



Passenger rail service is an important transportation mode in many countries. Photo by Cathy Hsu

feeders to major hub airports. In fact, in some city pairs, transit time is shorter via Amtrak service than by air service.

Similar steps such as rail passes ([CANRAILPASS](#)), fly/drive packages, special tour packages, and lodging partnerships have been taken by VIA Rail Canada to enhance customer service and ridership.

Asian and European Rail Service Blazes Ahead

Although train travel has declined in Canada and the United States, it has continued to be an important mode of intercity transportation in Asia and Europe. At present, the countries with the largest number of train passengers are China, Germany, India, and Japan. Heavy population concentrations and attention to roadbeds and tracks dedicated solely to passenger traffic have led to the development of high-speed rail service. China, Japan, Korea, France, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, and Spain are just a few of the countries where passengers can travel by train at speeds averaging up to 220 miles per hour (350 kilometers per hour). The technology for high-speed rail travel is continually evolving, and trains that can travel at speeds of up to 270 miles per hour are being put into service.⁴ The popularity of high-speed rail in Taiwan has actually caused the bankruptcy of several domestic airlines; and the surviving airlines no longer offer routes that duplicate the service of the rail. The rail service between Taipei (in the North) and Kaohsiung (in the South) takes about 90 minutes at a cost of \$50, whereas the flight time was about 60 minutes at a cost of \$100 while it was in operation.

Between major population centers within European countries, train travel has also become so fast and efficient that it is often more convenient and less expensive than travel by plane when travel to the airport, check-in, and baggage handling times are considered.⁵ By comparison rail service in Canada and the United States is more expensive and very difficult to piece together for long distance journeys. Examples in Table 6.3 compare the competitive nature of train and air travel between key European cities.