

London TravelWatch's guide to travel over the festive period



The Transport Secretary has said that people should consider avoiding the railway at Christmas because of the limits the current pandemic have put on the network's capacity with the need for social distancing. But some people will need to travel so London TravelWatch has put together some advice for people planning to travel over Christmas and New Year to enable passengers to plan their travel and avoid engineering works.

This guide covers National Rail services, Eurostar and services in London provided by Transport for London.

This advice should be read alongside the [guidance issued by the Government about the new tiers](#) which will come in once the second national lockdown has ended and the [guidance around the relaxation of Covid rules between 23-27 December](#).

Advice on buying tickets and claiming refunds

Should I book in advance or wait until I need to travel?

- Advance purchase tickets are often the cheapest tickets but they are also the most inflexible, with the greatest number of restrictions but passengers are being advised to pre-book their seats by many train companies as the number of seats available will be limited due to the need for social distancing. And some train companies are saying that passengers **MUST** pre-book their seat to travel and this may be on routes which don't usually require you to pre-book.
- Where they have a choice, passengers will need to decide whether they want to take a risk and purchase a cheaper advance ticket or wait until closer to their travel date and risk paying more or not getting a seat on the service they planned to use.

If I have to cancel my journey because new lockdown measures at my destination mean that my plans have changed as I can't meet the people I had planned to see can I get a refund on my advance ticket?

- If the train, including Eurostar trains, still runs then the advance ticket restrictions, including whether you can change your ticket or get a refund will

still apply whether they are imposed either by the UK or European countries. The exception is that if you bought an advance National Rail ticket to travel during December, before 26 November you can change it.

- Current or future Covid measures throughout the country such as rules on whether or not people can meet up may not affect a passenger's actual train journey but could impact on what they can do when they get there so passengers should take all Covid measures, including potential new measures into consideration when buying a rail ticket.



Am I entitled to a cash refund or rail vouchers?

- If the train is cancelled, including Eurostar trains, the passenger is entitled to a full cash refund. To claim a refund, the passenger must return to the place of purchase and not the train company with which they were due to travel.
- Be careful if buying through a third-party seller as some of – these companies may be less willing to refund passengers in the same way that train companies themselves are.

Where are planned engineering works taking place this Christmas?

Major engineering work is taking place at Kings Cross over Christmas as part of the [East Coast Upgrade](#), closing all lines from Saturday 26 to Wednesday 30 December. From Thursday 31 December until Sunday 3 January some lines will reopen with a reduced service to and from Kings Cross.

The other main engineering work is taking place in the following locations:

- Between London Liverpool Street and Shenfield, closing various lines from Saturday 26 December to Sunday 3 January.
- Between London Liverpool Street and Manningtree / Hythe, closing all lines from Sunday 27 December to Thursday 31 December.
- Between Peterborough and Stamford, closing all lines on Sunday 27 and Monday 28 December.



- In the Bristol Temple Meads area, closing all lines on Sunday 27 December.
- Between Fareham and Portsmouth Harbour, closing all lines from Friday 1 to Sunday 3 January.

Could coaches provide a good alternative to rail?

- [National Express](#) coaches provide an alternative to rail. They are offering one free ticket amendment on their most restricted tickets until 21 March which applies to their national journeys but local Covid measures will apply at destinations. For example, passengers travelling to Scotland or Wales may experience different measures relating to who/how many people they can meet up with and where, depending on their destination.
- There is limited seating due to social distancing, but the onboard toilet facilities are available.
- National Express' partner that runs into Europe is suspended with no further information.
- Other coach companies may have other restrictions.

Which services will be running in London over the festive period?



There will be no trains, Tube, buses, trams or DLR on Christmas Day. Many train companies are not running trains on Boxing Day this year - so please check before you travel. Train companies and TfL (Overground, Tube, buses, trams, DLR) will be running Saturday, modified or reduced services during the festive season, so please check to see if and when your normal service is running.

TfL usually suspends the Congestion Charge over the festive period but [this year the only day it will not operate will be Christmas Day](#).

As always, the advice is check before you travel during the festive season as your journey may be subject to engineering works.

Check the [Transport for London \(TfL\)](#) or [National Rail](#) websites to see how your journey may be affected.

Guide up to date as of 04/12/20