



COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE

SNCF Transilien
PARIS, 12 MAY 2016

VERSAILLES ON BOARD: NEWLY RENOVATED TRAINS COMBINE CULTURE AND COMFORT ON THE RER C LINE SERVING THE PARIS REGION

On May 25, newly refurbished trains decorated with scenes from Versailles will begin operating on the RER C line linking Paris with Louis XVI's iconic palace. Building on the success of the first five Versailles-themed trainsets, inaugurated four years ago, SNCF Transilien, STIF and the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles have joined forces to create coaches featuring scenes from this masterpiece of French Baroque art.

METICULOUS DETAIL

The scenes chosen for this second set of Versailles trains evoke the opulence of the royal estate. Adapted to the layout of the train, they have been streamlined to complement a new interior design filled with colour and light, giving passengers a whole new perspective inside each carriage.

The renovation work was performed at SNCF's Technicentre in Saint-Pierre-des-Corps near Tours, where specialists created trompe-l'oeil effects by applying a high-tech plastic film—an ultra-specialized task requiring extreme precision. With 941 visuals per trainset, installing the film is like working a puzzle: each piece must go into its proper place and dovetail with the pieces around it.

The SNCF employees who applied the film were specially trained to achieve the accuracy they would need to complete their task successfully, and the painstaking process involved ten full-time employees: one engineer, one

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manager/quality control supervisor, and eight technical specialists.

SCENES FROM VERSAILLES

Palace gardens

The new edition gives more prominence to the palace gardens, including the spectacular Latona Fountain, inaugurated in May 2015 after a two-year restoration.

Latona Fountain

With support from Fondation Philantropia, the Latona Fountain and the surrounding flowerbeds were returned to their original splendour in May 2015, thanks to a remarkable restoration process requiring a unique combination of skills and expertise.

The fountain was created by landscape designer André Le Nôtre in 1665 and embellished by architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart. It sits in the centre of Le Nôtre's Grande Perspective—the main axis of the gardens—and is probably the best-known work in the palace gardens. Surrounded by flowerbeds and crowned by a superb marble sculpture of Latona, mother of Apollo, it also features water spouts and figures of peasants and animals in gilded lead.

King Louis XIV, who chose Apollo as his royal emblem, ordered that the fountain be built in the centre of his garden to commemorate the sun god's childhood. To create it, his expert craftsmen transformed an existing pond from the time of Louis XIII, gradually adding water jets and sculptures by the brothers Gaspard and Balthazard Marsy. Between 1687 and 1689, Hardouin-Mansart produced the fountain in its current form, rotating the statue of Latona 180 degrees (to look down the main axis) and placing it atop a marble pyramid.

The Latona Fountain also plays a central role in the hydraulic system at Versailles, linking the ponds and fountains above it—the Water Garden and the Battle of the Animals, on the terraces—with the water features below: Apollo's Chariot, Bacchus, Mirror and Roman Ladies fountains, as well as the fountains in the Dauphin, Girandole, Obelisk and Colonnade gaves. In short, all of the ponds and fountains in the gardens are completely dependent on the Latona Fountain for their water.

New perspectives

The new trains also recreate the world-famous Hall of Mirrors and Hall of

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Battles, as well as less familiar, more intimate parts of the palace, including the Queen's Room in the Petit Trianon, the Temple of Eros, the Belvedere on Marie-Antoinette's Estate, the peristyle (or columned courtyard) of the Grand Trianon, and Louis XVI's library.

These magnificent trompe-l'œil scenes were selected by Paris region commuters in 2009, in a poll marking the 30th anniversary of the RER C regional rail line.

STRONG PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS TOURISTS AND PARIS REGION

Every day the five Versailles trains will stop at the 36 stations on the RER C line, which runs through five French *départements*: Paris, Hauts-de-Seine, Val-de-Marne, Essonne and Yvelines. Of all the lines in the SNCF Transilien regional network, RER C has the most tourism appeal, serving an array of major attractions in Greater Paris and carrying some 50,000 tourists per day—or about 10% of the passengers for the entire line.

For SNCF Transilien, the Versailles trains are a way to improve the travel experience for all passengers, be they tourists or commuters taking the RER C to school or work. The project also underscores the advantages of rail for leisure travel in the Paris region and highlights the convenience, environmental benefits, comfort and economic value of travelling by train.

For the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles, the trains are a creative way to promote the palace as a destination, not only for tourists but for residents of the Paris region. For passengers, bringing Versailles on board offers an escape for commuters—and a way for tourists to anticipate or extend their visit to the palace.

In 2015 some 7.43 million people visited the Estate of Versailles, and over 10 million toured the Grand Parc. Some 80% of visitors to the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon come from outside France, but the proportion is reversed for the gardens, with the Paris region accounting for 80% of visitors.

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Library of Louis XVI, King's apartment in the palace (photo: Maxime Huriez)



Queen's chamber in the Petit Trianon, with a view of the Temple of Eros (photo: Maxime Huriez).



Interiors of the Belvédère in Marie-Antoinette's estate. (photo : Maxime Huriez)

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Ceiling of the Hall of Mirrors
(photo: Maxime Huriez)



Impression of the trellises in the
Versailles and Trianon gardens
(photo: Maxime Huriez)



Impression of the topiaries and
views from the Gardens of
Versailles (photo: Maxime
Huriez)

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