

ICTM “Music and Minorities” Study Group Symposium. July 4-8

University of Rennes, Brittany.

HOW TO GET THERE?

Demat d’an holl,
Hello everyone,

The Rennes Symposium Local Committee have put together for you a detailed “How to get there” memo, summarizing what we think are useful information needed for you to prepare your trip to Rennes, Brittany. In order to make things even easier on you, this memo has many tested links every time it was possible to get one.

Also, consider that all the recommendations we make in this memo are experience based.

Just like you, we are international travelers for many years, and every options presented have been tested. So this is not just a copy and paste “How to get there” article from some tourist office. This is especially for you ICTM members, a “home-made” one, based on our own experience. If you have any question, concern, please let us know. We’ll answer you at once and will give you our best advice.

As you all know too well, safety concerns in big airports are prompting delays and extra checking. Allow for extra time in your schedule, consider alternative options if you can. It is in that spirit that we put together the 3 options detailed in this memo. Starting an international meeting with a bad traveling experience is always frustrating. We know how it feels.

It is our hope that this memo will allow you to choose what works best for you with all the needed details in hands.

We’ll make a special note later about French customs that you’ll have to go through at some point... We think you’ll find it useful.

In the meantime, here are the 3 different options to come to Rennes, Brittany:

Option A: ALL FLIGHTS

Book a flight to Rennes, Brittany. You'll arrive in Rennes International Airport (RNS) situated in St Jacques, in the immediate suburb of Rennes.

As a number of European cities have direct flights with Rennes, this might be worth checking:

<http://www.rennes.aeroport.fr/en/destinations/map>

Note that in many cases, but not all (see direct flights on the link above and Option C of this memo), you'll have to change airplane at Roissy Charles de Gaulle (CDG) airport or Orly airport (ORY) in Paris, France.

Going through the London airports, for example, to Rennes is possible. You'll need to change airport if you transit through London Heathrow (LHR) or London Gatwick (LGW) to South End airport (SEN) or Stansted (STN), London City (LCY) from where you'll board your flight to Rennes or Nantes (NTE), the other big airport in Brittany with many direct flights all over Europe, situated 90 min south of Rennes (this is detailed in Option C).

Option B: FLIGHT and TRAIN

Arriving in a city by train is most of the time more comfortable for you generally arrive at the heart of a city and therefore are able to hit the ground rolling. It will be the case in Rennes. From the station you are 10 minutes away by tube from the University where the Symposium will take place, and just minutes away from your hotels, some in walking distances.

Book a flight to Roissy Charles de Gaulle (CDG) airport where you'll catch a bullet train (TGV) to Rennes, Brittany. (A similar option is detailed in Option C if you elect to arrive through Nantes airport and then take the train to Rennes).

There is railway station within CDG airport. It is a less than 3 hours trip at high speed that will take you to the heart of the city. Careful through, this train is running 3 or 4 times a day at most. In Rennes railway station, there is an easy connection by tube, and again, some of our hotels are in walking distances.

This plane + high speed train formula is quite popular and very efficient. Yet, these trains tend to be sometimes crowded, especially with these big suitcases that seem to want to travel with us everywhere!

Make sure you have a decent margin between landing time and your train at CDG. Less than an hour between your scheduled landing time and your train is very dicy! A good rule of thumb is 90 minutes between the two. This will give you some buffer, in case of a small delay with you flight, and then the usual luggage collection-custom-passport controls drill...then you'll have to find and follow the train signs to get to the airport TGV station. Please, if you are not familiar with CDG airport, ask in which direction is the TGV railways station before

starting to walk. Trying to find your way on your own might be risky...as the signs for the TGV station are scarce and somehow not as consistent and logical as one international traveler might need.

“SNCF” is the name of the French railways. TGV stands for “Train à Grande Vitesse”, the local for “bullet train”. Signs might use any of those acronyms with a tiny train logo...Book your ticket (please see our note about SNCF booking policy below) on the SNCF website (get to their English version which is simpler to use than the cumbersome French version). The name of the Roissy Charles De Gaulle railways station where you’ll depart is “*Paris cdg airport*” and you’ll need to go to “*Rennes*”.

