

WARM UP

1 Which two countries does the 'Chunnel' link?

- From Folkestone in Kent to Coquelles in Pas-de-Calais
- 3 tunnels – two for trains and one service tunnel for maintenance and emergencies
- Tunnels are 50 km long, with 38 km under the sea at about 40 metres below the sea bed
- More than 300 million passengers so far

The 'Chunnel'

In the 19th century, various proposals – from the sensible (a tunnel to be used by horse drawn vehicles, lit by candles and with air shafts built above the height of the waves) to the weird (sections of tunnel moved into place by balloon) – were made to link England and France across the English Channel. In the 1970s a plan was adopted then abandoned. It was not until 1986 that the British and French governments finally agreed on the project for a high-speed rail link and work got underway in 1987. French and English tunnelling teams met and shook hands under the middle of the English Channel in 1990 as the two sections of the first tunnel were joined up. The Channel Tunnel – or 'Chunnel' as it is often known – was completed in 1994 and officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II and French President François Mitterrand on 6th May 1994.

Eurostar

The Eurostar is the name for the high-speed passenger trains that connect the UK to France and Belgium. It is possible to travel from London to Brussels in 2 hours and from London to Paris in 2 hours 15 minutes. Trains leave from St. Pancras International station in the north of London, and also from two stations in Kent. As well as Paris and Brussels, destinations include Calais, Lille and Disneyland Paris. The high frequency of services, the city-centre arrivals and departures and competitive rates mean the Eurostar is an excellent alternative to travelling by plane. In addition, carbon dioxide emissions can be as much as 80% less per passenger journey than when travelling by plane.



www.eurostar.com

Le Shuttle

Le Shuttle is the rail transport system which carries vehicles between the two countries. It is known as 'piggyback transport' as the cars, motorcycles, coaches and lorries are driven onto the trains for the journey through the tunnel. It carries 2.5 million cars and 1.5 million trucks every year. The Truck Shuttles are 800 metres long and can transport 32 heavy goods vehicles, while the Passenger Shuttles can carry 120 cars and 12 coaches. They both travel at 140 kilometres per hour.



www.eurotunnelgroup.com

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the texts and write down what these figures and dates refer to.

- 1 1986 _____
- 2 1990 _____
- 3 1994 _____
- 4 3 _____
- 5 50 km _____
- 6 300 million _____
- 7 2 hours _____
- 8 80% _____
- 9 800 metres _____
- 10 140 kph _____

SPEAKING

3 Discuss these questions in small groups.

- 1 Have you ever been through the Channel Tunnel? If so, what did you think?
- 2 Would you prefer to cross the English Channel by Eurostar train or ferry? Why?
- 3 How do you think the Channel Tunnel has improved the transport of freight and passengers between France and the UK?
- 4 Are there any large infrastructure projects (already built or planned) in your country? What do you think of them?