

GWR launches new timetable across Greater Bristol with changes to 75% of all trains

December 19, 2019



The new December weekday train timetable for Bristol has been launched today, providing faster journey times, more seats and more frequent services to key locations. Users are being warned to check before travelling to avoid being caught out.

Regular travellers have been asked to check their new journey times for the biggest timetable change on the network since 1976. The new timetable takes advantage of infrastructure improvements between Bristol and London and the electric capability of GWR's Intercity Express Trains (IETs) for the first time.

Additional train services will help reduce the fastest train times between London and Bristol Temple Meads by as much as 17 minutes and reduce the fastest journey times between London and Bristol Parkway to just 68 minutes, with the largest wholesale timetable change since the 1970s. The journey-time improvements will also benefit customers travelling from Taunton, Weston-super-Mare, Bath and Chippenham.

The planned improvements are so significant, especially for those who travel regularly and are used to catching a particular service every day, that GWR launched an awareness campaign to highlight the

changes ahead, and make sure customers are prepared. It is encouraging customers to find out more at www.gwr.com/timetable2019 before they head to their local station.

From today three extra trains will operate between Bristol Temple Meads and London Paddington in the morning and evening peaks, increasing the frequency of service from two an hour to three. The extra trains will run non-stop from Chippenham and will use the full accelerating power of GWR's new trains. On top of this there will also be four extra off-peak services from Bristol Temple Meads to London Paddington, via Bristol Parkway.

Two additional services in the morning and evening peaks will also operate non-stop from Bristol Parkway (originating in South Wales) and then direct into London Paddington.

West of England Mayor, Tim Bowles, said: "This is great news for the West of England and will help people switch from cars to public transport, reducing congestion and improving the air we breathe. The new timetable will support the new rail services we have planned across the region through MetroWest and it's great to see even more investment in both track and train."

Customers will see journey times into London, non-stop from Bristol Parkway, cut to just 68 minutes. The fastest journey times between London Paddington and Bristol Temple Meads will be cut to 79, 17 minutes faster than is possible today.

GWR Managing Director Mark Hopwood said: "This timetable has been a number of years in the making, enabling us to deliver the benefits of new Intercity Express Trains, and modernised infrastructure, for our customers. With the changes we realise that investment in trains and infrastructure, and deliver on the promise we made to customers for more services, more seats and faster journeys.

"More than 350 extra on-board staff have been taken on, more than 1,200 drivers trained, and we will have extra staff at stations throughout our network to help as we embark on this new journey.

"We have worked hard to help people understand how the changes will affect them. We have spoken with our customers as often as possible, possibly annoyingly so, to help ensure a smooth transition, but we all recognise there will be some issues to iron out as everyone gets used to the changes."

There are also more improvements for customers travelling between Cardiff and Bristol, as GWR continues to roll out five-carriage Turbo trains to replace the current three-carriage Class 150 units on the Cardiff-Portsmouth route.

Those travelling on GWR services between Cardiff, Bristol and the South West can also expect to see Castle Class trains, modernised high-speed trains with four carriages and automatic closing doors, running at the busiest times of day on the route. These trains will help to increase seat numbers on the line by more than 1,800 every weekday.

The Severn Beach line, which was the first to see newer, longer Turbo trains to improve capacity in 2017, sees a significant improvement to Sunday services, with trains extending through to Severn Beach.

Network Rail Route Managing Director for Wales and Western, Mike Gallop, said: “The timetable change this December will be the biggest since 1976 and will mean faster journeys and more frequent services for passengers.

“It follows unprecedented investment in railway infrastructure including electrification, improved signalling, upgraded stations and much more, which together with the introduction of new trains will transform rail travel.”

In the run-up to the timetable change GWR has sent six million emails to customers; put up hundreds of posters at sites across its network, both at stations and in the community; has run 60 meet-the-manager sessions at stations; has met with transport leaders across the network; and secured hours of airtime across the local media to raise awareness.

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