



Annual season tickets: benefits for passengers

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Introduction

Research undertaken by Passenger Focus in spring 2006¹ identified that a significant proportion of rail commuters lack awareness of the benefits of annual season tickets. For example, two in five commuters are not aware of how many weeks of “free” travel are offered using an annual season ticket and 19% of commuters without a season ticket cite the reason for not having one as “not value for money”². The aim of this report therefore is to highlight the benefits to commuters of purchasing an annual season ticket.

The key benefits identified are:

- it saves money: an annual season ticket gives you travel for 52 weeks of the year at a cost of only 40 weeks – a saving of 23%.
- train companies in the South East of England offer the “Gold Card” which has various benefits, including discounts on many fares, group travel and upgrades to First Class.

Train companies also vary in what additional benefits they offer passengers with annual season tickets. GNER, c2c and Midland Mainline offer the valuable benefit of paying for an annual season ticket via interest-free instalments. This is valuable because 14% of commuters who do not have an annual season ticket cite that they “haven’t got the money to pay in advance” for one, whilst 11% cite they “can’t afford one” as their reasons for not purchasing one³.

We advise passengers to familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of an annual season ticket. There can be many terms and conditions for some of the benefits, for example many of the benefits of the Gold Card have time restricted availability. Train companies will generally only issue a duplicate season ticket once.

¹ Passenger Focus, (2006): *Passengers’ requirements of rail fares*.

² As above.

³ As above.

Annual season ticket benefits

Benefits that are exclusively available to passengers who purchase a standard-class annual season ticket, are summarised below:

1. Annual season ticket saves you money

If you are travelling over the same route on a frequent basis it may be cheaper to buy a standard-class annual season ticket. An annual season ticket gives you travel for 52 weeks of the year at a cost of only 40 weeks – a saving of 23%.

2. Gold Card benefits in the South East of England

On top of the saving that an annual season ticket brings, the following train companies (c2c, Chiltern Railways, Central Trains, First Capital Connect, First Great Western, GNER, Island Line, Midland Mainline, One, Silverlink, Southeastern, Southern Railway, South West Trains and Virgin Trains) will issue you with a Gold Card that offers further benefits, within the South East of England as specified by the terms of the Gold Card:

Discounts on fares

A discount of 34% is available on the following ticket types – Standard Day Single, Standard Day Return, Standard Open Single, Standard Open Return, Cheap Day Single, Cheap Day Return, Network AwayBreak, Saver Return, and All Zones Off-Peak Day Travelcard (subject to a minimum fare - currently £4.80).⁴

Discounts for group travel

Up to three accompanying adults can travel at the same discounted fare each (as highlighted above) and up to four accompanying children (aged 5 -15) travel at a flat fare of £1.00 each, single or return. Groups must travel together at all times.

⁴ Discounted tickets are available anytime at weekends and on Public Holidays and from 1000 hours Monday to Friday. Tickets are subject to any restrictions that may apply to the use of corresponding fully-priced tickets.

First Class upgrades

First Class “one day” supplements, currently priced at £5 per adult and £2.50 per child, can be purchased and used in conjunction with valid standard-class discounted tickets on the following basis:

- on Mondays to Fridays they cannot be used over the route covered by your Gold Card unless a separate discounted ticket for the journey has been purchased. This does not apply at weekends and on Public Holidays
- Gold Card First Class supplement tickets cannot be used on Monday to Friday between 1600 and 1900 on trains departing from London or any intermediate stations between London and Clapham Junction inclusive
- Gold Card First Class Supplements can be used in conjunction with a valid discounted ticket for any journey on the date shown on the ticket. If the return journey is made on another day a further Gold Card First Supplement ticket must be purchased for each member of the party
- Gold Card First Class Supplement tickets are not valid for travel at any time on First Great Western, GNER, Midland Mainline or Virgin Trains.

Discounts on rail/sea Journeys

Discounts are also available to/from the Isle of Wight on through rail/sea journeys on:

- Red Funnel ships and Red Jet services between Southampton and East or West Cowes
- Wightlink ships between Portsmouth Harbour and Ryde Pier Head
- Wightlink ships between Lymington Pier and Yarmouth.

