



EURAIL PASS SALES CHALLENGED BY ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Utrecht, Netherlands, 18th March 2009 – The Eurail Group G.I.E. has reported a modest drop in Eurail Pass passengers triggered by the global economic downturn, but expects a full recovery in the coming years.

The Eurail Group's passes offer flexible travel throughout Europe to overseas visitors. With a total of just over 433,000 customers, passenger numbers in 2008 were down by 7.5% in comparison to 2007.

"We are not experiencing an unwillingness to travel, rather a decline in travel due to people having to prioritize their budgets. For many, holidays abroad need to be put on hold. Once the market picks up, we expect sales to grow again," explained Ana Dias e Seixas, the Eurail Group's Marketing Director.

"The Eurail Group and its authorized general sales agents foresee that passenger numbers will continue to fall in the immediate future. Subsequently, we're concentrating on offering additional customer benefits to make the product more attractive, so we're ready when the travel market recovers and people start taking trips abroad again. We expect a modest performance in 2009, but everything depends on the evolving economic situation."

North America is the biggest market (50% of the market share), followed by the Asia-Pacific region (38%), which explains the challenging times Eurail Passes currently face. Signs of the weakening world economy are especially prevalent in the United States as well as in South Korea. However, several of the key markets are still showing considerable growth. Sales from Japan, Australia, and Canada were up by between 4 and 8%. A special global promotion launched during the fourth quarter of 2008 helped generate additional sales.

Whilst most customers (around 57%) still wish to discover as much of Europe as possible, opting for a pass covering 3 to 5 connecting countries, or the classic Eurail Global Pass, which covers 21 countries, it's clear that times are changing. Launched in 2006, the relatively new Eurail One Country Pass range has become an important product line for Eurail with market trends favoring shorter trips to fewer destinations. Sales of this product are up by 14%.

Traditional western European destinations such as France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the Benelux region remain favorites for visitors – however, there is also an increased interest in discovering Eastern Europe. Consequently, the Czech Republic was introduced in the Global and Select Pass schemes this year, and Bulgaria became a One Country Pass member.

The Eurail Group considers climate change a serious issue and believes that passes can be used as a tool to stimulate environmentally friendly travel. Rail travel also has many other benefits: not only are trains safe, convenient and efficient, a well-planned trip can be very cost effective with one pass being used to visit multiple destinations across the whole of Europe. With today's modern high-speed connections, journey times are surprisingly quick. A direct train ride from Berlin to Munich covering 410 miles takes under six hours; from Copenhagen to Stockholm, you can travel 400 miles in just over five hours; and Paris to Bordeaux (a 350-mile journey) takes a mere three hours.

The Eurail Group offers a range of rail passes to suit all itineraries. Eurail Passes are available from the following authorized sales channels: ACP Rail International (www.eurail-acprail.com); Eurail (www.eurail.com); Flight Centre (www.flightcentre.com); Octopus Travel (www.OctopusTravel.com); Rail Europe (North America: www.raileurope.com, rest of the world: www.raileurope.fr), and STA Travel (www.statravel.com).

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