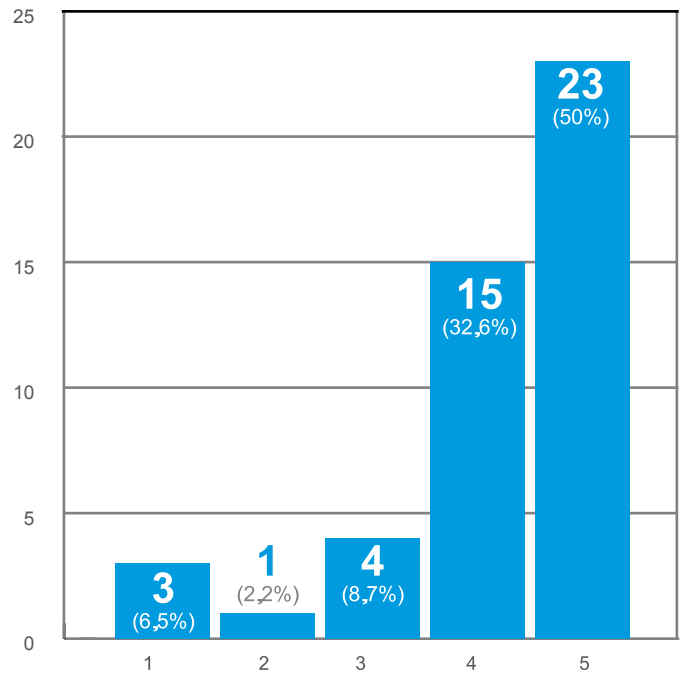
VIP Lounge with typical/regional food options

46 responses



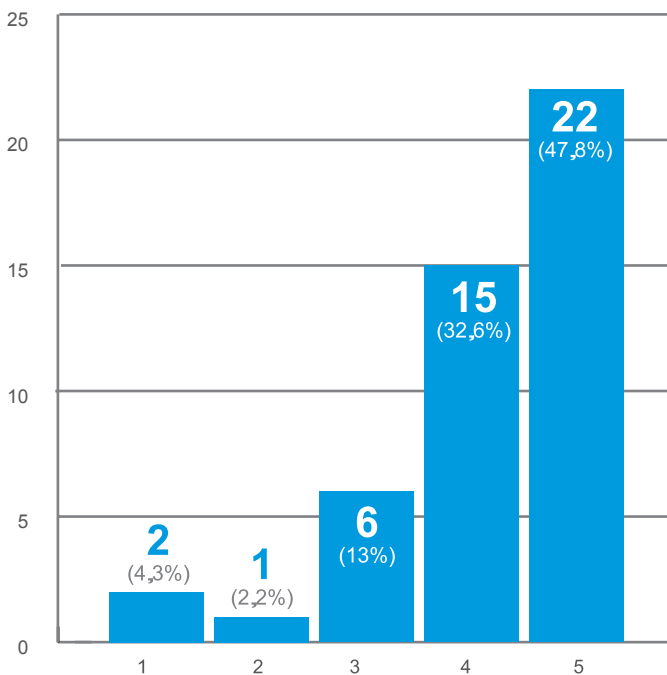
Multimodal transportation from station to downtown and vice versa available

46 responses



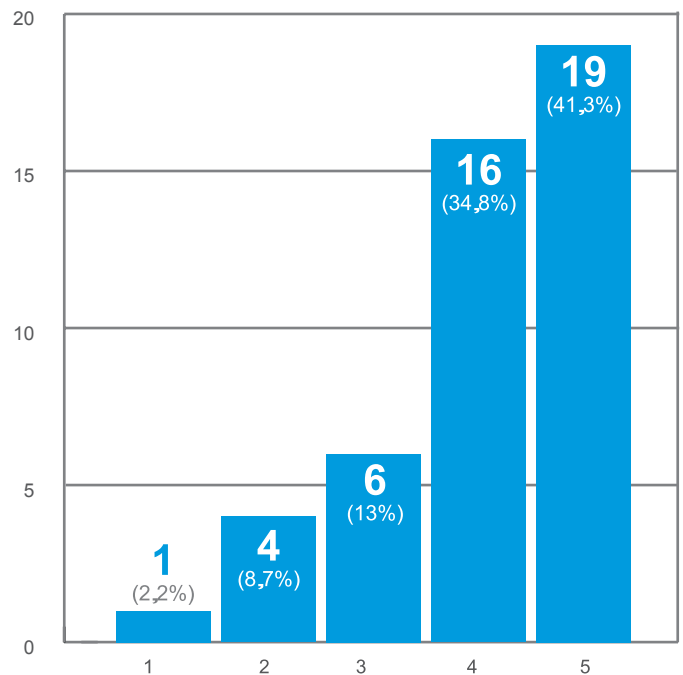
Multimodal connection to tourist attractions in town available from station

