

# Easy ticket guide



Great Northern

**GN**

GATWICK EXPRESS

SOUTHERN

ThamesLink

WE'RE WITH YOU

Updated May 2026

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We know that buying tickets can seem rather complicated for many customers, particularly those with anxieties when using busy places such as stations.

This simple guide produced with input from our Access Advisory Panel explains the options available when purchasing tickets, whether planning your journey, buying a ticket online or at the station. Our friendly customer facing teams are also ready to help everyone buy the right ticket and enjoy their journey.

This guide is also available in Easy Read format from the travel support section of our websites. See **Useful links** on page 6 for more details.

## How can I plan my journey?

Our websites help you to plan ahead. For example, information is there showing any changes to our timetable.

National Rail Enquiries has timetable and current train running information for all UK train companies to help you plan your journey.

If you need assistance before your journey you can also speak to Assisted Travel for advice.

See page 6 for details



## Where can I get tickets from?

There are many ways of buying a ticket - here are the options available to you to choose from.

### Online

These tickets can be used straight away. You can keep them on your phone or print them off. You can also load the ticket onto our Key Smartcard - see page 4 for details.

### Ticket vending machines

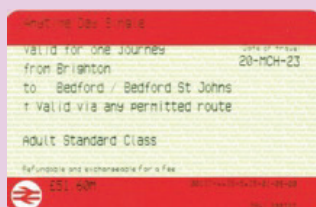
Approximately 95% of stations have 'cash and card' machines, and the rest have 'card only' ticket machines.

### Ticket office

Many stations have ticket offices that can let you know about tickets including those that they can sell, and those that can be loaded onto Smartcards or eTickets.

### Staff on trains

If you can't buy your ticket before you travel because there is no working ticket machine and the ticket office is closed, you can buy it from staff on board the train or when you get to the end of your journey.



## Tell me about online tickets? How do I purchase the correct ticket?

Our online ticketing web pages clearly show you the tickets available. You can purchase both eTickets and paper tickets online.

Our website informs you about the type of tickets available, including when peak and off-peak tickets can be used, to help you to buy the right ticket.

## How do I get my ticket if I purchase it online?

When you buy an eTicket from our website, it will be emailed to you with a QR barcode on it. You do not need to print this ticket and can show it to staff on your phone. You can also scan it at ticket gates.

eTickets can be purchased either on the website or on the Southern/Thameslink mobile phone app.

See ticket gates section on page 5.

## I don't have a smart phone - what other choices are there?

The Key Smartcard is an alternative to paper tickets that makes it quicker and easier to buy and use tickets. They are available online and from our ticket offices.



## How can I get a paper ticket?

Paper tickets can be purchased at ticket offices or ticket machines. If you are purchasing your ticket online, you can also choose to collect your ticket at a ticket office or ticket machine. Although not needed for tickets bought from our web site, some retailers require you to bring the debit or credit card you used to buy the ticket, when printing the ticket at the station.

## How do I get the right ticket at a ticket machine?

Our ticket machines offer a choice of many tickets and provide useful information on the screen to help you find the cheapest tickets for your journey.

At many stations, staff are nearby to help you use the ticket vending machine – they are all trained to help customers with disabilities or who need assistance.

If you purchase a ticket from one of our ticket machines, and realise you could have bought a cheaper ticket from the same machine, our **'Ticket Vending Machine Price Guarantee'** enables you to get the difference in price back. Please speak to our staff at the ticket office, check our web site or contact our customer services team for more information.



## Help available?

Most of our stations and some of our trains are staffed. They are all there to help you.

Induction loops for hearing aid users are provided at all ticket office windows and some counters are height adjustable.

## How do the ticket gates work?

Automated gates exist at most of our larger stations. They are staffed, and staff are either at the gate or can be contacted by using a gate line help point (audio/visual). The staff are there for your safety and will be able to assist you.

The wider automated gates are for passengers with accessibility needs; they give the customer more time to pass through and are also increased width. These are recommended for those with small children, carrying luggage, or wheelchair/scooter users or those needing a little extra time.

