

Our autism friendly guide to travelling by train





Introduction

This guide has been designed to show and tell you about some of the things you can expect to see while you're using the railway.

It will include information, pictures, sounds and links for further information. If you're only looking for information about part of your journey you can use the contents page to skip to the section that is most relevant to you.

Additional help

Asking for help at a station

At a station which is staffed, then you could ask a member of staff to help you; this could be done verbally or by using a communication device or card.

Asking for help whilst on a train

There may be a train manager on your train who you can ask for help; this could be done verbally or by using a communication device or card.

Some people choose to carry an information card that they can use to explain to other people that they are autistic or that to use to request help (without needing to talk).

Contents

A few things to know before you travel

- You may hear lots of different sounds at a station. They are often loud and happen at the same time. Below are some buttons you can press to familiarise yourself with some of the sounds you could hear. Each button will take you to a webpage to play the sound.

- The time at which you travel can have a big impact on how busy the station or the train is. If you would prefer a quieter journey, it may be helpful to try and avoid travelling during rush hour times.

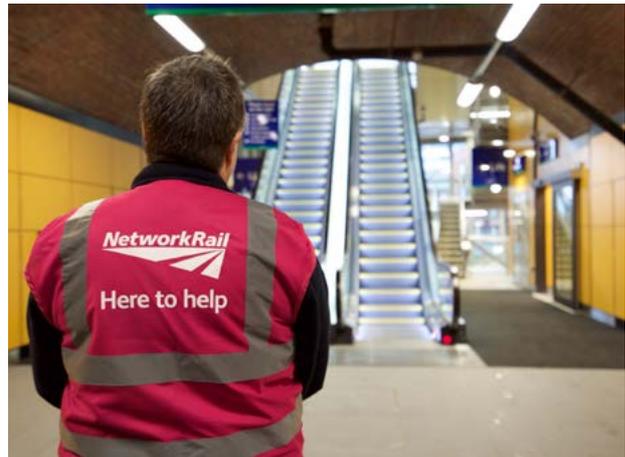
- You may choose to wear the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard to indicate that you have a hidden disability and that you may need a little extra help or time. This is something that our station staff, along with people at many other venues are being trained to recognise.



- We have systems in place at our stations to ensure that passengers are safe. Each station will follow their local Covid-19 measures to keep passengers safe. This might include things such as arrows on the floor to create one-way systems or marks to help people to social distance.
- You'll find toilets throughout our stations. There will be signs to toilets, such as those in the picture.



- If you need any help whilst at any of our stations please go to the customer service desk or speak to one of the members of staff around the station. Staff in different stations often wear different uniforms as they work for different companies, but they may look similar to these photos.



- Sometimes the platform your train is expected to arrive into can change. If this happens, there will be an announcement to let you know or you can check the board on the platform to make sure you know which platform to go to. You can also find real time updates on <https://www.thetrainline.com/live>
- If you are travelling on a train into the station your platform number may have changed on route. You can usually check this on <https://www.thetrainline.com/live> which shows you your arrival platform. If you have a connecting train journey you will also be able to see what platform your next train should be arriving at. You can also listen to any onboard announcements, or announcements at the station regarding platform allocations.

Packing for your journey

Think about what items you would find useful and pack them for your journey.

Essentials:



Train tickets

(paper, electronic or Ticket collection reference)



Photo by Philip Veater on Unsplash

Money

(including cash, card or electronic payment methods)

You may also want to bring (dependent on your own personal needs):

- Phone
- Phone charger or Charging device
- Communication devices or cards
- Headphones, ear plugs or ear defenders
- Sensory items
- Snacks or food
- Drinks
- Any medication needed
- Hand-sanitiser
- Something to help pass the time (e.g. book, portable games console)
- Notebook & pen
- Sunflower Hidden Disabilities lanyard and card
- Information card (e.g. National Autistic Society 'I am autistic card')

Additional things to be aware of:

Train tickets – if you have your tickets on your phone, make sure they are active and easy to locate. If you have a paper version, make sure it is an easy to locate place.

Buying your ticket

You can purchase your tickets online or at stations which have ticket machines or ticket offices.



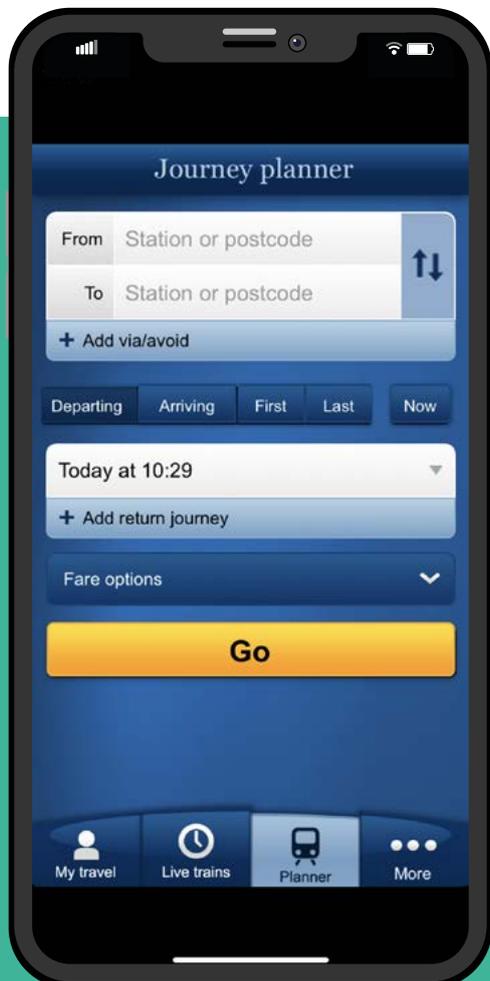
Online – you could purchase through the **trainline website** or directly through the train operator's website or app. You may have the option to choose your tickets to be digital, posted to you or for collection at a station. If you are choosing the collection option – you will need to check the station you are departing from has ticket machines.

