

THE RAIL SIMULATOR NEWSLETTER

WELCOME

Hello all! This month's Rail Times newsletter comes with an exclusive feature on the research that went on behind the construction of Rail Simulator's second route; Oxford to Paddington!

Sabrina

COMING SOON

Next month we will be introducing an extension to our website railsimulator.com!

We will be taking a closer look at the HST and the team behind the modeling of Rail Simulator's second train!

RESEARCHING THE OXFORD TO PADDINGTON ROUTE

Rail Simulator's 2nd route Oxford to Paddington was announced last month – and here we present the research trip that the KRS Content Team (Claire Boissiere Andy Jamison) embarked on in July of last year – following the route to capture every single bit of data that can be used to accurately recreate the route in Rail Simulator. This research trip was a great experience in that seeing how this busy line operates and visiting each station gave us invaluable understanding of this route. We are sure it's one that will give the players great pleasure. Going on these research trips is as much about clarifying the game design as collecting the route reference material.



Claire and Andy started their journey in Paddington – taking the express First Great Western Adelante train. They travelled in style as First Great Western was kind enough to give them a 4 day first class pass and the service was impeccable.

The Adelante express train stops at Slough, Reading and Oxford, this train journey gave the team their first look at the route, so they sat back and enjoyed the view contemplating the task ahead of them in

recreating it!

The urban sprawl seen on the way out from London to Reading provides a unique challenge when creating a route, being able to make enough art assets to capture the rich mix of buildings and density can be difficult. We adopt an approach where buildings can be reused by changing the brick work or roof colour allowing us to have a limited art asset list whilst delivering a diverse look.



As they moved past Reading heading towards Oxford the scenery changed into a more rural setting, and whilst this might seem like an easier part of the route to build, creating an empty field and trying to get it to have feel and atmosphere is indeed a challenge all of its own!



As the journey progressed towards Oxford Andy started busily writing down notes of things he saw along the way. There is an amount of research you can do in the office but it's only when you actually see the route that the detail falls into place and to some extent the enormity of the job. They captured GPS data along the way as the first test of the equipment. This was then downloaded later at the hotel to ensure all of the necessary connections and maps were set up correctly.

They then checked into the hotel and had a spot of lunch and then headed back to Oxford station to start their return journey out to Paddington where they would visit each station to fully research it. But this is where the plan fell down! They got off at Radley then realised that the next train wasn't for another 2 hours and those of you who know Radley station will sympathise that there isn't really enough there to keep a research team of 2 occupied for 2 hours! So they caught the train back to Oxford then headed out to Reading taking video footage along the way.



Reading station is not small so several hours later they had managed to capture enough measurements, photographs and GPS points to enable the team to create the station in the simulation. As the afternoon was already over by this point they headed back to Oxford on the First Great Western stopping service in order to peruse the smaller stations along the route and make decisions about the next days travels.



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They surveyed the platform dimensions, took reference and texture photographs and with half an hour at each station, sat and observed what trains ran along the route, which lines they used and in which directions they went. Something that was learnt from this was how rich with traffic this route is both passenger and freight and, according to Claire, the possible gameplay that could be achieved from such a route just kept buzzing round their heads. During this day a collection of stations were reached; Cholsey, Goring and Streatley, Pangbourne, Tilehurst, Tyford, Maidenhead, Slough, Hayes and Harlington and Ealing Broadway.



After a day of stations weaving their way through the timetable securing ½ hour at each station they were not finished yet! They then got on a First Great Western Link train out of Paddington heading towards Oxford stopping at each station but this time with the cameras rolling to capture the stunning scenery that spans the length of this route. After this long day they downloaded all the collected data and then retired for an early night, ready to capture the remaining stations tomorrow.



The next day the team wanted to capture the London end stations so they caught the fast train straight from Oxford to Paddington but this was hit by delays due to a fatality on the line. This appeared to cause some chaos to the timetables and they arrived into Paddington over an hour late. However the train operators were doing everything they could to put the schedule back on track and it was a good experience to observe first hand how a network is so carefully put together and how hard is it to maintain once a single train or section of track is out of use, this is the game play we want to capture for this route.

Fortunately First Great Western operate a very frequent service so the team were able to weave their way through the timetable with the required half hour stop at each station. On this third day they managed to research West Ealing, Hanwell, Southall, West Drayton, Iver, Langley, Burnham, Taplow and Culham. It was a strenuous day but with First Great Western getting their timetable back on track within a couple of hours the rest of the day went smoothly.

For the last day Claire and Andy's port of call was Didcot to survey the station and also visit the museum, Didcot is a busy station and also attracts quite a few rail enthusiasts. Claire and Andy were keen to keep our identify secret at this stage so as not to let slip which route Kuju are working on, but with the high tech equipment and precision level that they were doing we wouldn't have been surprised if Claire and Andy stuck out like a sore thumb!



We would like to give a big thanks to First Great Western for giving us permission to do this trip and for supporting us with all the relevant passes/authority papers and information that we need.

Also, to all the rail enthusiast that may have spotted us on our travels, now you know what we were doing and we hope you will be very pleased with the results!