

## Guide Dogs have a special trip to the station on National Dog Day

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Two Guide Dogs in training, Zea and Elli were given the day off from their regular schedule to celebrate National Dog Day, taking a special trip to see and experience being on a TransPennine Express (TPE) train as well as familiarising themselves with being at a train station.

Zea, a black Labrador and Elli, a yellow Labrador, Golden Retriever cross, have been training to become Guide Dogs for 14 weeks but their trainers, Kim Brooking and Laura Taylor, gave the two dogs a trip out to celebrate the special day and familiarise themselves within a railway setting.

The dogs and their trainers boarded a TPE train and the on-board conductor made their visit a little sweeter by making a fuss of the pair.

Natasha Marsay, Accessibility and Integration Manager for TransPennine Express, said: "We were delighted to be able to help Zea and Elli enjoy their day off from their regular training routines for National Dog Day.

"Guide Dogs can be a huge help for people who have a visual impairment, enabling them to be more independent and connect with others. After more than a year of reduced interactions due to the

pandemic, TransPennine Express and Guide Dogs know that now, more than ever, getting together has never felt better.”

TPE is committed to making its services accessible for all customers and anyone in need of some extra support when making their journey can book this via the Passenger Assist team either online, over the phone or at the station. More details can be found at: <https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/travelling-with-us/passenger-assist>

Shirley Morgan, Communications Manager for Guide Dogs North West, said: “It was fantastic for Zea and Elli to visit the station and board a TransPennine Express train to celebrate National Dog Day.

“At Guide Dogs, our ambition is a future where every person with sight loss has the confidence and support they need to live their lives to the full. Using trains, buses and getting out and about independently is a huge part of that. We are aiming to support more people year on year, either through our dogs or through our broad range of other services for vision impaired adults and children.”

TPE has also partnered with the Campaign to End Loneliness and is committed to raising awareness of loneliness and helping customers in the North and Scotland who currently experience, or who have experienced loneliness during the pandemic make invaluable connections.

Brittany Stead says that being a guide dog owner has helped her connect with others: “Having my Guide Dog, Honey has enabled me to be independent. Honey provides me with the confidence to navigate through busy areas, travel on public transport and socialise with friends.”

For those looking to travel by train, tickets can be purchased online via the TPE website or using the TPE Express App where people can pay using Apple or Google Pay or PayPal. E-tickets are also available allowing customers to use their phone instead of a paper ticket.

The train company is encouraging all customers, unless exempt, to wear a face covering at stations and onboard our trains as a courtesy to others. More information can be found here <https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/travelling-with-us/travel-with-confidence>

*Photo credit: TransPennine Express*