

The Graduation Gift

When Shawna opened the envelope at her graduation party, it seemed too good to be true: a trip to Europe! Her grandparents had often discussed the benefits of travel and encouraged Shawna to travel to learn more about the world around her. They had taken Shawna with them on some of their journeys and she had also traveled with her parents on summer vacations and business trips. These trips had allowed her to see some beautiful and exciting places, but now she was going to faraway places to do things she had only dreamed about.

After the excitement of the graduation party was over, Shawna settled down to carefully read the letter her grandparents had written describing their travel gift. They were going to buy her a round-trip airline ticket from her home in Montgomery, Alabama, to her choice of either London or Paris. They also were going to give her the money to buy a Eurailpass and her choice of a ticket to travel on the Eurostar through the Chunnel between London and Paris or a ticket on one of the ferries that cross the English Channel. In addition, they had included a check for \$1,000 to help pay for some of her other expenses.

Shawna knew it was late, but she couldn't wait to call her grandparents and thank them for the gift. When she asked them what airline to call and which one of the channel-crossing options to take, they simply told her that the experiences to be gained from planning her travels were part of the gift. With this in mind, Shawna immediately hopped on the Internet and then contacted Derik, her mother's travel agent, the next day for help in designing her itinerary.

During her first meeting with Derik, she learned that she would be using many different types of transportation while on her trip. She could begin by driving, riding a bus, or flying on a small commuter airline to Atlanta. Once there, she could fly directly to either London or Paris. After arriving in Europe, Shawna would have several choices of air, rail, and bus transportation. In addition, there was still the question of how she should cross the English Channel between England and France. Derik answered all of Shawna's questions, but his answers led her to ask only more questions. Shawna soon began to realize that there were several ways to meet her travel needs and she wanted to know more. Provided with a whole new understanding of transportation options, she and Derik began to discuss and plan the details of her upcoming trip. Her grandparents were right; planning her trip was a learning experience.



Ferries form one of the many links in the transportation system. Photo by Thomas Sun