

A beginner's guide to...

Train travel in Britain . . .



This form links to [www.raileasy.co.uk](http://www.raileasy.co.uk). Tickets can be collected at any main station or sent to any UK address.

**Overseas users welcome!** You can buy your UK train tickets online & collect tickets at any main station.

Can't find the cheapest fares? [Best fare finder](#)

Reservations open around 12 weeks in advance. [Get an email alert when bookings open](#)

**Collecting your tickets at stations:** You can collect your tickets from machines like these at any main British station (the colour & design varies by train company). Just use the touch screen to click 'collect tickets' then insert your credit card and out come your tickets! You **must** have the original credit card used to make the booking.



**A London to Edinburgh train** about to leave Kings Cross station, under the magnificent arched roof completed in 1852. London to Edinburgh trains run hourly & take just 4 hours 30 minutes centre to centre, with fares from less than £20 one-way...



Since 1995, Britain's rail network has been run by over 20 different private train companies. However, the government makes sure they work together as **National Rail**, with co-ordinated fares, ticketing & information. You can find train times & fares for all train operators all on one website, and you can buy a train ticket between any two stations, with tickets normally valid on any operator's trains. This page is a simple guide to train travel in the UK.

### About UK train travel...

[How to check train times & fares](#)

[How to buy cheap train tickets online](#)

[Quick guide to British train fares](#)

[How to find the cheapest tickets](#)

[Which operators & routes can I use?](#)

[Save money with a railcard](#)

[Are the trains running on time?](#)

[Maps of the UK train network](#)

[London bus & Underground info](#)

[Nationwide bus & taxi information](#)

[Ferry information](#)

[BritRail passes & Rail Rovers](#)

[Taking bikes on trains in the UK](#)

[Hotels & accommodation in Britain](#)

### On other pages...

[London to Scotland by Caledonian Sleeper](#)

[London to Cornwall by Night Riviera sleeper](#)

[London to Jersey & Guernsey by train+ferry](#)

[London to the Isle of Man by train+ferry](#)

[London to Belfast by train+ferry for just \*\*£49\*\*](#)

[London to Dublin & Ireland by train+ferry, \*\*£38\*\*](#)

[London to Paris & Brussels by Eurostar from \*\*£39\*\*](#)

[London to Amsterdam by train or ferry from \*\*£39\*\*](#)

[Train travel from the UK to anywhere in Europe...](#)

[Buying UK train tickets to connect with Eurostar](#)

[Britain's most scenic railway: The West Highland Line](#)

[Scotland's cruise train: The Royal Scotsman](#)

## How to check train times & fares...

- The best place to check train times & fares for any train journey in Britain is [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk). This is provided by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) on behalf of all train operators, and it shows train times & fares for all routes and all operators.
- To check train times & fares by phone, call National Rail Enquiries on **0845 7 48 49 50** (if you are overseas call **+44 20 7278 5240**). Lines are open 24 hours a day and calls are charged at local rates.
- **Is your train on time?** Go to [www.nationalrail.co.uk/ldb/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/ldb/) and enter the name of your station to see an online 'live departure board' showing train arrivals & departures in the next hour or two, and whether they are on time or not....