46 responses



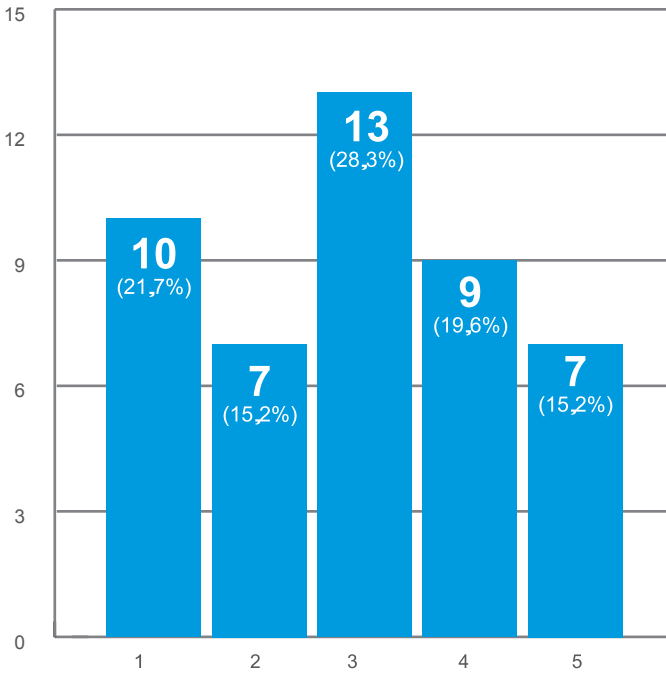
Convenient drop on - drop off areas for tourist services

46 responses



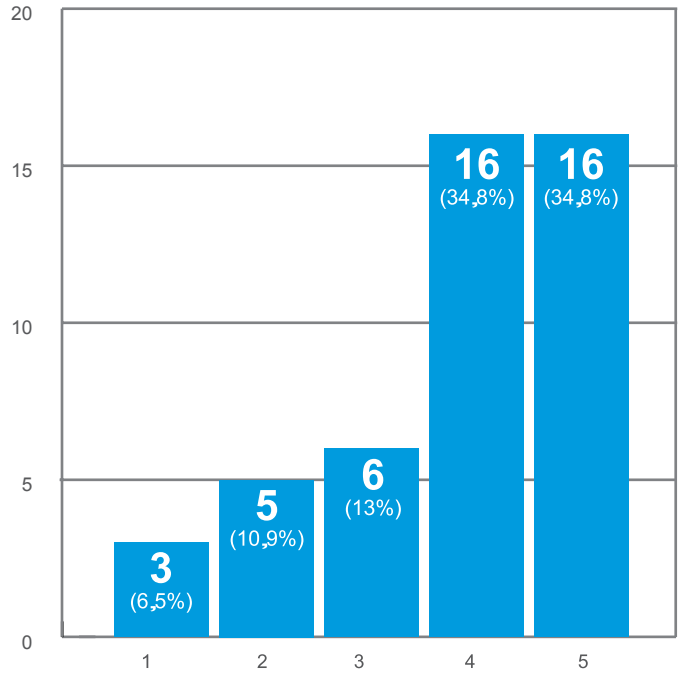
Bike parking area

46 responses



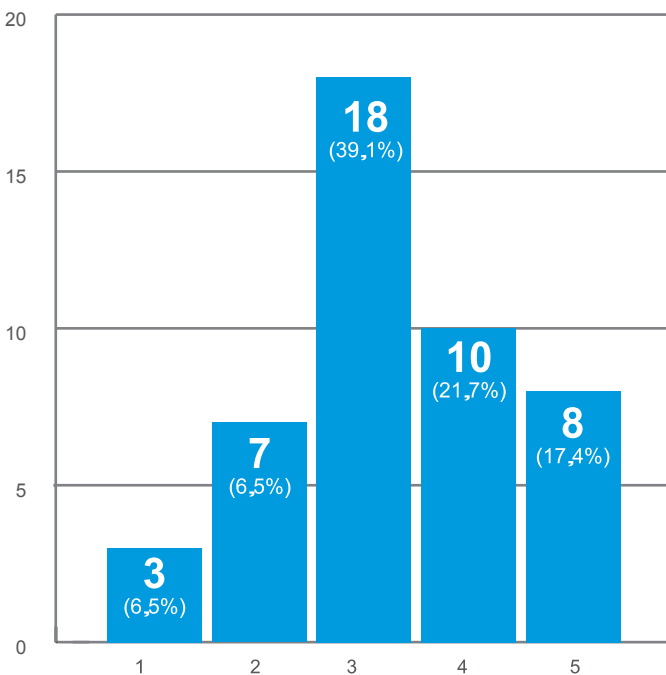
Tourist information booth with bilingual staff

46 responses



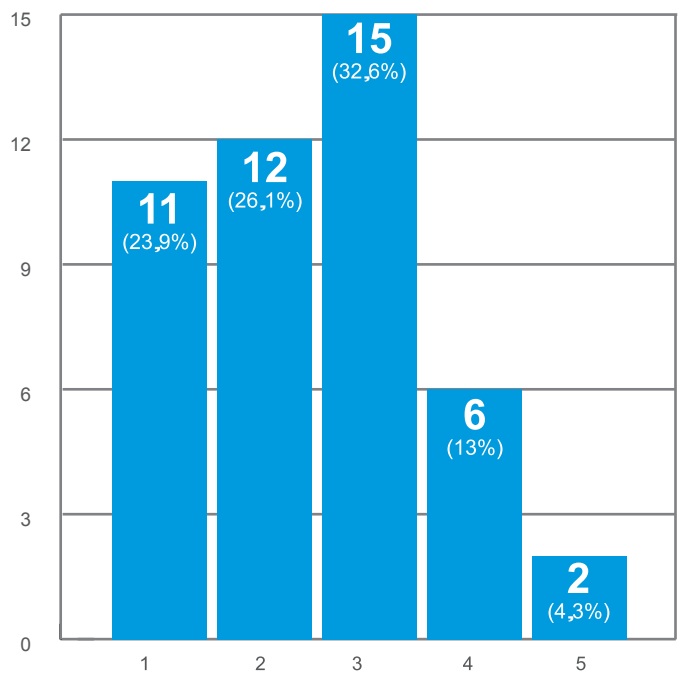
Departure and/or arrival station (buildings) are tourist attractions in themselves, are presented in a tourist manner with information, itineraries, etc.

