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**Virgin Trains extends relaxation of Friday peak to encourage spontaneous weekend travel**

* *Eight more weekends of flexible Friday travel from London*
* *Savings of more than £100 on walk-up fares to destinations on West Coast route*
* *Extension follows success of initial promotion during summer of sun and celebration*

Virgin Trains is extending a summer promotion which has enabled thousands of people to cut the cost of a spontaneous weekend getaway by more than £100.

Customers travelling on Fridays will see afternoon peak restrictions from London Euston removed until October 26, eight weeks after the offer was initially due to finish this Friday.

The success of the promotion over the last six weeks has seen thousands more visitors flock major cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow for a weekend break.

The mass getaway occurred during a summer of sun and celebration as England progressed to the World Cup semi-finals, the national basked in a heatwave and Love Island attracted record-breaking viewer numbers.

Sarah Copley, Commercial Director at Virgin Trains, said that, with more warm weather predicted in September, the extended promotion was a chance to keep summer going: “Britain’s had an amazing summer and here at Virgin Trains we’ve done everything we can to help people enjoy it. The nights may be getting shorter and the temperature gradually dropping but we want to keep summer going by extending this promotion and making spontaneous travel easier in September and October too.”

While the cheapest tickets are always available in advance, Virgin Trains’ promotion enables people who decide to travel on the spur of the moment to secure a cheaper off-peak ticket any time after 9.30am on a Friday, instead of waiting until the normal start of the off-peak period at 7pm.

For a customer turning up at Euston Station at 4pm and travelling on the next train to Manchester, this sees the cost of a walk-up fare drop by £125.55.

Despite driving up numbers travelling, the promotion has also led to a reduction in overcrowding by spreading passenger demand more evenly throughout the day.

Initial results from the promotion, which originally ran between July 20 and August 31 show that the most popular destinations for weekend travel were Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Preston and Coventry.

Notes to Editors

Station Saving:

Birmingham £60.50

Chester £94.55

Coventry £53.50

Glasgow £111.25

Liverpool £115.55

Manchester £125.55

Preston £129.25

Stafford £75.20

Stoke-on-Trent £105.20

(Based on return journey using Anytime ticket outbound and Off-Peak ticket return vs. Off-Peak ticket both ways.)

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the West Coast inter-city route under the Virgin Trains brand, revolutionising travel on one of the UK’s key rail arteries.

The network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains ahead of other long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

Virgin Trains has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme, introducing the industry-leading onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM, and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Virgin Trains operated the East Coast route between March 1, 2015 and June 24, 2018. In that time, we invested £75m to create a more personalised travel experience, including over £40m in the existing fleet. Customers have benefitted from 48 additional services between Edinburgh and London every week, and an extra 22 Saturday services between Leeds and London – a total of 1.74 million additional seats since May 2015.

Working together, the partnership railway of the public and private sectors has published a long-term plan, called *In Partnership for Britain’s Prosperity,* to change and improve Britain’s railway. The plan will secure almost £85bn of additional economic benefits to the country whilst enabling further investment and improvement, and contains four commitments which will see rail companies: strengthen our economic contribution to the country; improve customers’ satisfaction; boost the communities we serve; and, create more and better jobs in rail. For more information go to [Britain Runs on Rail](http://www.britainrunsonrail.co.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAr_TQBRB5EiwAC_QCq9OA-y_Al1Voo4ZvYjMvSBs86kuvjZLD8MfFvnOUU9UeVZ1T5CObLRoCasIQAvD_BwE).

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