## How to buy train tickets online...

- You can buy train tickets online using the [Raileasy booking form above](#). Tickets can be collected at any main railway station, useful if you are booking at short notice or from overseas, or they can be posted to any UK address. [See below](#) for a quick guide to the 3 types of UK train ticket: Anytime, Off-Peak & Advance.
- Raileasy aren't the only ticket retailer, of course. There are now several independent online train ticket retailers in Britain, each selling tickets for any train journey in Britain on any operator: [www.raileasy.co.uk](http://www.raileasy.co.uk), [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com), [www.eastcoast.co.uk](http://www.eastcoast.co.uk), [www.mytrainticket.co.uk](http://www.mytrainticket.co.uk), [www.redspottedhanky.com](http://www.redspottedhanky.com), [www.takethetrain.co.uk](http://www.takethetrain.co.uk) & [www.quno.com](http://www.quno.com). Train operator websites also offer online tickets, but almost all of them are in fact powered by either thetrainline.com, the eastcoast.co.uk system, or mytrainticket.co.uk.
- **All these sites offer the same train tickets with the same prices & availability** from the same national rail database, so feel free to use any of them. The only difference is the booking fee: [www.raileasy.co.uk](http://www.raileasy.co.uk) charges around £1 for debit cards or £2.61 for credit cards plus £1.50 to send out ticket (collection at stations free). [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com) charges about £1 for debit cards or £3.50 for credit cards. Train companies' own websites such as [www.tpeexpress.co.uk](http://www.tpeexpress.co.uk) don't charge any fee.
- It can often be best to start with the national rail website, [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk). This doesn't sell tickets itself, but after answering your enquiry it will offer you a choice of all the ticket selling websites, including the train companies' own sites, with the operator most relevant to that specific journey being offered at the top of the list. Pick a train company site such as [www.tpeexpress.co.uk](http://www.tpeexpress.co.uk) and you won't pay a booking fee. Very, very occasionally, a train company gives a small extra discount on its own fares, for example at the time of writing East Coast gives an extra 10% off its own Advance fares from London to York, Leeds, Newcastle & Edinburgh and so on, if you book at its own website, so it's a good idea to pick the train operator site that [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) suggests at the top of the list.
- **To buy train tickets by phone**, there are a number of train operator telesales lines to choose from, all selling the same tickets at the same prices. For example, Virgin Trains on **08457 222 333**.
- **Reservations normally open around 12 weeks before departure**, you can't buy tickets before then. But here's a good idea: Sign up for a free email 'ticket alert' when bookings open for the specific route you want, allowing you to snap up those cheap fares as soon as they are released (It's worth trying later in the day if you don't immediately see any cheap deals available). To sign up for an alert, go to [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com), click '**Gadgets & Tools**' top right, then click '**Ticket alert**' or just [click this link](#). Some other train companies also offer this service. Incidentally, if you look at a date beyond the period when reservations are open, some websites will still show train times with more expensive flexible tickets available (which don't require a reservation), just wait till reservations open & the cheap tickets will appear.

## How to buy train tickets online, if you live outside the UK...

- **If you live in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India etc**, you can buy British train tickets at genuine UK prices [using the online booking form on this page](#). Raileasy happily accepts overseas credit cards, and although they won't send tickets overseas, you can select the option to collect tickets from the self-service ticket machines at most main British stations, including all the London ones. [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com) also accepts non-UK credit cards, and will now send tickets overseas to any address worldwide for a £7.50 fee (must be signed for). Remember that bookings normally open 9-12 weeks before departure, you can't book before then. Beware of agencies in your home country selling point-to-point train tickets at inflated prices. Also remember that you'll need the same credit card used to make the booking to retrieve the ticket from the machines.
- For short distances (for example, London to Greenwich, Oxford or Cambridge) just buy a ticket at the station & hop on the next train. For longer distances (for example, London to Bath, York or Edinburgh) you can also buy tickets on the day, as advance reservation is never compulsory on any British train so they can never 'sell out', but the big advantage in pre-booking is that on long-distance routes you'll usually find cheap budget-airline-style 'Advance' fares. This may help: [Quick guide to the 3 types of train ticket](#).
- If you have problems booking online, you can check train fares & availability at [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk), then buy the same tickets at exactly the same prices via an international phone call, for example to Virgin Trains telesales on **+44 870 9080 107**.
- Using this advice, one traveller avoided a \$183 (£110) London-Edinburgh fare and found a cheap £14 (\$24) train ticket instead!

## How to find the cheapest train tickets...

Train fares have a reputation for being complicated, but the [Quick guide to the 3 types of train ticket](#) on this page will make it simple. If you book a cheap 'no refunds, limited changes' ticket in advance you can find some great fares, for example:

## How to find these cheap train tickets...

1. Book in advance, the earlier you book the more likely you are to find a cheap fare. You can buy these tickets [online using the booking form on this page](#), or by phone or at a station, but buying online is easiest.
2. You can buy Advance fares a maximum of 12 weeks ahead, though it's sometimes less than this, perhaps 9 weeks in some cases. If reservations aren't yet open for your date of travel, [sign up for an automatic 'ticket alert' from TheTrainline.com](#) and they'll email you the moment bookings open. Be warned, if you look at a date **beyond** the period when reservations are open, some websites will then only show the more expensive flexible tickets (which don't require a reservation), you need to wait till reservations open & the cheap tickets will appear.
3. Like budget airline fares, Advance fares vary in price from train to train & day to day, so hunt around for the cheapest train. Obviously, Wednesday lunchtime is usually cheaper than Friday or Sunday afternoon...
4. If you can't find any cheap Advance fares on the date & time you want, [use the 'Best Fare Finder' at www.thetrainline.com](#) to track down the dates & times of day with the cheapest fares...
5. **Advance** fares are only valid on the train you've booked, no refunds, only limited changes to travel plans allowed... If you want flexibility, you'll need an [Off-Peak](#) or [Anytime](#) fare instead.
6. Bookings for Advance fares theoretically close at 18:59 the day before travel. But in practice they remove any remaining Advance fares at 23:59 on many routes, so it's worth trying even if you've just missed the deadline!