At stations – you could purchase your tickets at the station on the day of travel (though this can mean they will be more expensive). Some stations have ticket offices and ticket machines, some just have ticket machines and some might have neither.



While you're buying your ticket here are some things you might want to consider.

- If you have a Disabled Persons Railcard – this can give 1/3 off adult train fares for you and a companion.
- You can find out more information about the Disabled Persons Railcard on their website.
- There are different ticket types that you can purchase which can vary in price;
 - » Advance tickets – only valid on a particular date and train (but may be cheaper).
 - » Anytime tickets – can be used on any date and train (but may be more expensive).
 - » Off-Peak or Super-Off Peak tickets – have some time restrictions on them (which can vary across different train companies), but they can enable cheaper travel if you want to travel outside of the busiest times.



Check before you travel

It's a good idea to plan your journey before you get to the station. You can see if there are any planned maintenance works on the line which might affect your journey.

Collecting your tickets

- If collecting your ticket at a station, you will need to have the reference number of the booking available. It can be helpful to have this reference number ready in advance so you can access it easily for when you need it.



- When collecting your tickets, there will often be more than one piece to your ticket – please ensure you wait until they are all printed.
- You can visit the [trainline website](https://www.trainline.com) for more information.

Once you have your tickets, keep them in a safe place – you'll need them later in your journey.

Getting to the station

There are lots of ways you can get to the train station.



Photo courtesy of Stagecoach

By bus



By car



Photo courtesy of Stagecoach

By coach



By walking



By bicycle



By Underground/Subway/Tube

Finding your platform



- Most stations will show the trains leaving the station on a departures screen. In big stations, this will often be in the main entrance / concourse. Look for your destination and train time - next to it there will be a platform number.
- There is often a lot of information on the displays, so don't worry if you can't find the bit you want. A friendly staff member should be able to help you locate the information you need.



- In many stations, you may have to pass through ticket barriers in order to get to your platform. In some larger stations, you might not be allowed to go through the barriers to the platform until it is close to the time of departure or your train is announced as 'ready for boarding' (this may be indicated by the departure boards not showing a platform number). This may be to allow people to get off the train and/or to manage the amount of people on the platform.
- If and when you are able to do so, go to the allocated platform and wait for your train. If you have to wait to be allowed onto the platform, wait where you can see a departure board.
- Some stations have waiting rooms on the platforms which have departure screens inside.



- When you are able to, go to the platform to prepare to get onto your train.

Going through the barriers

There are multiple ways of getting through the barriers depending on your ticket type.



- If you have a paper ticket, insert it into the barriers and collect it again at the top. The barriers will then open. If this doesn't work, ask a member of staff near the barriers to help you. Sometimes the ticket does not come back out, but the barriers will still open, this is usually when you have ended your journey and the ticket is now expired and of no use to you. If you still need the ticket, ask a member of staff for help.
- If you have an e-ticket, make sure your phone is on the brightest setting and click on your ticket barcode. Hover your phone with your screen facing about an inch above the scanner and the barrier should open. If this doesn't work, ask a member of staff near the barriers to help you. It is important to keep your phone safe, so only get it out just before you need it.

If there are other passengers around, it may be worth standing back and watching others use them first. The barriers open quite abruptly once a ticket has been accepted, and you will need to move quickly through them once they have opened before they close again. If you're travelling with a suitcase, you may want to look for one of the wide barriers, usually located at the end of the line.

Waiting on the platform

When you get to the platform – check the board to make sure you're on the right one.



Getting on the train

If you have a seat reserved, check which carriage that seat is in, and aim to get on the train in the correct carriage.

Different trains may have different types of doors, and different ways that they open. Some may open automatically and others by pressing a button (which will light up or flash when it is unlocked).



Once the doors are open, you can get on the train. Mind the gap between the train and the platform edge.

If there are lots of people waiting to get on the train, they'll usually form a queue. This can become busy and you may wish to stand further back from the crowds.

