

Kent & East Sussex Railway holding first Diesel Gala in 14 years this weekend

April 10, 2024



The **Kent & East Sussex Railway** (K&ESR) is holding its first **Diesel Gala in 14 years** this coming weekend (12th – 14th April) as the first major event in its 50th Anniversary celebration programme. No less than five historic diesel locomotives will be in action – three ‘guests’ making their first ever appearance at the railway as well as two from the K&ESR’s own diesel fleet.

“Diesel trains have played an important part in the evolution of the UK’s rail system and were there at the start of the K&ESR’s services back in 1974,” said K&ESR General Manager Robin Coombes. “They are iconic in their own right and it is our job as an educational charity to help visitors understand and appreciate that role as we bring British transport history to life while giving passengers an amazing day out.”

Just like steam trains, diesel trains have their own loyal following amongst railway enthusiasts and the railway expects a busy event. Online booking is therefore advised to avoid disappointment and to save on ticket prices which will be higher for walk-up purchases.

Special Features at the Gala

Saturday Morning Cavalcade (13th April)

Prior to the start of services (10.30am) there will be a chance to see all five diesels together. The cavalcade will leave Rolvenden at c9.30am, travelling up Tenterden Bank into Tenterden Town Station.

Driver Experiences

Fulfil a lifetime dream and drive an iconic diesel train!

- Friday 12th – Sunday 14th. Short (10-minute) driver experiences aboard Ruston for £10 throughout the weekend from 11am until 3.30pm in a siding at Tenterden Station. These are available on a first come first served basis and are not bookable in advance. Payment by card or cash on the day.
- Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th. A unique opportunity to enjoy a full 90 minutes of driving a diesel hauled train on the K&ESR. This includes taking the controls going up Tenterden bank, the steepest incline of any heritage railway in the UK. Two of the locomotives available to drive – Class 37 and Class 17 – have never been to the K&ESR before and Class 37 from the Great Central Railway is the largest diesel ever to travel on the line. Booking is in advance via the website.

Vintage bus service from Headcorn

A vintage bus shuttle service will be operating between Tenterden Town Station and Headcorn Station to connect with mainline services between London (out of Charing Cross, Waterloo East and London Bridge via Tonbridge and Sevenoaks) and the Kent coast. Timetable available on the website.

Friday evening Beerex Train to Bodiam, sponsored by Shepherd Neame

Modelled on the K&ESR's popular Real Ale & Cider trains, the Beerex Special departs at 7.30pm, returning to Tenterden at 10pm, in time for a vintage bus link to Headcorn station. Food, drinks and live music will be available at Tenterden Town Station beforehand, with band The Rockitmen playing from 6pm. Tickets include the entertainment, but refreshments need to be purchased separately.

More details about Gala and the participating diesel locomotives are available on the website <https://kesr.org.uk/diesel-weekend/>