46 responses



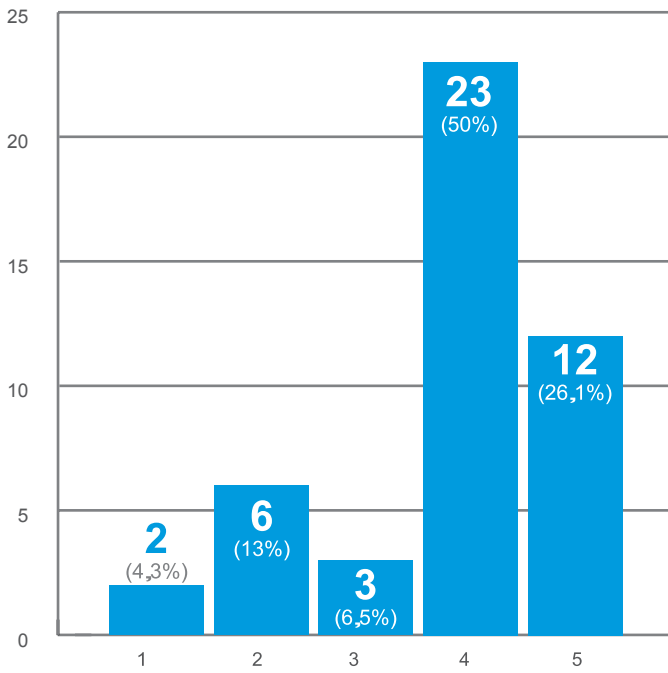
Cultural activities in the station, like music, exhibitions, etc.

46 responses



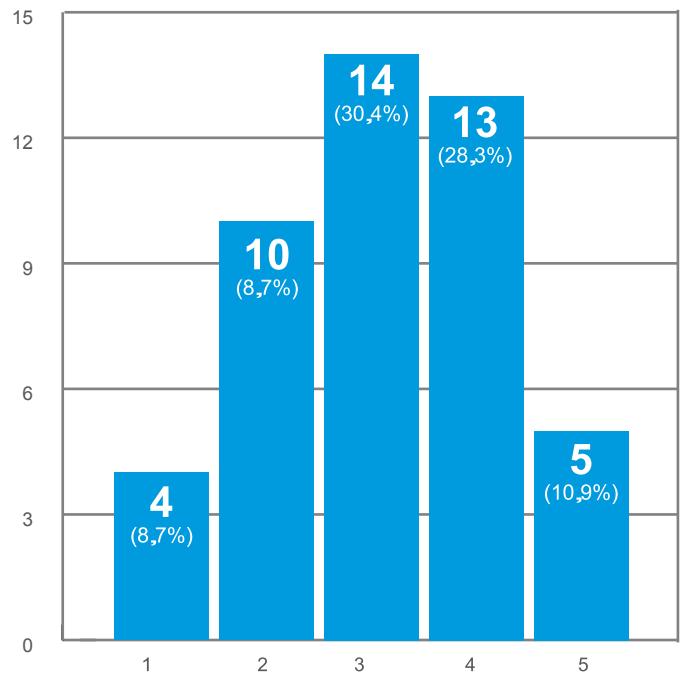
Wayfinding system includes tourist services

46 responses



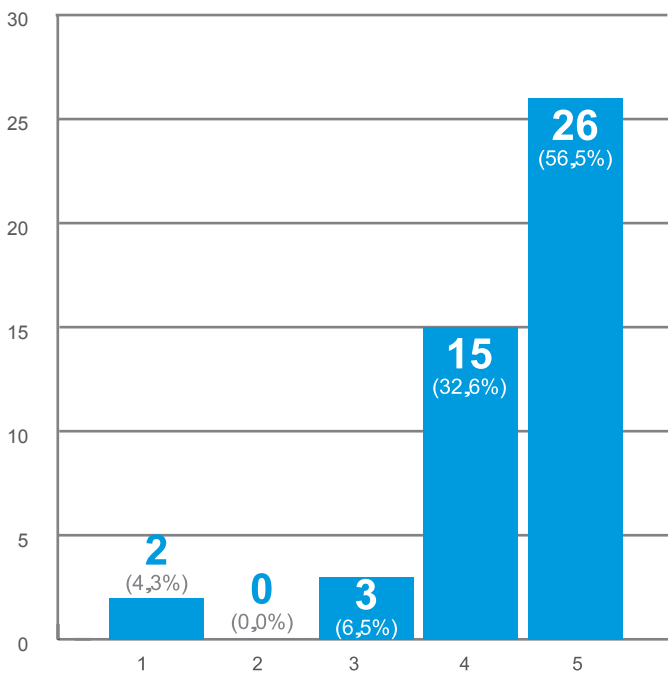
Concession stands include regional food/tourist literature/souvenirs

