

The reputation of international train tickets is not as positive as it should be. International train tickets are considered expensive and difficult to book.

In reality international train tickets can be amazingly cheap. I have travelled in September of this year from Copenhagen to Amersfoort for 34,30 Euro. Before Covid-19 I have used twice the Eurostar leaving at 17.19 from St. Pancras in London to Amersfoort for 48 Euro. A plane between London and Amsterdam at that time of the day would have cost me at least 200 Euro. To these 200 Euro should be added the costs to get from the centre of London to an airport and the cost of travel from Amsterdam Airport to Amersfoort.

The problem is that many people are not aware of these possibilities or are unable to find the websites where you can find those cheap tickets.

A few recent examples of people I know:

- A politician who prefers to travel by train tried to book train tickets from The Hague to Rome for a holiday with her family. She did not manage to find the train tickets. She took the plane.
- A cousin of mine, a well-educated lady, was asked to speak at a conference in Dresden. It took her half a day wrestling with websites to book a ticket from her home town IJlst, in Friesland, to Dresden. She did not know that early booking might have saved her a lot of money, so she paid far too much.
- My daughter who lives in La Paz, and who is able to travel all over Latin America, was with her family in the Netherlands. She wanted to go to Brussels but she got stuck in the website of NS. I advised her to use the website of SNCB which proved to be easier. But who knows in the Netherlands that there are other websites?
- The Connecting Europe Express went last Sunday from Bad Bentheim to Amsterdam. Directors and staff of ProRail and NS were invited to join the train. Similar invitations went to the director of Rover. All those people are experienced travellers by train, so they knew perfectly how to get a ticket to the Dutch border-station Hengelo. But how to buy tickets from Hengelo to Bad Bentheim? That proved to be so complicated that everybody had paid a different price varying from 5 Euro minimum to 20 Euro maximum for the same short stretch between two border-stations.

If CER manages to solve this issue in a passenger friendly way the number of international train passengers will double in a short time.

*Arriën Kruyt, Member of the board of European Passengers Federation.*