

Travel by train

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A few years ago Neil asked me to guest write a blog post about

my wife and I's decision to travel by train on holiday to Belgium after reading "No Oil in the Lamp" (original post here: <http://www.theoilamp.co.uk/?p=4007>). So when my wife and I made plans recently to go on holiday to Paris, we recalled our trip to Belgium and decided to go by Eurostar again. The difference being that now we would have an 18 month old accompanying us! How would we get on travelling with a toddler while still trying to be environmentally conscious on holiday? First a bit of background: I grew up in the US where train travel was not (and still is not) a commonly used mode of transportation for longer journeys or holidays. Car or airplane travel are often assumed to be the only two reliable modes of transportation in many parts of the country. So our initial Eurostar trip to Belgium came out of a desire to take holiday in a different way, one which consumed less oil and would cost our world less. This time around, we were still motivated to make choices that were kind to our planet, and we also felt that the train travel would be easier on our daughter and on us as parents. Having flown with her previously, we had already experienced that airplane travel was something to be survived with a young child, rather than enjoyed! Our experience travelling by train was highly positive and enjoyable for myself, my wife, and our daughter (and also therefore, I imagine, those sitting around us!). In addition to the environmental benefits of our journey, our comfort level as a family was far greater than it would have been on an airplane. Having more room at our seats and the ability to move around our car and between cars helped everyone feel a bit more comfortable and at ease. On our Eurostar journey in particular, it was easy to get up and walk around with our little one, despite travelling at high speeds. Our daughter enjoyed seeing (and calling to) the many sheep, cows, and horses we could see outside the train on journeys to and from London. On our return journey we were able to ride in a newer Eurostar train, which has a redesigned cabin (shown in picture) and can travel up to 10% faster than their older



trains.

During our holiday in Paris, we found it quite easy to

continue making eco-friendly decisions for our daily wants and needs. There are many opportunities to buy local and organic foods at supermarkets and pop-up markets around town. Our location in the city allowed us to either walk to most places or make use of Paris's excellent metro system. And while we did have to forego our cloth nappies for disposables for the week, we were able to easily find nappies and wipes that were produced with minimal chemicals or additives. I had assumed that being out of our normal everyday life would mean that our eco-options would be reduced or diminished, and I was pleasantly surprised for that not to be the case! One sobering moment while visiting Paris is that the same week we were there on holiday, my home country the USA withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement signed in 2015. It was heart-breaking to hear the news, and being in Paris that same week gave the announcement a greater sense of gravity and depth. I am very grateful that no one we encountered in our time there openly criticised us for our home country's decision! While we wait and hope for the USA to reconsider its position on fighting climate change, we are glad that we were able to

fight future climate change through the small choices we made over the week. Overall we loved our holiday to Paris, and particularly enjoyed making use of train travel to get to and from our destination in Paris. I would highly recommend train travel with little ones and would especially prefer it over airplane travel. While we have done our best as new parents to maintain daily life practices that involve cleaner, less wasteful living, it is still a learning process with plenty of missteps and the need for grace for ourselves. I hope that someday we are able to effectively share with our daughter our beliefs and values about God's call to us to care for creation. Perhaps by then she will be able to read Andy and Neil's next book, "No Oil in the Lamp - For Kids"! But I am grateful that we will have great memories as a family together on holiday from this trip, and I hope that we can continue to learn how to enjoy time away together while also caring for our world. Tim



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