

New timetables and longer trains, but message remains the same to only use the railways if necessary

July 6, 2020



A major timetable uplift has been introduced for many train operating companies – with more services and longer trains.

With pubs, cinemas and more shops opening this week, Britain's train companies are preparing for more people to start returning to the railways by publishing their pledge to maximise space, boost cleaning, help with hygiene and improve information to ensure passengers can travel safely.

It comes as the rail industry continues to urge people to use public transport only if necessary to ensure there is enough space for those who need to use it. To help, as more businesses reopen, some train operators started adding more services from Sunday (5 July). This reflects the forthcoming relaxation of lockdown measures by the Government and will help employees across newly opened up sectors get back to work.

Train operator CrossCountry is running longer trains from today (July 6) to provide more space on board

and resume services to places not connected to its long-distance network for many months.

To meet the expected demand, CrossCountry will operate eighteen trains each day formed of two coupled together across its core routes to provide up to twice the normal capacity.

There will also be four additional return services between Birmingham and Newcastle each day to help this busy route. As well as extra space on board, Penzance, Paignton, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Stansted Airport will also see daily services return, reconnecting them to the wider CrossCountry network. In total, from July 6 CrossCountry will operate 85% of its normal daily seating capacity compared to around 55% in March.

Although the Government is reducing the distance people are expected to maintain from others to one metre where additional protections are available, as the numbers travelling increases more time needs to be allowed at stations for people to board and alight trains if this distance is to be maintained.

To achieve this while also maintaining the national railway timetable, a small number of stations will see their CrossCountry services reduced or withdrawn to allow additional time at the more heavily used stations. Where this happens, care has been taken to ensure other train services are available so people can still travel, although a change of train may be necessary for some journeys.

Commenting on the changes, CrossCountry's Managing Director, Tom Joyner, said: "As we emerge from lockdown people want to resume travelling by train as the fastest and easiest way to move around the country. While social distancing remains a requirement, we are pleased to provide almost a third more capacity on many trains than we could in March, meaning people can be confident they can travel with us in comfort and safety. And with towns and cities that have not been served by us for many months again seeing daily services, the CrossCountry rail network is again open for business."

From today (July 6) Northern says it will be operating more services in the traditional morning and evening peaks with a focus on getting people to and from the region's major towns and cities.

To meet the expected demand, whilst ensuring the safety of passengers and staff, the company says it will be utilising additional carriages to make longer trains, provide enhanced cleaning, keeping soap restocked more often in train toilets and stations, and providing vending machines for face coverings and hand sanitiser at some key stations.

A spokesperson for Northern, said: "Since the start of the pandemic we have amended our timetables to provide the best possible service for key workers and those making necessary journeys.

"Now, with more people returning to work, we are re-introducing some peak time services to help keep the north on the move.

"But we need our customers to do their bit in keeping themselves and others as safe as possible.

"Face coverings remain mandatory for all – with some exceptions – and all customers should continue washing their hands as often as possible and try to maintain distance between them and other rail travellers. Although we're adding more peak services, we're asking people to travel outside of the busier

peak hours where possible.”

The Safer Travel Pledge, which will be displayed in railway stations around the country, will help people who work in pubs, cafes, hairdressers and the wider hospitality industry to have confidence in their journey as they return to work for the first time in over three months.

Under the new Safer Travel Pledge, extra services are being introduced by the rail industry where possible to meet increased demand and timetables will be designed to prioritise more trains at peak times and busier stations to prevent overcrowding.

Here are the eight things rail companies are doing to help combat the spread of COVID-19. And the four ways passengers can help.

Train companies...

- **More trains and extra carriages in timetables** – to make extra room and help with social distancing
- **New social distancing signs** – so people know where to go, stay 2 metres apart where possible and avoid pinch points
- **Powerful fog cleaning on trains** – with trains and stations cleaned more frequently through the day
- **Soap restocked more often in stations and on trains** – so it’s easier to keep your hands virus-free
- **Vending machines for face coverings and hand sanitiser** – at over 150 stations making it easier for passengers to buy what they need
- **Hand sanitiser points in over 300 stations** – helping protect people from the virus
- **New service on Messenger app alerting people to busy trains** – look up National Rail on Messenger to get started
- **Up to 2,500 extra staff available at key locations** – to help passengers on their way

Passengers...

- **Travel off-peak** – keep distance wherever possible and avoid the busiest times
- **Wash your hands** – carry hand sanitiser and wash hands before and after your journey
- **Bring a face covering** – wear it throughout your journey, but remember that hidden disabilities and medical conditions mean not everyone can
- **Check before you travel** – visit nationalrail.co.uk before setting off and sign up for alerts on the Messenger app

Robert Nisbet, director of nations and regions at the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train operators and Network Rail, said: “With pubs, restaurants and other businesses reopening next week, more people will be taking the train. While we are still asking people only to take the train if necessary, as the lockdown is eased further we are stepping up timetables and taking other steps so people can travel with confidence. In return, we want people to help us by avoiding the busiest times, wearing a face covering and checking the latest train information online before setting off.”

Photo credit: CrossCountry