

LNER transforms travel to make returning to rail simpler

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London North Eastern Railway (LNER) is transforming travel to make journeys for people returning to rail even simpler, giving customers greater choice as more people look to travel again after the easing of lockdown restrictions.

LNER has made the process of planning, booking and travelling on its services simpler, and improved its reservation process to help customers to book a seat as close as five minutes prior to travel in order to make the journey even more comfortable for everyone.

Millions of tickets are now on sale as far ahead as September, and with an increase in journey searches and bookings for the summer, LNER's new award-winning, simple to use app is making it even easier and accessible for customers to book their travel plans, make any changes and reserve a seat.

In response to COVID-19 and the need to maintain social distancing, LNER accelerated plans to trial reservation-only services. Since it was introduced, everyone travelling has been assured a seat, even those catching a train at short notice and those with 'walk-up' tickets.

As social distancing will be no longer required by the UK government from 19 July, LNER is adapting its approach – under the new name of *Seat Sure*. From 19 July, LNER will continue to recommend customers reserve a seat, while increasing the flexibility for those who want to travel without making a reservation.

To provide customers with comfortable journeys on LNER services and give confidence that trains will not be overcrowded, *Seat Sure* means that most seats will require a reservation. To protect the flexibility of the walk-up railway, there will be a number of unreserved seats in Coach C for Standard and a number of seats in Coach M in First Class, or Coach E in First Class in a five-coach train. Customers without a reservation will be able to travel in these unreserved areas of the train.

YouGov research, conducted on behalf of LNER, found that one in three British adults would be more likely to take a long-distance train journey instead of by car if they were guaranteed a seat, while 14 per cent said they were less likely. LNER has conducted extensive research throughout the pandemic and is using the results and insights gathered to adapt its approach in response to this feedback. The research also found that having a guaranteed seat would make 34 per cent of those who previously flew long distance at least once a year before the pandemic more likely to take a train.

David Horne, LNER Managing Director, said: “We’ve been working hard throughout the pandemic to design new ways of making journeys by train – which is the most sustainable method of long-distance travel – as accessible, enjoyable and appealing as possible.

“We’ve made booking tickets and travelling with LNER even smarter and introduced new products that make the whole experience of rail travel even more enjoyable. The tools we have invested in and continue to refine are industry-leading and offer customers greater flexibility and more choice when it comes to travelling with us.

“Research shows that having an assured seat has benefits beyond social distancing and the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that in 2019, more than 60 per cent of LNER journeys were made using tickets which had a reservation attached. In recent months, that has increased to 84 per cent.

“*Seat Sure* allows us to avoid overcrowding, which we know is important for our customers, whilst helping us manage planned disruption by making data more readily available for people travelling or planning to travel with us.”

In another positive change introduced in March 2021, bookings for Passenger Assist can now be made six hours before travel, rather than the previous 24 hours’ notice that was required to guarantee assistance. This is in addition to the ‘turn-up-and-go’ assistance service.

For customers taking bikes onboard, bicycle spaces can now be booked at the same time as buying tickets directly through the LNER website as well as at a Travel Centre or via the Customer Contact Centre. LNER is also working with Network Rail to expand bicycle parking at various stations.

In addition, to make it easier for customers to order food and drinks from their seat, ‘Let’s Eat at Your Seat’ has been introduced in an industry-first. It allows customers in Standard Class to order refreshments

directly to their seat by scanning a QR code on their smartphone. This revolutionary system complements the onboard cafe bar which continues to operate.

A generous new loyalty scheme, LNER Perks, also gives customers the opportunity to earn credit against the purchase of train tickets on the LNER website or mobile app, which can then be used to save money on future LNER journeys.

To ensure customers can travel with confidence, LNER is continuing to deliver record levels of enhanced cleaning onboard its trains and in stations.

To enjoy the best journey experience, customers are highly recommended to reserve a seat to travel on an LNER service. LNER's online reservations tool allows customers to see which seats are booked, share their seat preferences, as well as move their seat using the online seat map. Reservations can be made for free when booking, or up to five minutes before departure, at [www.LNER.co.uk/Reserve](https://www.lner.co.uk/Reserve) , on the LNER app, at a Travel Centre, via our Customer Contact Centre or by speaking to a team member.

The legal requirement to wear face coverings in England will be lifted on 19 July, although it will remain mandatory in Scotland. The UK government expects and recommends that people will still wear face coverings (unless exempt) in areas where people are in close contact, including public transport. LNER is asking customers to continue to wear face coverings on its trains, in stations and in Travel Centres and is reminding customers that face coverings are required by law in Scotland, unless exempt.