

History of Transport

In 3500BC, a wheel was attached to a cart for the first time. This invention meant that people could use a cart to carry food and other items, instead of having to carry them by hand. Using a cart with wheels made carrying large amounts of food for long distances easier, so people didn't have to live close to the places where food was produced.

In 1783, a man called Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier became quite famous. He was from France and was a chemistry and physics teacher. He also became the first person to fly in a hot air balloon. However, Jean-François had to persuade King Louis XVI to let this happen, because the King had already decided that two criminals were going to be the first people to fly in it. Jean-François realised that whoever went into the hot air balloon first would be remembered for a long time and he did not think that criminals should be famous.

Two years after this first flight, Jean-François tried to cross the English Channel in a hot air balloon. Sadly, the balloon deflated during the flight and crashed. Jean-François and his passenger were killed in this accident.

George Stephenson invented the first steam-powered railway engine in 1814 and he called the engine 'Blucher'. Blucher's first test was to carry eight coal wagons along an uphill track. Blucher was such a success that Stephenson ended up building another sixteen engines.

Have you ever travelled anywhere on a bicycle? How far do you think you would get without pedals? German inventor Karl von Drais invented something that he called the 'Laufmaschine', which means 'running machine'. This invention had two thin wheels, with handles at the front for steering, but no pedals. Instead, the rider pushed along the ground with his or her feet.

Karl von Drais' 'Laufmaschine', or 'running machine'.



In 1903, brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright flew the first powered aeroplane. They did this in America in a state called North Carolina. When they were



designing their plane, they studied birds to learn how they could fly. This helped them design the wings for their own aircraft. They couldn't decide who would attempt to fly the first aeroplane, so they flipped a coin. Wilbur won the coin toss and sat in the pilot's seat and flew! This first flight only lasted 12 seconds.

Orville and Wilbur Wright

The first supersonic flight took place in 1947. The word 'supersonic' means 'faster than the speed of sound', which is very, very fast! During the flight, the plane flew at 700mph. The pilot was Air Force general officer Charles Yeager, and the plane was called 'Glamorous Glennis'.



Air Force general officer Charles 'Chuck' Yeager

Another invention that has made travelling easier is The Channel tunnel. The Channel Tunnel opened in 1994. High-speed trains take people from the UK to France. The tunnel is over 31 miles long, but the trains travel through it so fast that it only takes around 35 minutes to get from one side to the other. This has definitely made the journey between England and France a lot quicker. The ferry between Dover and Calais takes around 90 minutes.

Some people think that the next big thing to happen in transport will be regular trips into space! What do you think the next big transport invention will be?

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Questions

Read carefully and complete the answers to the questions below.

1. What was invented in 3500BC?

2. Why were people able to live further away from the areas where food was produced?

3. Who thought that criminals should be the first people to fly in the hot air balloon?

4. What is 'Blucher'?

5. How many steam engines did George Stephenson make after he tested the first one?

6. Karl von Drais' bicycle-like invention had no pedals. How did riders make it move?

7. Which of the Wright brothers flew the first plane?

8. How did studying birds help the Wright brothers?

9. What does the word 'supersonic' mean?

10. How fast did Charles Yeager's plane travel?

11. What was Charles Yeager's plane called?

12. How long does it take for a train to travel through the Channel Tunnel?

Answers

1. What was invented in 3500BC?
Carts with wheels were invented in 3500BC.
2. Why were people able to live further away from the areas where food was produced?
They were able to use the carts to carry food for longer distances.
3. Who thought that criminals should be the first people to fly in the hot air balloon?
King Louis XVI thought that two criminals should go into the hot air balloon first.
4. What is 'Blucher'?
Blucher was the name of the first steam engine that George Stephenson invented.
5. How many steam engines did George Stephenson make after he tested the first one?
He made another sixteen engines.
6. Karl von Drais' bicycle-like invention had no pedals. How did riders make it move?
They pushed themselves along with their feet.
7. Which of the Wright brothers flew the first plane?
Wilbur won a coin toss to fly the plane first.
8. How did studying birds help the Wright brothers?
They studied birds' wings to help them design the wings for their plane.
9. What does the word 'supersonic' mean?
'Supersonic' means 'faster than the speed of sound'.
10. How fast did Charles Yeager's plane travel?
Charles Yeager's plane travelled at 700mph.
11. What was Charles Yeager's plane called?
Charles Yeager named his plane 'Glamorous Glennis'.
12. How long does it take for a train to travel through the Channel Tunnel?
It takes around 35 minutes for a train to get from one side of the Channel Tunnel to the other.