



## Subscribe To Our Newsletter

Read today's Portuguese stories  
delivered to your email.

[Sign up here](#)

[Home](#) / [Opinion](#) / [RENFE launches 360 km/h 'Bullet Train' in Spain - \(and beyond?\)](#)

# RENFE launches 360 km/h 'Bullet Train' in Spain - (and beyond?)

The 25th of May marked a major leap forward for very high speed rail.

By Paul Luckman, in [Opinion, Portugal](#) · 03 Jun 2023 · [5 Comments](#)



[RENFE](#) confirmed that they are receiving thirty units of the Talgo Avril, a train capable of up to 360 km/h on existing rail lines in Spain, Portugal and France. This means that this new train, which will enter into operation this November, could achieve Paris-Madrid in a little over three hours.

Bearing in mind that this is city centre to city centre it will be faster than Paris Madrid by air. Work it out for yourself. How long does it take to travel to the airport, parking, check-in, waiting, boarding and then getting back to the city centre on arrival? No contest, the Talgo Avril will be faster and a lot more comfortable. This new train, with its 380 kph capability is a game changer for rail competing with travel by air within Europe.

Two weeks ago I wrote about RENFE starting the process of entering onto the [Portuguese rail system](#). At that time the new Talgo Avril had not been announced. The Talgo Avril can operate on CP rail which is what is known as the Iberian gauge. The high-speed rail gauge is being developed, but this train can use either based on its ability to change the width of its wheels. This means they can be used in practically the entire Iberian railway network capable of travelling at up to 360 km/h on any gauge. On the 1,668 mm-Iberian gauge, the limit is 220 kilometres per hour. The

Talgo Avril, however, will hit speeds of up to 360 kilometres regardless of track gauge.

## Coming to Portugal soon?

It's hard, if not impossible, to imagine that RENFE don't plan to bring these ultra-high speeds into Portugal, completing the northern Europe to Portugal network of a real alternative to air travel. Reports vary about the progress of the Madrid-Lisbon high-speed rail link. The Lisbon to Porto route which is now being upgraded to high-speed rail standards has to be a target for RENFE. CP don't have a train, even on order, that can match the speeds of the Talgo Avril.

According to the Portuguese Government, the connection between Lisbon and the Spanish border could be fully operational in 2024.

Once completed this could mean, and I do stress **could** mean Paris-Lisbon in less than five hours. Concorde revolutionised travel between northern Europe and New York. This remarkable new train could revolutionise the connections between northern Europe and Portugal. By air northern Europe to Portugal is between two and a half and three hours. That's without getting to the airport check-in etc. This is serious competition to air travel.



## It can't get any faster than this

The Talgo Avril has to represent the fastest it can get with wheels on the rails. The next step would have to be maglev or similar, and that's years away from being constructed for any distance. The world's fastest non-Maglev train currently in service is China's Fuxing Hao CR400AF/BF, it can reach 400 kph, only a little faster than the Avril. Japan's bullet train achieves 360 kmh, the same as the new Talgo Avril.

The Talgo Avril holds the world speed record on the Iberian gauge at 360 km/h. This speed was reached on September 7, 2022, on the Ourense-Santiago de Compostela high-speed line, in Galicia. LE TRAIN, France's leading private high-speed train operator, and Talgo, signed an agreement last month in Bordeaux for the future development of a fleet of high-speed trains adapted to the French market and based on the leading high-speed Avril platform.

Apart from its very high-speed capability, the Talgo Avril has a low floor, so no step-up at the station. The train and the platform are at the same level. Much easier for wheelchairs, prams or baggage. Due to their high capacity and light overall weight, Avril trains minimise energy consumption and are highly efficient. They will reduce greenhouse gas emissions which makes the Talgo Avril the most sustainable mode of transport. This train is a game changer.

## **The possible routes**

RENFE have not, as yet, announced which routes the new train will serve, but there are obvious candidates. Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Malaga are almost certain. Linking Paris to Barcelona and Madrid must be high on their list, and there are no legal or technical obstructions. Linking Barcelona to Lisbon and the existing high-speed network in the north through to Porto are subject to the approval process and rail improvements that are already in process. Madrid Lisbon is a route waiting for the rails etc to be completed. Linking London to Paris is already being applied for. I personally believe that RENFE will apply to operate Lisbon to Porto, CP haven't even ordered trains for this route, RENFE have them, and much faster trains.

The 'bullet train' has arrived in Europe and with it new horizons for European travel.



Resident in Portugal for 50 years, publishing and writing about Portugal since 1977. Privileged to have seen, firsthand, Portugal progress from a dictatorship (1974) into a stable democracy.

*Paul Luckman*

***Disclaimer:***

*The views expressed on this page are those of the author and not of The Portugal News.*

## **Support The Portugal News**

We are proud to provide our readers from around the world with independent, honest and unbiased news for free – both online and in print.

Our dedicated team supports the local community, foreign residents and visitors of all nationalities through our newspaper, website, social media and our newsletter.

We appreciate that not everyone can afford to pay for our services but if you are able to, we ask you to **support The Portugal News by making a contribution – no matter how small.**

Single

Monthly

Annual



|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| €2.50 / month | €5.00 / month |
| Other         | €             |

*You can change how much you give or cancel your contributions at any time.*

Continue →

## Comments

This article is a joke. The Avril has been announced years ago. Yes, Renfe will finally be able to use the trains for commercial operation in the near future. But Madrid to Paris in 3 hours? Lol. As a rail enthusiast, I would love to see this happening. But even when LAV Burgos-Vitoria, Y Vasco and LGV Bordeaux-Dax-Spanish border are finished around 2030/2035, Paris-Madrid will be 6 hours at least. Which is still very competitive, by the way. The Avril can reach 360, yes, but will never actually do that in commercial operation, because the high speed lines in Spain and the rest of Europe are usually built for 300, some for 320 in France. Yes, I am excited for this train, but this article needs some work still, to be fair.

By **Marc** from Other on 03 Jun 2023, 11:46

I am super excited for any train and route upgrades that connect Portugal to the rest of Europe. I would happily take a train over flying any day!

By **Mechel** from Porto on 05 Jun 2023, 12:01

Yes, of course, but it will be only a dream in Portugal. There is still not a double rail from Lisbon to Santarém, never mind all the way to Porto. In fact the entire line would have to be realigned in Portugal to match the speeds of these trains. Let's be realistic and start with improving the line to Porto, and to Faro. The train from Lisbon to Faro requires 3 hours on the fastest train, but only for half the schedule. Add 30 minutes to the rest of schedule. Can you say slow speed rail? Let's be realistic, baby steps, start at home here in Portugal and make

improvement to our own rail lines. Any changes to the rail system will likely be very slow. But wait, breath deep, and enjoy a glass of the great Portuguese wines and all will be ok!

*By **Dirk Driedger** from Algarve on 06 Jun 2023, 12:21*

© 2023 The Portugal News - Established 1977

All content and design is copyright Anglopress Lda and The News Group of Newspapers