46 responses



Free Wifi in the station and platforms

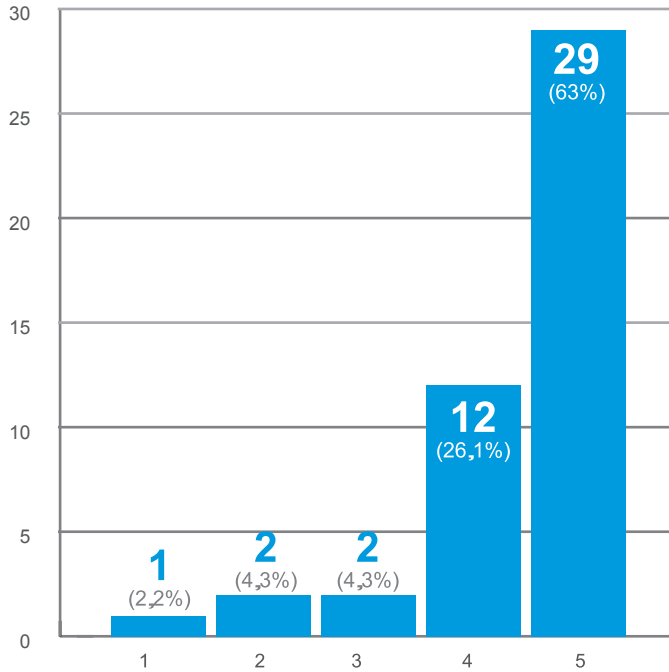
46 responses



TOURIST-FRIENDLY COACHES/TRAINS

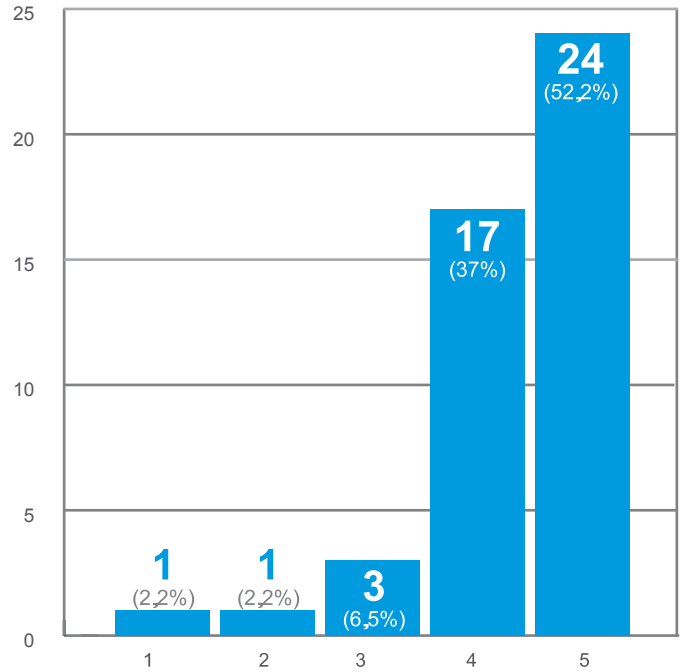
Free Wifi available on board the train

46 responses



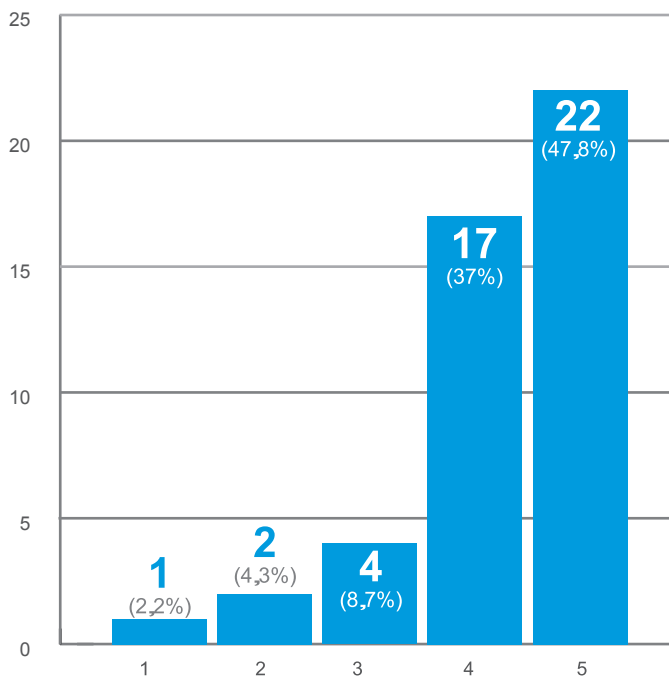
Power socket in every seat

46 responses



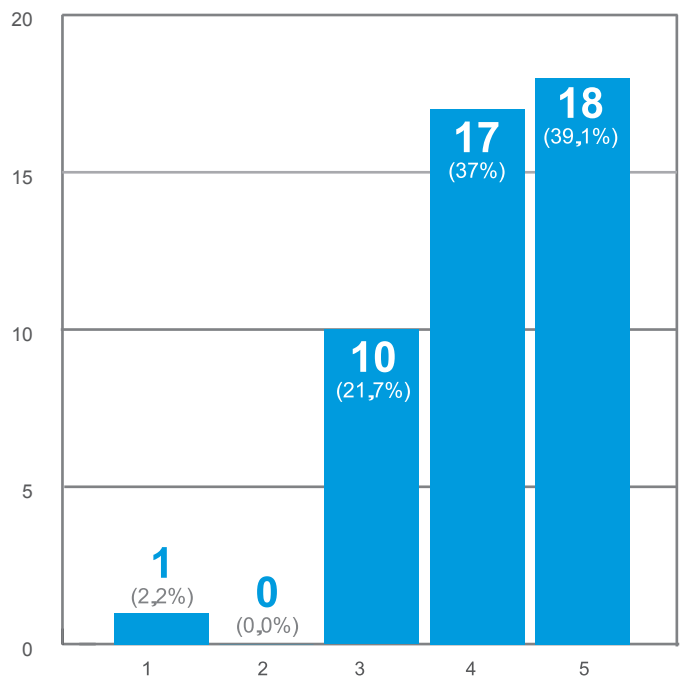