thetrainline.com  
Best fare finder.



thetrainline.com

Cheap train fares...	
Cheapest available one-way 'Advance' fares:	
Journey:	Fare starts at:
London - Edinburgh	£14.50
London - Glasgow	£20
London - Newcastle	£13.50
London - Leeds	£11.50
London - York	£11.50
London - Sheffield	£15
London - Manchester	£12
London - Liverpool	£12
London - Oxenholme (Lake District)	£16

## Other ways to make your journey cheaper...

- **Consider getting a [railcard](#)** if you're under 26, over 60, travel as a family, or have a registered disability. Railcards give 34% off Anytime, Off-Peak and Advance fares, [see the section below](#).
- **Megatrain.com:** [www.megatrain.com](http://www.megatrain.com) offers really cheap train tickets from just £1 on a handful of fairly random routes (the common factor is that they're all on train companies associated with Stagecoach group), usually on just a handful of trains a day. Routes include London to & from Liverpool, Runcorn, Sheffield, Nottingham, Loughborough, Coventry, Birmingham, Bath, Exeter, Salisbury, Portsmouth, Southampton, Bournemouth, Poole, Weymouth. Also some cross-country routes such as Birmingham to Edinburgh/Glasgow. Worth a look, although they keep trying to sell you a bus ticket.
- **Split the journey, if two tickets are cheaper than one:** You'll sometimes find a situation where the fare from A to B plus the fare from B to C is less than the fare from A to C. As long as the train stops at B, you're perfectly entitled to use a combination of tickets. For example, rather than buy a Penzance to Birmingham Off-Peak ticket you can save money by buying two Off-Peak tickets, one from Penzance to Cheltenham and another from Cheltenham to Birmingham (all the Penzance-Birmingham trains call at Cheltenham). This situation arises where different pricing managers on different train companies have priced the various sections of route, and not noticed the anomaly. To find such situations, it requires some trial & error with [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) to find where your train stops en route, and to try different combinations of ticket. Don't waste too much time looking for these, as it won't always make your journey cheaper (after all, pricing managers try to avoid such situations) but where it does occur there can be big savings.
- **Split the journey to avoid paying peak 'Anytime' fares for the whole trip:** You can sometimes save money by splitting the journey into two tickets if your chosen train starts as a peak train but becomes an off-peak train en route. This tends to happen where Off-peak fares carry an 'any departure after 09:30' restriction, as they do in much of the Greater London area. For example, if you need a train leaving at 09:15 and arriving 10:00, why pay the peak 'Anytime' rate for your whole journey, it might be cheaper to pay the peak 'Anytime' rate to the first station at which the train stops after 09:30, then pay the cheaper Off-Peak rate from that station onwards.
- **A word of warning about 'travelling short':** There are many cases where it's cheaper to buy a ticket from A to C and get off at B. For example, a cheap limited-availability Advance ticket might be available from London to Edinburgh, but no cheap fares available to Newcastle, only Off-Peak or Anytime fares costing more than the cheap deal to Edinburgh. In practice you might get away with this, especially if there are no ticket barriers at your destination so you can just walk out of the station. But technically, you cannot break your journey with an Advance fare, nor with the outward portion of a long distance Off-Peak return fare. Under the National Rail Conditions of Carriage, ticket inspectors are entitled to charge you the difference in fare between what you've paid and the cheapest walk-up ticket for the journey you've actually made.

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## Railcards: How to save money if you're under 26, over 60, travel as a family, or have a disability...