<https://uk.voyages-sncf.com/en/#/>

There is another train station where you can take a train to Rennes. It is called *Paris Montparnasse station*, located in downtown S-WParis (you are at the far N-E from the city some 90 min away). The good news is that from this station a train leaves for Rennes every hour or so. High speed trains will take you in less than 2 hours to Rennes. The bad news is that you’ll need to take a shuttle bus (white Air France buses) from the airport to the Paris Montparnasse railways station, again, a good 90 minutes ride assuming no major traffic. It runs every 30 min. Unless you have some business in Paris, or want to spend some time there prior to our symposium in Rennes, our advice is to try first to catch a train at the airport railways station and avoid downtown Paris at all costs, especially during summer holidays, and on a WE!

If you arrive in Paris through Orly airport, you’ll have to get to the Paris Montparnasse railways station to catch a train to Rennes, Brittany.

The Air France shuttle line 1 will take you there. Some detailed information here:

<http://www.aeroportsdeparis.fr/en/passengers/access/paris-orly/public-transport>

Note about the SNCF (French railways) booking policy:

You might find yourself unable to book a train or even look at a possible timetable if you try to do so more than 3 months in advance! This is plain silly, but it’s the way it is despite all the trouble it generates. Same thing about platform announcement. The SNCF is claiming they will announce the platform number for your train 25 minutes before departure...well, do not panic if it is just 15 minutes before. Keep an eye on the board and trust your train number. In many cases, trains for Brittany are made of actually two connected trains complete with their own engines. 1 train, 2 train numbers. The reason for that is that upon arrival in Rennes, they will split the train in two, one will continue toward Northern Brittany (Brest), the other one to Southern Brittany (Quimper). So while you will ride in the good direction and will definitely arrive where you want (Rennes in your case), you might be in the wrong part of this coupled “double train”, resulting in not having your seat, and having to travel in non-ideal conditions and face grumpy travelers requesting “their seat”. The spectacle of arguing travelers ticket in

hands usually ends when one realizes he or she is NOT is the good train, for the same coach number and the seat number...Avoid that frustration is double checking the train number you board.

These are very long trains. It can take you some walking in the station before reaching your coach in the right train. Make sure you board the right one (numbers are digitally showing on the side of the coaches), but again, check the train number before trusting the coach number, because you'll not be able to get from one part to the other of these double trains. Experience rules!

OPTION C: BEATING THE CROWD

You want to enjoy your trip with less stress, are willing to avoid the big crowds, the big cities, the huge airports in summer holidays, on WE as much as possible and get the smart way around?

Then Option C is possibly your option.

Indeed, willing to arrive directly in Brittany while avoiding Paris stations and airports is a smart idea, and perfectly doable with Option C. And you can do it in different ways:

By air:

As mentioned in Option A, you have a possibility to fly from London to Rennes through the South End airport (SEN).

Travelers from the UK, or who chose to land in London, this is a direct way to land in Rennes International Airport. You can book one of the two daily flights available both ways.

<http://londonsouthend.airportdirecttravel.co.uk/flight-results>

By train:

Crossing the channel using the world famous “tunnel under the channel” is a life time experience. There is at least once a day a train going from London St Pancras station going to Rennes Station through Lille where you'll have a short connection (around 25 min) in the station, same platform most often.

While boarding this train in St Pancras looks really like you are boarding a flight (very strict checking, please no pocket knife in your luggage, even it was in your checked luggage on the

plane, here you'll have to travel with it. So your precious pocket knife, even with your name on it, even it is an innocent tiny knife only good to sharpen pencils will be seized and destroyed mercilessly...sigh! The English police has a zero tolerance about it. Don't expect any exception, no arguing or you'll be arrested, plain and simple). Beside this, it is a smooth, relaxing, interesting 5:30 hours trip from station to station. You have a restaurant in the train, if you are so inclined to have lunch or dinner under the sea. This unique trip is taking you from "great" Britain, to the "tiny" Britain, "Brittany", for being populated by the same Celtic tribes, this was and for a long time the way people would make the difference between the two lands, as the Channel never was (and never will be for us!) any kind of obstacle, even less a "border" for these seafaring nations. Today, crossing the channel "under the sea" is possible.