Group or family seats

46 responses



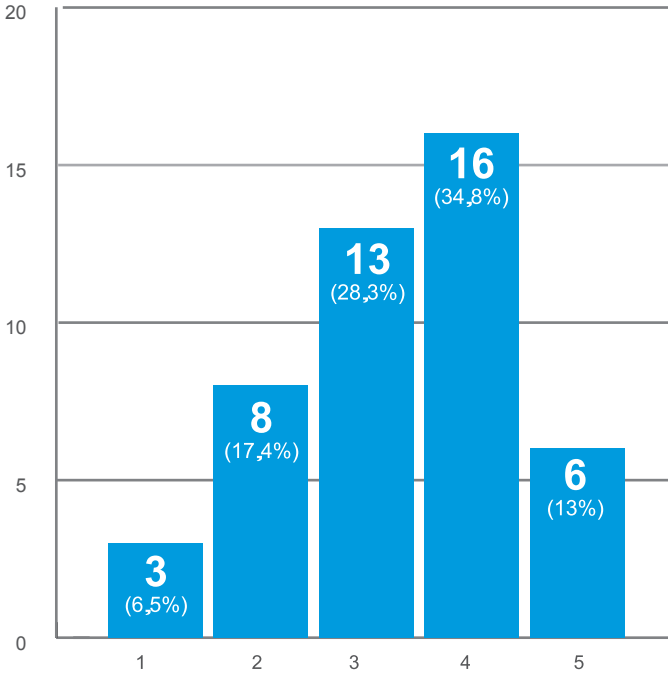
Panoramic windows

46 responses



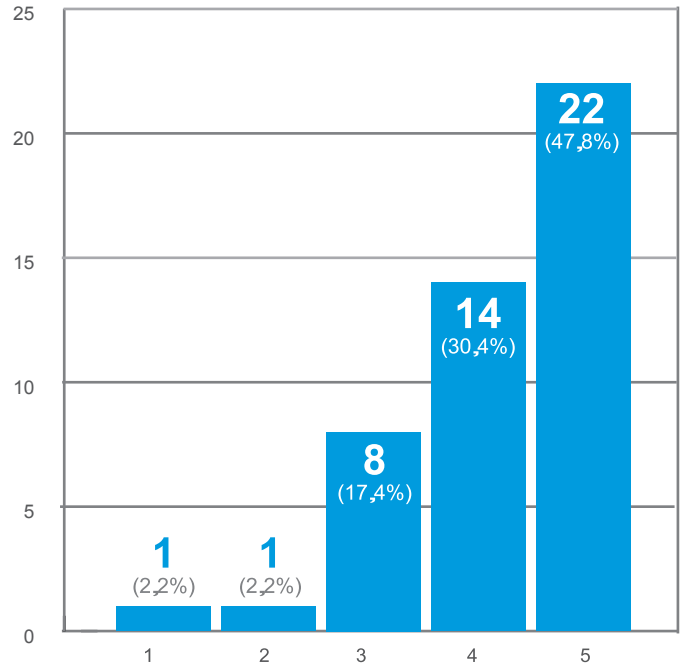
Observation Car

46 responses



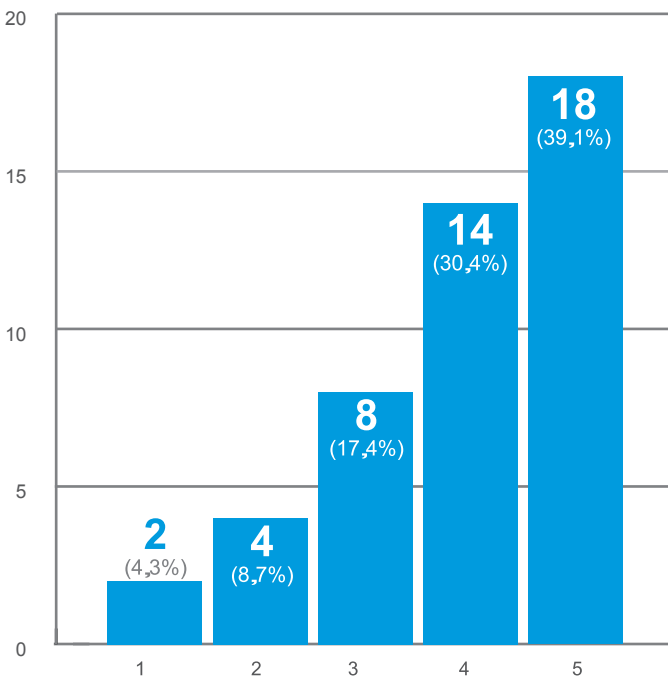
Food Service available on board in all services

46 responses



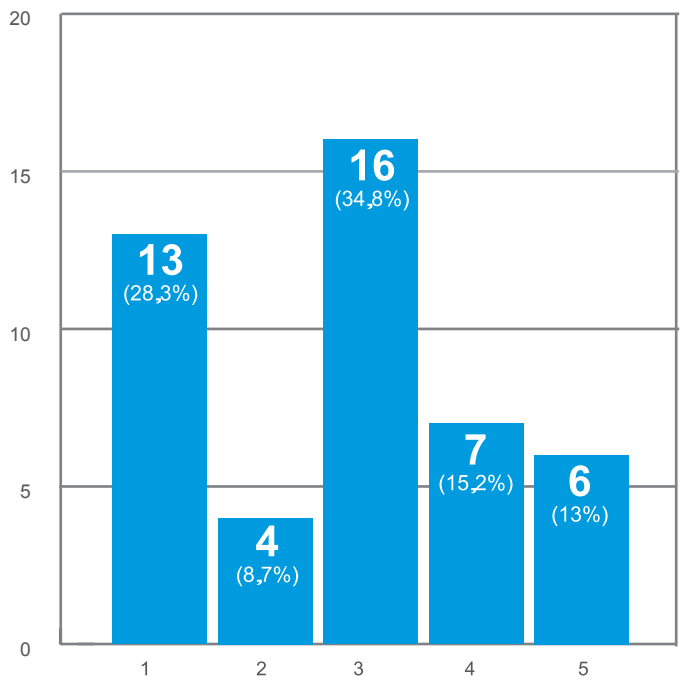
Vegetarian/Vegan or typical food options on board

