

Al-Boraq

Al-Boraq (Arabic: البُراق^[2]) is a 323-kilometre-long (201 mi) high-speed rail service between Casablanca and Tangier, operated by ONCF in Morocco. The first of its kind on the African continent, the high-speed service was inaugurated on 15 November 2018 by King Mohammed VI of Morocco following over a decade of planning and construction by Moroccan national railway company ONCF. It is the first phase of what is planned to eventually be a 1,500 kilometres (930 mi) high-speed rail network in Morocco.^[3] Al Boraq trains operate over a dedicated high speed line reaching speeds of up to 320 km/h on the 186 km sector between Tangier and Kenitra. From Kenitra trains operate over an upgraded mainline for the final 137 km through Morocco's most populous corridor via Rabat to Casablanca.^[4]

Contents
 Name
 History
 Infrastructure
 Rolling stock
 Gallery
 See also
 References

Name

King Mohammed VI named the high-speed service Al Boraq (البُراق), in reference to the creature in Islamic tradition believed to have transported some prophets,^[5] notably the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem during the night journey.

History

Early studies into the feasibility of high-speed rail in Morocco began in 2003, and by 2006 the route between Tangier and Kenitra had been identified as

Al-Boraq	
 <div>An <u>ONCF Alstom RGV2N2</u> high-speed trainset at Tanger Ville railway station in November 2018</div>	
Overview	
Native name	البُراق
Status	Active
Owner	<u>Morocco</u>
Locale	Morocco
Termini	<u>Tanger-Ville Railway Terminal</u> (Tangiers) <div></div> <u>Casa-Voyageurs Railway Station</u> (Casablanca)
Service	
Operator(s)	<u>ONCF</u>
Rolling stock	<u>Alstom Euroduplex</u>
History	
Opened	15 November 2018 ^[1]
Technical	
Line length	323 km (201 mi)
<u>Track gauge</u>	1,435 mm (4 ft 8½ in) <u>standard gauge</u>
<u>Electrification</u>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>25 kV 50 Hz</u>3 kV</div>
Operating speed	320 km/h (200 mph)

being among the first lines to be constructed.^[6] In 2007, preliminary agreements to manage the project had been signed, and ONCF announced plans to purchase 18 Alstom trainsets.^{[6][7]} In 2008, ONCF said that it planned to begin construction that year, with operations to begin in 2013.^[6]

Financing was not finalised until February 2010, when ONCF signed agreements worth 20 billion dirhams (DH).^[8] Direct investments came from the Moroccan government, which allocated DH4.8 billion to the project, and European sources, which invested a total of DH1.9 billion, while the remaining DH12.3 billion came from commercial loans.^[8] DH10 billion was planned to be spent on infrastructure, with DH5.6 billion going to supporting equipment and DH4.4 billion to rolling stock.^[8] At the time, work was expected to start in mid-2010, with service beginning in December 2015.^[8] In December 2010, ONCF signed a final agreement to purchase 14 Alstom Euroduplex trainsets.^[9] Following further delays, construction of the line began on 29 September 2011, when a ceremonial groundbreaking took place in Tangier.^[10]



On 25 September 2012, construction began on a project to increase capacity on the trackage between Kenitra and Casablanca by constructing a dedicated freight track in the existing right of way, allowing for passenger trains to access Casablanca from the high-speed line to Tangier.^[11] In addition to the rail construction, stations in four locations (Tangiers, Kenitra, Rabat/Agdal, and Casablanca) were either constructed from the ground up or rebuilt from existing facilities.^[12] On 19 June 2015, rolling stock deliveries began with the arrival of the first trainset in Tangier.^[13] In September, the service facility for the trains in Tangier was completed and a joint venture between ONCF and French rail operator SNCF was established to maintain the trains for a 15-year contract.^[14] In February 2017, testing of the trains at revenue speeds began; during the test program an African rail speed record of 357 kilometres per hour (222 mph) was set.^[12]

In October 2017, track construction was completed, followed by the new electric catenary in November.^[3] The electrical system was energised for the first time in January 2018, and the line's control facility came online in February.^[3] By mid-2018, construction of stations had been completed, though the estimated beginning of service had been pushed back until the end of the year as trial runs over the route had yet to be operated.^{[3][12]}

On 15 November 2018, the service was inaugurated in a ceremony at Tangier and a special train that operated to Rabat, with revenue service planned to begin by the end of the year.^[5] By December 25, 2018, trains were scheduled to depart Casablanca every two hours from 06:00 until 21:00.

The inauguration of the service also came with the opening of several new or renovated train stations: Tanger-Ville Railway Terminal,^[15] Kenitra Station,^[16] Rabat-Agdal Station,^[17] and Casa-Voyageurs Railway Station.^[18]

Infrastructure

The line is constructed in two sections—a new route from Tangier to Kenitra and an upgrade of the existing route from Kenitra to Casablanca.^[10] The 186-kilometre-long (116 mi) Tangier–Kenitra line has a top speed of 320 kilometres per hour (200 mph), while the 137-kilometre-long (85 mi) Kenitra–Casablanca line was rated for 160 kilometres per hour (99 mph) when service began, with a planned upgrade to 220

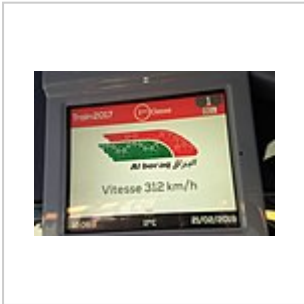
kilometres per hour (140 mph).^[5] The trackage from Kenitra to Casablanca is planned to be eventually replaced by a new high-speed right of way, with construction scheduled to begin in 2020.^[5] Two electrification types are used—from Tangier to Kenitra the new trackage was built with 25 kV at 50 Hz, while the line from Kenitra to Casablanca retained the existing 3 kV DC catenary.^[5] The ETCS-type signal system was installed by Ansaldo STS and Cofely Ineo.^[19]

At the launch of service in 2018, the travel time between Casablanca and Tangier was reduced from 4 hours and 45 minutes to 2 hours and 10 minutes.^[5] The completion of dedicated high-speed trackage into Casablanca would further reduce the end-to-end travel time to 1 hour and 30 minutes.^[5]

Rolling stock

The 12 (14 originally ordered) Alstom Euroduplex trainsets operating on the line are bilevel trains, with each set comprising two power cars and eight passenger cars.^{[9][5]} The passenger capacity is 533 across two first-class cars, five second-class cars, and a buffet car.^[9]

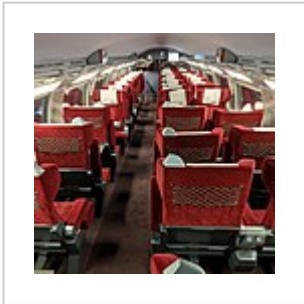
Gallery



Screen onboard showing the train speed at 312 km/h



Train ticket from Tangier to Casablanca



View of first class seats



View of second class seats



Train in Tangier

See also

- Transport in Morocco

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