Sharing the discounts

For just £1 you can nominate your partner, a relative or a friend to receive a Gold Card Partner’s Card and enjoy a range of discount benefits over the same period as your Gold Card.

3. Further benefits

Apart from the discount available on all standard-class annual season tickets and the highlighted Gold Card benefits available to many in the South East of England, some train companies, as identified below, offer other additional benefits exclusively to passengers who have a standard-class annual season ticket.

c2c

- Four free off-peak return tickets to anywhere on the c2c network for use by anyone, per year
- Payments by interest-free direct debit.

Chiltern Railways

- Free weekend travel across the whole Chiltern Railway network when you buy an annual season ticket to/from London
- Six free off-peak day passes (for you or your friends), for use across the whole of the Chiltern Railway network, per year, when you buy an annual season ticket to/from London.

First Great Western

- You will be issued a Devon and Cornwall Gold Card if the route on your annual season ticket is wholly within Devon and Cornwall. The Devon and Cornwall Gold Card offers:
 - 34% discount on Cheap Day and Saver tickets for journeys made within Devon and Cornwall. The card holder may be accompanied by one adult who will receive the same discount on the Cheap Day and Saver tickets, along with four children (under the age of 16) who will be charged a flat fare of £1 each
 - 34% discount on Cornish Day and Devon Day Ranger tickets. The card holder may be accompanied by one adult who will also receive a third discount on the same tickets, along with four children (under the age of 16) who will be charged a flat fare of £2 each
 - 50% discount on the St Ives Day Ranger ticket. The card holder may be accompanied by one adult who will also receive the 50% discount on the same ticket, along with four children (under the age of 16) who will be charged a flat fare of £2 each
 - all discounts are available for journeys made wholly within Cornwall and Devon.

GNER

- You can pay for your annual season ticket by interest-free instalments⁵
- You can reserve your own seat
- You will be issued with four weekday upgrades to First Class for use over the length and on the route of your annual season ticket
- Unlimited discount of 34% off Standard Advance 4 (advance purchase ticket) single tickets for you plus one other accompanying person
- £20 of catering vouchers to use on the onboard train trolley catering service, per year.

Merseyrail

- Season tickets are zonal: the annual season ticket can be used for more destinations than the point to point journey that you have purchased it for.

Midland Mainline

- Up to 3 accompanying adults can travel with a 35% discount off Saver and Cheap Day tickets along with up to three accompanying children (aged 5 -15) having 75% discount off either Saver or Cheap Day tickets at the weekend. Valid across the Midland Mainline network, at the weekend
- You can pay for your Annual Season ticket by interest-free instalments⁶

Silverlink

- Four free First Class return tickets to anywhere on Silverlink for use by anyone, per year

South West Trains

- You will be issued with six tickets annually, entitling you to free travel on the South West Trains network at the weekend.

⁵ At time of purchase, 25% of the overall total, with the rest owing in four (0% interest) further instalments due at approximately two-month intervals.

⁶ 20% of the cost of the annual season ticket will be payable on issue, and the balance will be payable in 8 equal monthly instalments. The Direct Debit is interest-free, at no extra cost.

Summary of Annual Season ticket benefits

Train Company	Discounted Travel: 40 for 52 weeks travel.	Gold Card.	Food Vouchers for use on board train.	Selected number of free weekday upgrades to First Class per year.	Reserving your own seat free of charge.	Unlimited free travel across the train company's network at the weekend.	Selected amount of free travel across the train company's network at the weekend.	Devon and Cornwall Gold Card.	Discounted travel on selected advance purchase tickets.	Pay by Direct Debit.	Selected number of off-peak passes for you or friends to use anywhere on train company's network.	Zonal travel: travel anywhere within the zone that your route falls into on your season ticket at anytime.
Arriva Trains Wales	X											
C2C	X	X								X	X	
Central Trains	X	X										
Chiltern Railways	X	X				X					X	
First Capital Connect	X	X										
First Great Western	X	X						X				
First Scotrail	X											
First TransPennine Express	X											
GNER	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		
Midland Mainline	X	X								X		
Merseyrail	X											X

Northern	X											
One	X	X										
Silverlink Trains	X	X										
South West Trains	X	X					X					
Southeastern	X	X										
Southern Railway	X	X										
Virgin Trains	X	X										



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