46 responses



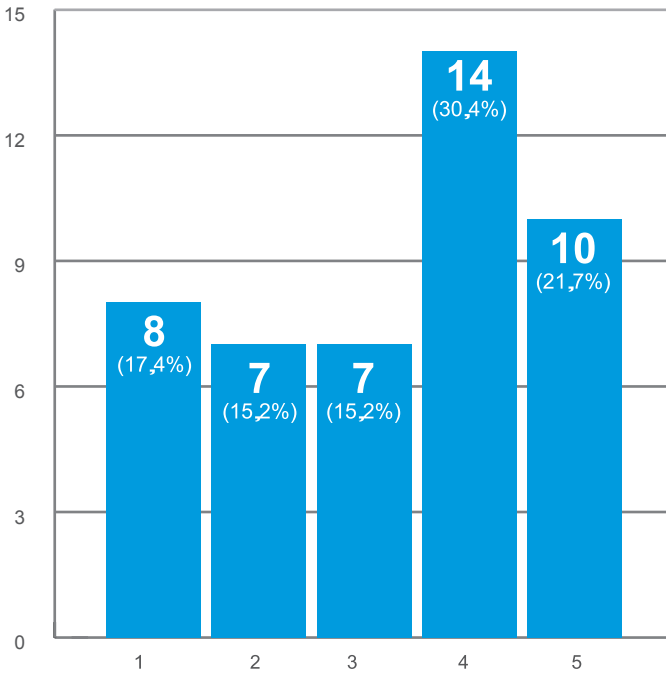
Kids' play area

46 responses



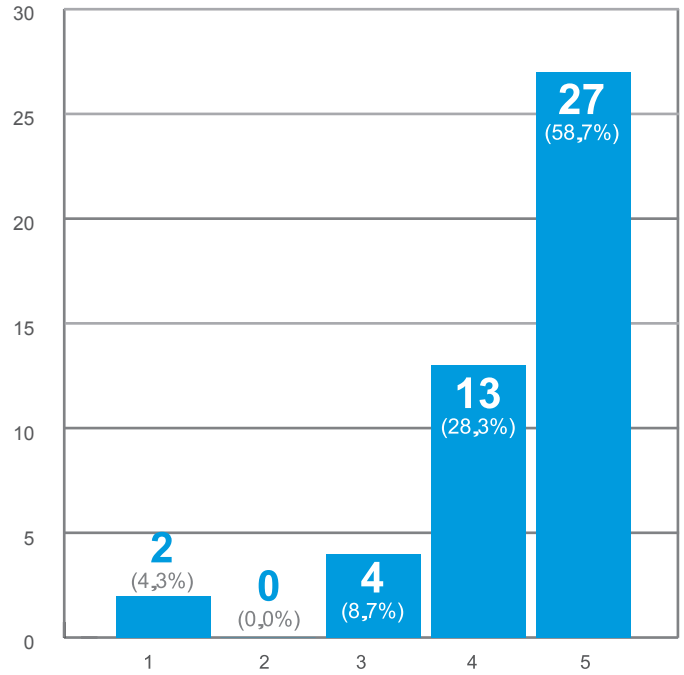
Bicycle racks

46 responses

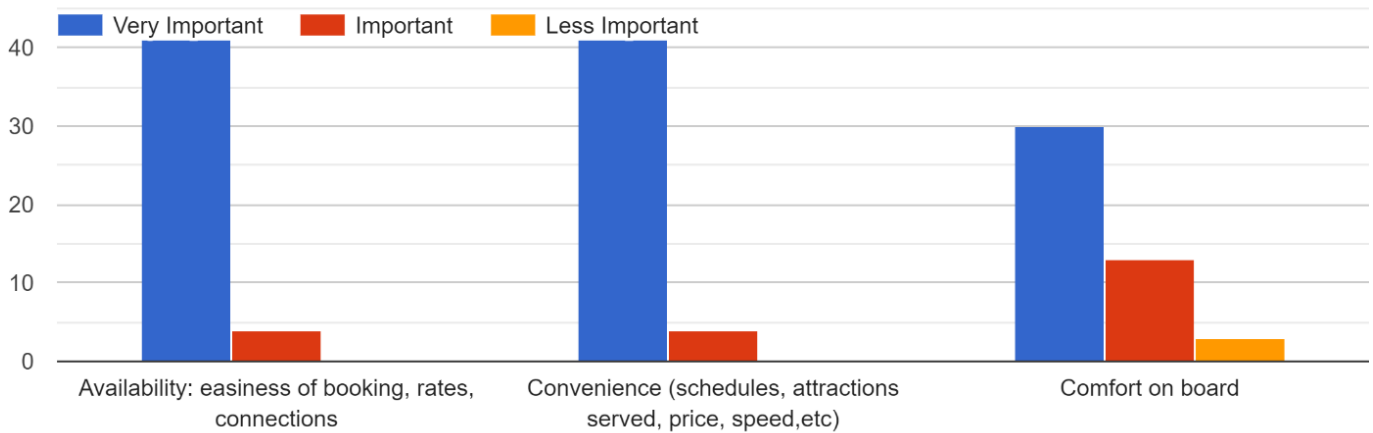


Clear, visible directional and situational signs for coaches/seats

46 responses



How relevant are each of these drivers in attracting leisure tourists to rail travel?



