



## Virgin launches 42 new Edinburgh-London services



*Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell has launched a new cross-border timetable with 42 additional Edinburgh-London trains per week, adding 22,000 seats and delivering a half-hourly frequency for most of the day.*

Virgin Trains has added 42 additional services between Edinburgh and London per week, adding 22,000 seats to the route and prompting a surge in advance bookings. The new timetable was launched on May 16 by Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell, who was joined by Stagecoach Chief Executive Martin Griffiths and David Home, Virgin Trains' Managing Director on the east coast route, to see off the first departure at 9am.

Welcoming the frequency uplift, Mr Mundell said it would mean "more choice and flexibility" for rail travellers. "It will make it easier for Scottish businesses to reach customers and markets right across the UK. These new services will also bring more visitors to Scotland, helping to boost jobs and prosperity," he said.

There are now an additional eight departures on weekdays, which extend services to and from London that previously started or terminated in Newcastle, and two extra weekend services, meaning customers have a half-hourly timetable between the UK and Scottish capitals for most of the day.

Bookings for the new services have grown by 15% in the first two months, compared to the same period last year.

David Home said the new timetable would give customers more choice and flexibility, making rail a more attractive alternative to flying between England and Scotland. "We're really pleased that our new services have proved so popular with the travelling public. We think the combination of service improvements and a half-hourly frequency is a winning combination, and that together with low fares we'll be able to persuade more people to switch from the inconvenience of air travel to the comfort of our trains," he said.

More than a million rail passengers travelled between London and Edinburgh last year. Virgin Trains has unveiled ambitions plans to capture half of this market from airlines by the end of its eight-year franchise on the east coast route in 2023.

## Virgin launches industry-leading onboard entertainment system



*Customers can now stream around 200 hours of complimentary films, TV shows, magazines and games straight to their devices with Virgin Trains' revolutionary new BEAM app.*

A clutch of Hollywood stars were on hand to help Virgin Trains launch its revolutionary onboard entertainment system, BEAM, which streams around 200 hours of free entertainment to customers' devices.

We partnered with the Hollywood blockbuster *Independence Day: Resurgence* to deliver a red carpet event at Euston Station. Director Roland Emmerich and cast members Liam Hemsworth and Jeff Goldblum turned up to unveil the train wrap, each having a carriage decorated with their characters on the side.

BEAM will give customers access to incredible films, TV episodes, magazines and games, including a selection of classic and new films such as *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Bridesmaids*, *Theory of Everything* and *Despicable Me 2* as well as a mix of popular box sets and TV series from *House of Cards*, *Poldark* and *Fortitude*. To keep the kids busy, BEAM will have a separate section for children, playing popular TV shows like *Peppa Pig*, *Ben 10* and *Horrible Histories*. A selection of leading magazines will also be available, including *Newsweek*, *Men's Health*, *Top Gear*, *Total Film*, *Hello*, *Grazia*, *Living Etc.*, *Ideal Home* and *Marie Claire*.

The industry-leading on-train entertainment service was developed by Virgin Trains in conjunction with GoMedia. The entertainment includes films which are updated monthly and the magazines' latest issues.

The BEAM entertainment system will be complimentary to all Virgin Trains customers. To access the huge selection of entertainment, customers need to simply download the BEAM app from the Apple or Android app store on their phone or tablet before they get on-board, either at home or by using the free station Wi-Fi. And if the destination arrives before the end of the film, then BEAM will remember exactly where it left off, allowing customers to finish their new favourite viewing on the return leg.

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## Green light for Azuma timetable



*Britain's rail regulator has approved Virgin Trains' plans to accelerate regular Edinburgh-London journeys to just four hours following introduction of its Azuma fleet on the east coast route in 2018.*

Britain's rail regulator has approved Virgin Trains' bid to transform east coast services following the introduction of its fleet of cleaner, faster, more comfortable Azuma trains in 2018.

Regular journeys between Edinburgh and London will be accelerated to just four hours as part of the timetable, which will also increase capacity from King's Cross at peak times by 28%.