- Railcards save you 34% off train fares if you're under 26 ([16-25 Railcard](#)), over 60 ([Senior Railcard](#)), a family or group of friends with at least one child ([Family & Friends Railcard](#)), or have certain types of disability ([Disabled Person's Railcard](#)).
- Railcards cost £28 and give 34% off Anytime, Off-Peak & Advance fares on all National Rail train operators in the UK.
- 3-year Railcards are now available, costing £65 and so saving money over three annual cards.
- A railcard can pay for itself in just one or two long-distance train journeys. For example, an Off-Peak return London-Manchester costs around £65, so it's £43 return with a railcard, that's a £22 saving straight away.
- **16-25 Railcards** are for anyone between the ages of 16 & 25 (inclusive). Buy online at [www.16-25railcard.co.uk](http://www.16-25railcard.co.uk). You get 34% off almost all train fares, the key restriction is that a minimum fare of £12 applies to Anytime or Off-Peak one-way or return tickets (but not Advance tickets) if you travel before 10am on Mondays-Fridays. That's to stop people using it for commuter trips to work, and this restriction does not apply in July & August.
- **Senior Railcards** are for anyone over 60. Buy online at [www.senior-railcard.co.uk](http://www.senior-railcard.co.uk), an get 34% off almost all rail fares. The only restriction is that you can't use the card for journeys wholly within the London & Southeast area in the morning rush hour on Mondays-Fridays (that's to stop the card being used for London commuting and to avoid adding to overcrowding at these times). See the website for more details.
- **Family & Friends Railcards** are for small groups of up to 4 adults and 4 children. You don't need to be related, as long as the party includes at least one child and all travels together. One Family & Friends railcard gets 34% off all the adult fares in the group (adults of any age) & 60% off all the child fares in the group. It can easily pay for itself in just one long-distance train trip! Buy online at [www.family-railcard.co.uk](http://www.family-railcard.co.uk).
- **Disabled person's railcard**. Read through [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk) to see if you qualify.
- **Network Railcard**: See [www.railcard.co.uk/network](http://www.railcard.co.uk/network). This is the odd one out, as it isn't national, it just covers the old London & Southeast ('Network SouthEast') area, and it's for anyone of any age. It costs £28 for a year and gives 34% off most London & Southeast train fares after 10:00 on Mondays-Fridays, any time at weekends, subject to a £13 minimum fare on Mondays-Fridays. You can also take up to 3 other adults with you, also at 34% off, and up to 4 children aged 5-15 at 60% off the child fare (minimum fare £1) I have a Network Railcard, and it saves me money over the year on my off-peak trips into London. The fare from my local station to London is £19.30 off-peak return, so I pay £13 with my railcard, saving over £6 each time I go to London.

- **For a summary of all railcards** see [www.railcard.co.uk](http://www.railcard.co.uk). If you're from overseas, you still qualify for a railcard if you meet the age (or family group) criteria, so can still save money on your train travel within the UK, but you will need to buy in person at a station when you get here as they won't send railcards overseas. Railcards only give discounts on British train tickets, not for travel in mainland Europe, or on Heathrow Express or Eurostar.
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**General train travel information:** [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

As well as online train times and fares, [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) has:

- details of any major disruption and a 'live departure board' system showing whether trains are running on time.
- telephone numbers and addresses for lost property, travel assistance, current train running information, telesales and customer services departments for **every** train operator in Britain.
- general information for travelling on the UK national rail network.
- details of station facilities.
- links to each train operator's own website.
- There are **left luggage offices** at all the major London stations, also at Birmingham New Street, Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central, Leeds, Liverpool Lime St, and Manchester Piccadilly. See [www.left-baggage.co.uk](http://www.left-baggage.co.uk). There's also a small office at Holyhead. Most other stations don't have left luggage facilities.

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**Und hier eine eher willkürlich herausgesuchte Zugverbindung (mit Umsteigen) für den, der tagsüber in London ankommt – und über Nacht nach Irland weiterfahren möchte:**

Depart	Arrive	Travel by	Train company	Duration
20:15 London St Pancras Intl	20:40 London Euston	Tube	n/a	00h 25
20:40 London Euston	22:12 Crewe	Train	VIRGIN TRAINS	01h 32
22:23 Crewe	22:45 Chester	Train	ARRIVA TRAINS WALES	00h 22
23:08 Chester	01:19 Holyhead	Train	ARRIVA TRAINS WALES	02h 11
02:30 Holyhead	05:45 Dublin Port (Stena)	Ferry	ARRIVA TRAINS WALES	03h 15
05:45 Dublin Port (Stena)	07:05 Dublin Connolly	Transfer	n/a	

**Und hier eine Verbindung für den, der es schafft und sooo früh genug in London angekommen (oder schon da) ist:**

Outward Journey				
Depart	Arrive	Travel by	Train company	Duration
09:10 London Euston	12:50 Holyhead	Train	VIRGIN TRAINS	03h 40
13:50 Holyhead	17:15 Dublin Port (Stena)	Ferry	ARRIVA TRAINS WALES	03h 25
17:15 Dublin Port (Stena)	Dublin Connolly	Transfer	Bus der Fährgesellschaft	

All diese Angaben haben wir von folgender Webseite:

<http://www.seat61.com/index.html>