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTED FEATURES:

FOR RAILWAYS:

- Ease of group bookings, availability of different classes, better quality of local/ regional services & ability to book seats.
- Simplicity and convenience.
- Just make it easy and give value for money. If it costs more to take the train than fly, it will be difficult to attract people. Plus update train facilities - CLEAN toilets, availability of restaurant cars, wifi etc. Has to compete with planes and travelling in your own car...
- Specific reservation contact assigned and luggage service available for groups
- As a tour operator selling tour packages it is a challenge to deal with dynamic rates and uncertainty regarding the schedule. We calculate tours up to one year in advance. We cannot pay by credit card as we have LOTS of travellers and this creates a lot of extra work for our accounting department.
- We need an easy way to price/quote tickets in advance. If we are having to guess prices then it makes it nearly impossible to include rail journeys and especially if we don't have a one stop shop that can sell tickets to us.
- Porterage services for luggage
- As a DMC / wholesaler selling to a network of tour operators and travel agents it is important to have a payment to account facility without huge deposits up front
- Price inconsistencies put people off - have a standard fare that doesn't change every time you look at it. Also, make it very clear when a time and seats CAN be reserved and when it is an open ticket - people get very upset if they didn't realise there is no seat reservation and I find it a mission on some booking platforms to find this out. Also, Provide clear seat maps.
- We have recently introduced 6 or so Rail only trips that we operate year round- we are predominantly a coach touring company specialising in youth travel and carrying 40k predominantly English speaking travellers through Europe each year. Our first dip in to the market has been reasonably successful but our biggest challenge comes in securing the space on the trains and making the bookings- working with RailEurope we have found it to be a very tedious and slow booking process that does restrict us from upsizing our offering to people
- Itinerary must be available much earlier, especially for local trains
- Should be like the airlines with guarantees in place in the event of delays and cancellations.
- easy to see routes and possible stops along a train route allowing tourists or leisure travellers to explore a train line or route for example, increase tourism spend along the way.
- More cohesion in terms of policies across the different railway companies would be helpful. Also, rates policies, and processes not just for the public but for the travel industry, to make it easier for them to package, sell and operate rail itineraries
- Being able to plan ahead (as UIC schedules become available late in the year for next year), being able to purchase full itineraries that include regional/suburban train tickets
- Guaranteed operation of trains during strikes.
- Ability to purchase group tickets (ie over 15 pax) in one booking

FOR TOURIST RAIL ROUTES

- “on board guest relation managers” rather than “ticket conductors”
- Affordable price and smart timetables.
- Guides are not a deciding factor, you can find similar things on any app, but might add a nice feature
- luggage/porter service available for additional cost.
- Audio guides and info on screens are mostly needed on the typical tourist stretches. We also use a lot of trains connection i.e. different cities. In this case the train is a transport stretch, so guiding is not as relevant. Nor the scenic landscape. Although definitely a plus.
- Convenient routes and station locations.
- delivery of luggage from station to hotels or v.v and luggage storage on board of trains
- Competitive price.
- Having adequate storage area for people to be able to travel with luggage equivalent to that they would fly with- when a group of 25 or so people placed in same carriage are boarding trains luggage storage can be a major challenge.
- Luggage services for reasonable price
- Itinerary must be available and T+C must be group friendly
- Comfortable and simple to book night trains. Good quality food onboard is a must.
- Ease of booking and again, rates, policies and processes which work for the travel industry
- Seamless, step-free access on board, baggage storage, easy transfers between trains/platforms

FOR RAILWAY STATIONS

- Accessible stations (eg lifts to platforms to help manage luggage), clear & large screens with departure/ arrival information, clean easily located toilet facilities that are free to use.
- Why the hell only VIP lounge?! Comfort for everyone!
- Safe and clean and good readable signs and sufficient staff for assistance
- Clean and safe. Bathroom facilities need to be of a good standard. Free for those with train tickets.
- Customer service is key, tourists need friendly people to approach and have someone explain where they need to go/what to do etc.
- Clean facilities

- VIP lounges are not so important to the regular travel. It is important to get the basics right first. When a traveller arrives at a station (especially overseas), they want to be able to understand how to change trains or travel onwards from there. Signage and staff are really important. They will often want to use the toilet facilities, buy refreshments and maybe buy a newspaper. If changing trains, they may want to sit and wait somewhere (an area stations are often lacking) but not necessarily pay for a VIP lounge. Basic tourist info is helpful too. Concerts / exhibitions are nice but practicalities are the most important. If a traveller has a positive experience at a station and on the railways, they are more likely to travel more by train and recommend it to others. Some stations are not welcoming, provide poor toilet and refreshment facilities and nowhere to sit and wait
- Safety (stations should be spaces where everyone is welcome, there is no discrimination, spaces are well lit, and travellers are not heckled by cab drivers, bag handlers, et al.