Finding your seat

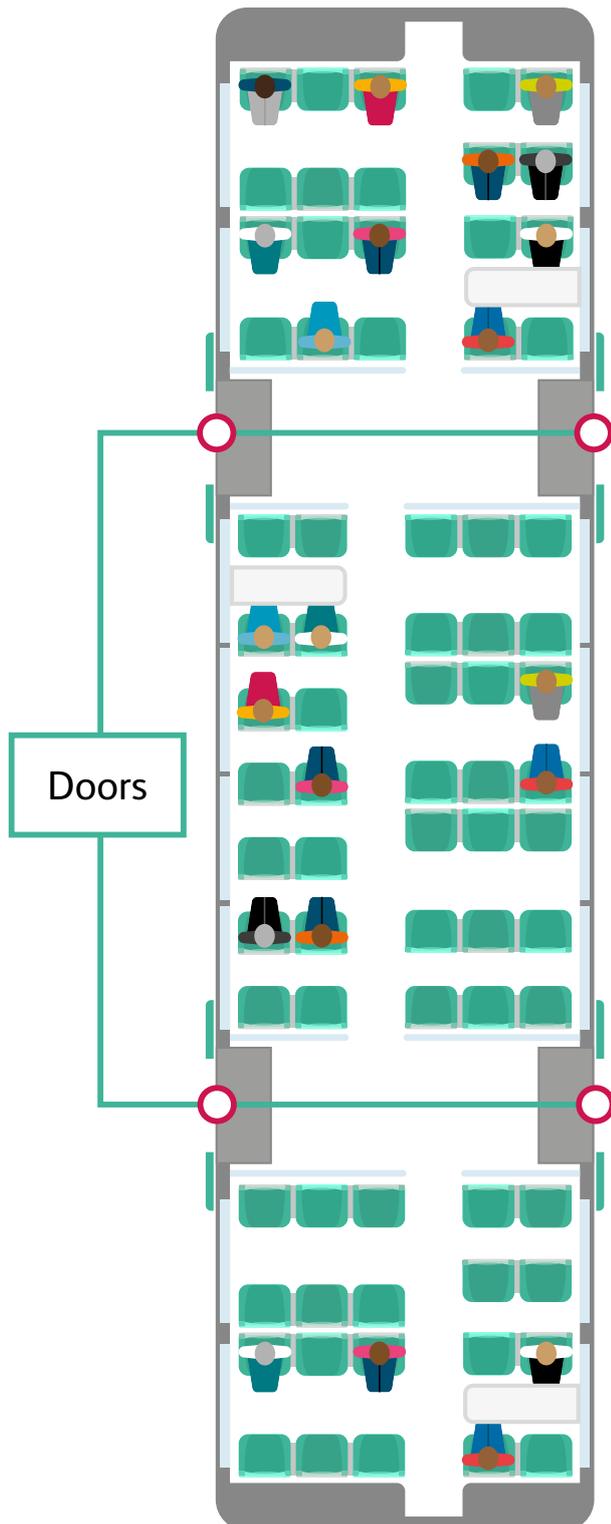
If you have a reserved allocated seat:

- Walk onto the train and find your seat. You can find your seat number on your ticket if you have been allocated a seat. If you haven't been allocated a seat, you can sit on any unused seat.
- Sometimes, people sit in seats that are not reserved to them because there is nowhere else to sit – and they sit there knowing they may have to move if the ticket holder does turn up.
- If someone is sitting in your seat, it is OK to either ask them to move or go and find the train manager to ask for advice about where else to sit.
- Alternatively, you may choose to sit in another unreserved seat that is nearby.



If you are on a train without a reservation system or you didn't reserve a seat:

- Walk onto the train and look for a free seat. Some trains do not have any reserved seating, so you would need to look for any seat that is free. If you are on a train that has reserved seating, then you can look for any seat that says it is unreserved.



On the train



- Once you have located your seat, you may wish to put small items of luggage in the luggage rack above your seat. If you have any large items of luggage, these can be left in larger luggage racks that you can usually find at either end of the carriage. For some smaller, short-distance trains there may be no racks for luggage and you may have to keep it by your feet.



- You may see lots of people sitting alone on the train. Most people will opt to sit alone unless they are travelling with friends.
- Some people prefer to listen to music, read books or even use their laptops on the train, rather than have a conversation.

Arriving at the station at the end of your journey

- Once your train has come to a stop at your destination, make sure you have all of your belongings and go to the door. If you are the first person to exit the train, you may have to press a button or use a handle to open the door. Once you have pressed the button, it may take a moment for the door to fully open.

If you have trouble with the door, ask a member of staff to help you.

- As you get off the train, mind the gap between the train and the platform edge, and then follow the signs to the way out or to the departure board if you are looking for the next connecting train on your journey.



- If there is a barrier which is closed, use your ticket to open the barrier and leave the station.



Useful links

Station access map

accessmap.nationalrail.co.uk

Book travel assistance

booking.passengerassistance.com

Live information on current delays, platform changes and departures via text

www.nationalrail.co.uk/travel-information/alerts-and-notifications

Accessibility awareness products

stickmancommunications.co.uk/products

JAM card

www.translink.co.uk/usingtranslink/accessibility/jamcard



This guide was created in partnership with
The National Autistic Society.

The National Autistic Society is here to transform lives,
change attitudes and create a society that works for
autistic people.

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