We applied for a new nine-year track access contract to help us achieve major improvements to our timetable from May 2019, which was approved in full by the Office of Rail and Road.

As well as a fast service, stopping alternatively at Newcastle, then at both Newcastle and London, the timetable includes a slower service on the half-hour which will provide more connections for customers travelling to and from Scotland.

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## Virgin Trains responds to Air Passenger Duty proposals



*Virgin Trains has welcomed proposals to boost Scotland's international air connectivity but warned against damaging growth on cross-border rail routes.*

Virgin Trains has welcomed proposals to boost Scotland's international air connectivity but warned against damaging growth on cross-border rail routes.

In our response to the recent Scottish Government consultation on Air Passenger Duty Reform, which proposes reducing the departure tax, we have called for an exemption to be made on routes where customers can choose between different modes.

Rail travel between Scotland and London has enjoyed strong growth over the last decade as Virgin Trains has invested in improved services on the west coast, helping

persuade more people to take the train rather than plane and helping cut carbon emissions from transport. The number of passenger journeys between Glasgow and London tripled in the six years to 2015.

We have now unveiled ambitious plans to win more customers over from air when travelling between Edinburgh and



London by investing and improving services, with a clear target of winning a 50/50 share of the market against airlines by 2023, up from around a third today.  
To discuss APD reform and Virgin Trains' response to the consultation, please contact [damien.henderson@virgintrains.co.uk](mailto:damien.henderson@virgintrains.co.uk).

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## TV Chef James Martin appointed



*Virgin Trains has appointed the celebrated TV chef James Martin to deliver newer, tastier onboard menus as it continues a £140m investment programme to improve services on the east coast route*

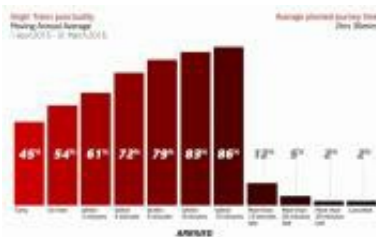
Award winning chef James Martin was on board Virgin Trains serving up treats from his new seasonal menu to surprised customers in a newly refurbished First Class Carriage. The train operator's new executive chef then put his catering skills back into action as he travelled from King's Cross, delighting customers with samples from the new menu.

James has created a range of specially created seasonal menus for us, including a new chicken curry dish and a range of jams produced in Yorkshire – just for us! The menu is already available for First Class passengers, and we'll be rolling it out in Standard Class in the autumn. We've also introduced free Wi-Fi for Standard Class passengers who book through our website, which is yet another part of our plan to invest in our services so it works for our customers.

This comes after we overhauled our First Class Lounge at Edinburgh Waverley in March, one of eight across the network that has been given an injection of Virgin sparkle.

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## Virgin sets benchmark for publishing punctuality information



*We have set new standards for transparency in the rail industry by publishing clear, comprehensive and up-to-date information on how punctual our services are*

We recently became the UK's first train operator to publish clear, comprehensive and up-to-date on how punctual our services on the west coast and east coast routes are. It's presented in bar charts which use the 'Right Time' measure – where trains are only classed as on time if it arrives within 59 seconds of its scheduled arrival time. This is particularly challenging for Virgin Trains as a long distance intercity operator, as some of our journeys can be in excess of four hours.

We're providing this data to deliver our punctuality information transparently to our passengers, and it shows that almost three quarters of our trains arrive within 4 minutes of their planned arrival times. The data can be found [here](#) and it's broken down into the various routes along the West Coast and East Coast mainlines.

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## Have your say on the next West Coast franchise



*We are encouraging stakeholders to respond to the Department for Transport's consultation on the next Intercity West Coast passenger franchise*

The Department for Transport's consultation on the next InterCity West Coast franchise closes on 2 August, and we would encourage all stakeholders with an interest in the franchise to respond.

These responses will help the DfT to identify what they ask for in the Invitation to Tender, which is expected to be published in November 2016.

If you have any questions on the consultation then please feel free to contact us. The closing date for responses is 2 August, and the relevant documents can be found [here](#).