FOR TRAINS/COACHES

- Either multilingual stop announcements, or visual displays showing which station. Eg SBB services.
- Comfortable seats. Option to sleep on trains. Adequate toilets. Good sound insulation to block out noise. Freebies that are included in the price (“free” food etc).
- Handy/Safe luggage storage options near seating
- Luggage storage areas or porter service
- Better luggage areas
- Cleanliness and well positioned windows for good views
- Groups and families must be able to sit together.
- Clean facilities
- Investment in rolling stock
- Bag storage, Quiet car availability, reserved seat enforcement



tourism
friendly
UIC TopRail

REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



8.1 List of Tables and Figures

Table 1 Main Drivers for Selecting a Mode of Transportation

Table 2 Benefits of a Classification and Categorization System for Tourist-Friendly Railway Services and Experiences

Figure 1 Classification of Railways

Figure 2 Proposed Classification for Tourist and Tourist-friendly Railways

Table 3: Criteria for a tourist-friendly Coach/Train

Table 4 Criteria for a tourist-friendly Line

Table 5 Criteria for a tourist-friendly station: Main Hall, Platforms and parking area

Table 6 Criteria for a tourist-friendly Station: Lounge

Table 7 Criteria for a tourist-friendly railway company

8.2 Bibliography and references

1 [Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourism \(toprail.org\)](https://toprail.org)

2 [Impact assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak on international tourism | UNWTO Sept.2022](#)

3 [Travel & Tourism Economic Impact | World Travel & Tourism Council \(WTTC\) Sept.2022](#)

4 https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/20220728_uic_and_mckinsey_bossting_passenger_preference_for_rail_final_online.pdf July 2022

5 [Traffic trends among UIC member companies in the first half of 2022 | UIC Communications Jan 27 2023](#)

6 Tala, Madalina & Schiopu, Andreea & Müller, Catalina. (2011). Bleisure - a new trend in tourism industry. Forum Ware International ISSN 1810-7028.

7 World Tourism Organization (2021), International Tourism Highlights, 2020 Edition, UNWTO, Madrid. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422456>

8 [Survey on passenger satisfaction with rail services - septiembre 2018 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)⁹ Sustainable Travel International. (n.d.) Carbon Footprint of Tourism. Retrieved from <https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

10 Sustainable Travel International. (n.d.) Carbon Footprint of Tourism. Retrieved from <https://sustainable-travel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

11 United Nations Environment Programme (2022). Emissions Gap Report 2022: The Closing Window — Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies. Nairobi. <https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2022>

12 Booking.com's 2021 Sustainable Travel Report affirms potential watershed moment for industry and consumers," Booking.com, June 3, 2021

13 [Responsible Transitions in Transport: ATTA and Switzerland Tourism Release New Research | Adventure Travel Trade Association \(adventuretravelnews.com\)](#)

- 14 [Home - Nightjet](#)
- 15 [Goodbye Air Travel? Imagining a Future Where Trains Replace Planes | The National Interest](#)
- 16 <https://www.german-way.com/travel-and-tourism/public-transport-in-germany/about-germanys-9-euro-ticket/>
- 17 [It's official: France bans short haul domestic flights in favour of train travel | Euronews](#)
- 18 [The Next Generation of Acela | Amtrak](#)
- 19 [20220901_high_speed_lines_in_the_world_v2.pdf \(uic.org\)](#)
- 20 UIC, 2020 [Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourism \(toprail.org\)](#)
- 21 <https://www.belmond.com/train>
- 22 [Luxury trains - Don't dream about travelling, travel to your dreams - Renfe](#)
- 23 [Premium panorama trains | Switzerland Tourism \(myswitzerland.com\)](#)
- 24 [Swiss Travel Pass – the All-in-one-Ticket for Switzerland | SBB](#)
- 25 [JAPAN RAIL PASS | ジャパン・レール・パス](#)
- 26 [FEDECRAIL - European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways](#)
- 27 [The World Alliance of Tourist Trams & Trains > Home \(wattrain.net\)](#)
- 28 UNWTO defines Leisure of statistical purposes at [SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf \(un.org\)](#)
- 29 https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/20220728_-_uic_and_mckinsey_bossting_passenger_preference_for_rail_final_online.pdf July 2022
- 30 Adventure Travel Trade Association “Responsible Transitions in Transport Report” retrieved at www.adventuretravel.biz, Sept 2022
- 31 [“Customer Experience by rail, State of the Art and Best Practices” UIC 2022](#)
- 32 “TopRail Travel Trade Exchange” Workshop with representatives of railways and tour operators held on Octobre 13th, in Brussels
- 33 European Travel Commission (ETC) & Eurail B.V. 2020 “White Paper - Rail transport for international tourism in Europe: Towards a shared vision for a more sustainable growth”.
- 34 World Tourism Organization (2015), Hotel Classification Systems: Recurrence of criteria in 4 and 5 stars hotels, UNWTO, Madrid
- 35 <https://guides.developer.iata.org/v213/docs/cons-hp15-airline-taxonomy-codeset>
- 36 UIC leaflet 180 proposes a categorization of rail stations. <https://uic.org/passenger/passenger-railway-stations/>
- 37 <https://uic.org/com/enews/article/uic-to-prail-members-and-etoa-european-tourism-association-held-an-online>
- 38 https://www.toprail.org/IMG/pdf/uic_guidelines_on_sustainable_tourism_2017_def.pdf
- 39 <https://uic.org/passenger/tourism-opportunities-for-railways/#TopRail-Publications>

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYS

16, rue Jean Rey - 75015 Paris - France

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 49 20 20

Fax +33 (0)1 44 49 20 29

E-mail: info@uic.org

Published by: UIC - Passenger Department - TopRail

Director of publication: Vanessa Perez Miranda

Printing: UIC

ISBN 978-2-7461-3278-8

Copyright deposit: May 2023

www.uic.org



#UICrail