Careful when booking on the SNCF website, you will see that many of these London-Rennes or Rennes-London trains have a connection in Paris where you'll have to change stations (a guaranteed absolute nightmare, especially with luggage!). Make sure you chose, both ways, a Lille connecting trip (not a Paris one!), like in this example:

<http://uk.voyages-sncf.com/choose-your-outbound-journey#>

By air + train:

Nantes, the capital of the Dukes of Brittany, is located about an hour or so by train from Rennes.

It has the largest airport in Brittany and operates many companies with direct flights. If you are coming from a European city (Dublin, Brussels, Amsterdam, London, Manchester, Madrid, Milano, Salzburg...) or have the possibility to land in one of those cities from where you are coming from, you then might have a direct flight to Nantes and therefore you will avoid going through the busy Paris airports and stations.

The English version of the Nantes airport not being available for some reason, here is a link where you get all the companies flying to Nantes.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nantes_Atlantique_Airport

From Nantes to Rennes, it is quite easy to travel by train. A shuttle bus will take you from the airport (in front of Hall 1) to the railway station downtown Nantes. There are "direct trains" to Rennes and some with a short connection time in Redon. This would be ok, if the connection would be on the same platform. But it is not. So book a "direct train" Nantes-Rennes, please. You'll really hate, as we do, going down stairs and up again with your luggage just to change platforms!

You have also a shuttle service you can book online, able to take you to Rennes, especially interesting if you are a small group:

<http://www.navairport.com/gb>

By boat:

Want to add a holiday like mini cruising flavor to your trip to Brittany avoiding the big cities? Take the sea!

Land in London, catch a train from Waterloo station if you are in London, to Portsmouth Harbor here:

<http://www.thetrainline.com/train-times/london-waterloo-to-portsmouth-harbour>

And then board a Brittany Ferries (a proud Breton company, see booking link below) ship to St Malo (a famous impressive corsair city on the northern coast of Brittany, 45 minutes by train north of Rennes). Depending of your boarding time, you might want to spend the night sleeping at sea, either in a comfortable cabin, or possibly in a nice recliner, depending of your budget. From the terminal, take a taxi to the railway station, walking is “doable” but with some luggage, forget about it and grab a cab.

<http://www.brittany-ferries.co.uk/>

In conclusion:

Whatever the option you’ll chose to come to Rennes, we’ll be delighted to welcome you if possible at the airport or the train station, take you to your hotel and get oriented.¹

In order to do so and help us provide you with the best possible assistance, please make sure to arrange with us well in advance and at least a few days before you take your flight for we can make sure we can organize your arrival and transfer in the best possible conditions.

Here is what we need to greet you at Rennes International Airport or at the railways station:

1/ An email from you giving us your detailed travel information, sent to us in advance. Please let us know if you have special needs.

2/ A cell phone number or an email you’ll be able to read on the go.

We’ll then get back to you to give you confirmation we’ll be able to pick you up and give you details. Please note that, except special arrangement, we might not be able to come and pick

¹ Otherwise, if case you want to be on your own, from the Rennes International Airport:

Take Bus 57 (running also on Sundays, but not as often, is situated 300 meters from the terminal) and of course taxis will take you to downtown Rennes. The bus ride is about 20 min, a taxi we’ll be much faster and of course will drop you exactly where you need to go (it will be a good idea to have your hotel address on a piece of paper for the taxi driver). Here is a link to Rennes airport website giving you more details.

<http://www.rennes.aeroport.fr/en/bus>

you up, once the symposium is started, Monday July 4th. We encourage you to come early if possible for you and enjoy spending the WE in Brittany and Rennes while gently accommodating the jetlag prior to our Symposium. If you plan for some extended stay after the symposium, we'll be delighted to help you with some planning and special accommodation prices we have been able to negotiate for that purpose (see our memo about accommodations).

Again, we look forward to see you. Just as this memo is talking about travelling to Rennes, you'll have other ones treating the subjects of Accommodations, Practical information...and much more.

Degemer mat e Breizh!
Welcome to Brittany

A kreizh galon,
All the best to you,

Yves Defrance

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