There are three ways to use the gates:

### Paper tickets

Most paper tickets now have a bar code printed on the top. Place the ticket facing downwards onto the glass reader at the ticket gate. If the ticket is valid for travel, the gate will open. If it is not valid, a small light will go red, and the gate will remain closed.

Ticket office staff are trained to assist visually impaired customers for example offering to fold over the top left corner of the ticket to help identify where the bar code is printed.

### Smartcards and contactless bank cards

Use the yellow pad on the gates. It takes a few seconds for the reader to scan the smartcard or bankcard.

### eTickets

Use the barcode reader at the front of the gate, holding the mobile phone or printed out barcode ticket upside down above the glass panel. The gates will either open up or remain closed, depending on the validity of the ticket.

The gate gives a single 'beep' when it has read the ticket. If it gives a 'double beep' check with staff.

Automated gates are operated in two directions. The direction is indicated by the green arrow (for entry) or red crosses (no entry).



## What do I do if I can't get a ticket, or I buy the wrong ticket?

If you need help with ticketing or cannot purchase your ticket before boarding the train, always speak to our helpful staff. They will be able to check if ticket machines or ticket offices were unavailable and are there to help you. If there are no staff around, you can contact us by pressing the green button on the help point for advice.

If you purchased your paper ticket from any Southern, Thameslink, Great Northern or Gatwick Express ticket office or ticket machine, you can ask for a refund from the ticket office (regardless of which one you purchased the ticket from).

If you have purchased your paper ticket online and **have not printed** that ticket – you can receive a refund via your online account.

If you have purchased your paper ticket online and **have printed** the ticket – you can receive a refund from any Southern, Thameslink, Great Northern or Gatwick Express ticket office.

If you would like a refund for your ticket that you bought from another retailer including another train operator you should contact them directly.

## Useful links

### Buying train tickets



[ticket.southernrailway.com  
/search](https://ticket.southernrailway.com/search)



[ticket.thameslinkrailway.com  
/search](https://ticket.thameslinkrailway.com/search)



[ticket.greatnorthernrail.com  
/search](https://ticket.greatnorthernrail.com/search)



[ticket.gatwickexpress.com  
/search](https://ticket.gatwickexpress.com/search)



[nationalrail.co.uk/](https://nationalrail.co.uk/)

### Assisted Travel links



[southernrailway.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel](https://southernrailway.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel)



[thameslinkrailway.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel](https://thameslinkrailway.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel)



[greatnorthernrail.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel](https://greatnorthernrail.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel)



[gatwickexpress.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel](https://gatwickexpress.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel)



Southern/Gatwick Express  
0800 138 1016  
(Textphone: 0800 138 1018)



Thameslink/Great Northern  
0800 058 2844  
(Textphone 0800 138 1018)

## Useful links

### Support whilst you're travelling links



[southernrailway.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel  
/support-whilst-travelling](https://southernrailway.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel/support-whilst-travelling)



[thameslinkrailway.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel  
/support-whilst-travelling](https://thameslinkrailway.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel/support-whilst-travelling)



[greatnorthernrail.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel  
/support-whilst-travelling](https://greatnorthernrail.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel/support-whilst-travelling)



[gatwickexpress.com  
/travel-information  
/travel-help/assisted-travel  
/support-whilst-travelling](https://gatwickexpress.com/travel-information/travel-help/assisted-travel/support-whilst-travelling)

### Refunds



[southernrailway.com  
/tickets/buy-tickets  
/refunds-and-changing  
-your-ticket](https://southernrailway.com/tickets/buy-tickets/refunds-and-changing-your-ticket)



[thameslinkrailway.com  
/tickets/buy-tickets  
/refunds-and-changing  
-your-ticket](https://thameslinkrailway.com/tickets/buy-tickets/refunds-and-changing-your-ticket)



[greatnorthernrail.com  
/tickets/buy-tickets  
/refunds-and-changing  
-your-ticket](https://greatnorthernrail.com/tickets/buy-tickets/refunds-and-changing-your-ticket)



[gatwickexpress.com  
/tickets/buy-tickets  
/refunds-and-changing  
-your-ticket](https://gatwickexpress.com/tickets/buy-tickets/refunds-and-changing-your-ticket)

