



Just the ticket

With so many different choices of rail tickets, it is sometimes hard to know if you are buying the most suitable one for your journey. Passenger Focus is the official, independent voice of the rail passenger and we want to make sure that you get the best value from your rail travel. This leaflet briefly outlines your options, gives you some handy hints and tips that may help you when buying a rail ticket and points you in the right direction to get further information should you require it.

STEP ONE: Be clear about what you want

Make sure that you are clear about your requirements. Do you need to be at your destination at a certain time or have to travel on a particular day? What is more important to you: the cheapest ticket, the fastest journey or the flexibility to catch any train?

The time of your journey

Most, if not all, train companies define their services as 'peak' and 'off-peak', and offer fares which can be used during the peak alongside other fares which restrict your travelling times. If you avoid travelling during the peak period, generally your ticket will cost you less. There is usually a morning and evening peak, Monday to Friday. For specific times contact National Rail Enquiries or the train company directly for details.

Example: A return ticket from Manchester to London travelling off-peak on Mondays to Fridays can make huge savings. Tickets bought on the day of travel can vary from £57.00 (off-peak) to £202.00 (travelling at peak time).

Avoiding the peak saves you money!

Advance-purchase tickets

Purchasing some tickets in advance can also save you money. With these types of ticket you must specify the dates and times of your outward and return journeys. (Remember this means you lose the flexibility to travel on any train.) They are subject to availability and may not be available on all trains.

Different train companies specify different advance booking periods within which the ticket must be purchased. Even the same train company may have different options depending on how many days in advance you book your ticket.

All advance-purchase tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Advance booking saves you money!

A specific train or route

On some routes/journeys you will have a choice of which train company you can use or the route you can take.

By restricting yourself to travelling on specified trains or by specific routes you can save money on your ticket, but you may not be able to change the journey once booked and restricted refund conditions may apply.

Example: Three train companies run services between London and Birmingham from different stations. The journey time varies between the routes from 80 to 150 minutes; also some trains have catering and some do not. The price at peak times can be dearer than off-peak by as much as a third.

Being specific saves you money!

Buy	Travel anytime	Travel restricted
Any time	Highest price but most flexible • Standard day returns • Standard open tickets	Cheaper. Can be used for travel off-peak on Mondays and Fridays, and any time at weekends or bank holidays. Such as: StayAway, Network AwayBreak, Cheap Day Return and Saver
In advance	—	Generally the cheapest but limited in number and may not be available on all trains. Need to be booked ahead. You must specify your journey times at the time of purchase. Costly to change, or no refund. Such as: Apex

STEP TWO:

Special fares and discounts

There may be other ways to reduce the cost of your journey

- > **Group fares:** All train companies offer reductions for groups of 10 or more people. Some train companies offer discounts for groups of 3 or 4 people (e.g. Group Saver). They can be cheaper than buying separate tickets for each person, but you must all travel together.
- > **Add-on fares:** Some train companies offer fares which include the cost of bus, tram, ferry or London Underground. They can be cheaper than buying tickets for each element separately.
- > **Rail Rovers:** Many companies offer tickets which allow you to make as many journeys as you like on specified parts or all of the rail network for a limited period (usually for periods between 1 to 15 days). Peak-hour restrictions apply to some Rail Rovers.
- > **Special offers:** Train companies sometimes have special discounts for a limited period of time. These are usually advertised in the press and at stations. You can also get information about them from train companies, telesales offices or websites.
- > **Season tickets:** If you are travelling over the same route on a frequent basis it may be cheaper to buy a season ticket. These can be purchased for any seven-day period or any period between one month and a year. Some companies offer season tickets which include travel by other modes of transport, such as the Underground.





STEP THREE: Basic tips for travelling

Ask questions!

Do not hesitate to ask:

- > Would it be cheaper if I travelled at a different time or on a different day?
- > Does another train company run trains to my destination and offer a cheaper ticket?
- > Is it cheaper to buy two single tickets rather than a return?
- > Am I eligible for a Railcard? Would it reduce the cost of this journey?
- > Do you offer group fares?
- > Do I need to make a reservation? How much does it cost?
- > What if I do not use the ticket? Can I get a refund?

Buy the ticket before boarding

Unless there are no available booking facilities or working ticket machines at the station, most train companies require you to buy your ticket before boarding the train. If not, you may not be able to benefit from any reduced fares nor use your Railcard for a discount. In some parts of the country you could be charged a penalty fare if you travel without a valid ticket or permit to travel.

Travelling restrictions

Ensure that you travel on the correct train according to any restrictions and conditions which apply to your ticket. If in doubt, ask.

Asking for assistance

Tell the seller if you have any special needs. Most staffed stations may provide assistance for disabled passengers, other people who need assistance should contact their local train company for details of other services provided. Most train companies ask that you book your journey at least 24 hours in advance, to allow them to make necessary arrangements for your journey. You can find contact information for these companies by contacting National Rail Enquiries on 08457 484950 or by visiting the Passenger Focus website www.passengerfocus.org.uk



Railcards

A number of different Railcards are available. They entitle the holder to a discount on the price of most tickets. Restrictions may apply to the times the discount can be used and the tickets you can purchase with your Railcard (e.g. a Young Person's Railcard cannot be used to buy reduced-price first-class tickets).

National Railcards include:

- > **Young Person's Railcard:** for passengers aged between 16 and 25 inclusive or mature students in full-time education.
- > **Senior Railcard:** for passengers aged 60 or over.
- > **Disabled Person's Railcard:** for passengers who are eligible.
- > **Family Railcard:** for one or two adults travelling with up to four children between the ages of 5 and 16.
- > **Network Railcard:** for travel on specific routes in the south east of England.

Other regional cards are available.

The saving you could make when buying a ticket for just one journey could cover the price of a Railcard. For example, if you buy a Young Person's Railcard costing £20, the saving you make on a ticket costing £60 or more will be greater than the cost of the Railcard plus ticket.

You can buy Railcards at staffed stations or rail-appointed travel agents (except the Disabled Person's Railcard for which a special form can be obtained at stations or by writing to: Disabled Person's Railcard Office, PO Box 163, Newcastle NE12 8WX). Evidence of eligibility and identity may be required and, for a Young Person's Railcard, a passport style photograph will be needed. Most internet based retailers do not sell Railcards.

Forgotten your Railcard? Forget the discount! Remember you must take your Railcard on any journey you are making.

STEP FOUR: How can I get information?

National Rail Enquiries for information on train times, fares, service alterations due to engineering work and up-to-date information in case of disruptions:

Phone: **08457 48 49 50**

Textphone: 0845 60 50 600

Welsh-language service: 0845 60 40 500

Web: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Ticket office staff will give you impartial information unless the ticket office window/counter is clearly marked as dealing with only one train company's services.

The traveline gives you information about planning your entire journey. This includes buses, trains, ferry and coach information:

Phone: **0870 608 26 08**

Minicom: 0870 841 2216

Web: www.traveline.org.uk

Train Companies: Most train companies run telesales offices and websites. It can be useful to check if special offers are available. However, they may only give information about their own services. To ensure you get the best deal it is worth checking first with National Rail Enquiries.

For more help and advice about getting the right ticket for your journey or any other rail issues, contact us at:

Passenger Focus,
Freeport WA1521,
Warrington WA4 6GP

Phone: **08453 022 022**

Textphone: 0845 850 1345 Fax: 0845 850 1392

Email: info@passengerfocus.org.uk

Web: www.passengerfocus.org.uk

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