**Virgin trains made from 2,000 presents given away to Christmas travellers**

* **Life-size models of Virgin’s iconic Azuma and Pendolino trains constructed from individually-wrapped parcels**
* **Festive surprise follows glum research revealing majority of us believe Christmas magic dies at age of 18**

**13th December 2016:** Festive travellers will be presented with the largest ever replica train made entirely from presents, in Virgin Trains’ now traditional annual bid to spread Christmas cheer.

Life-size replicas of the iconic Azuma and Pendolino trains will be unveiled at King’s Cross and Birmingham New Street stations this week, with lucky passengers able to take a present home.

It follows new research\* which reveals that when it comes to Christmas this year, the average Brit will give 18.5 presents and spend £388.50 on loved ones, family and friends. In spite of this generosity, all is not rosy with the findings, showing that the magic of Christmas disappears when we reach the age of 18.

The survey found:

* When it comes to Christmas generosity, the average Brit will spend £388.50 on Christmas presents this year
* Brits will buy on average 18.5 presents for friends and family in 2016
* A third of us give our loved ones Christmas presents we didn’t actually buy ourselves – and men are twice as bad as women
* Scots will be digging deepest into their pockets, splashing out £461.60, while those in Wales will be thriftier, getting their gifting done for £382

On Tuesday 13th December, a model of the Virgin Azuma train, which comes into service on the East Coast route in 2018, will be presented to passengers travelling through King’s Cross. The 12m long by 2m high replica has taken a team of eight 1,500 hours to build. It consists of over 1,000 individually wrapped presents, including iPads, folding bikes, Virgin balloon rides and pamper days, robotic dogs and a lorry load of chocolate. A replica of the iconic Pendolino train, which is also made up of 1,000 presents, will be unveiled at Birmingham New Street station on Thursday 15th December.

For those unable to attend in person on either day, Virgin Trains will be hosting a Facebook Live event where people can tune in for the chance to win one of the presents. Passengers will be given live clues by one of the helpers at both stations and have to guess what present is in the helper’s box. The first person to guess the present correctly will win it.

Patrick McCall, Co-Chairman for Virgin Trains said; “We know Christmas is here when we get to unveil our Virgin Christmas Train. This year we’ve broken from tradition and taken it off the tracks for the first time and into stations – giving away an amazing 2,000 presents over the week. After finding out that people believe the magic of Christmas disappears at age 18, we wanted to spread a bit of sparkle for the two million customers expected to travel with us over the festive period.”

The research into the gifting habits of the nation further reveals that men typically spend £85.20 on their other half, while women spend £70.40 on their partner. The difference between the sexes continues with men being twice as guilty as women (42% v 21%) of gifting a present they didn’t actually buy themselves, with the national average being nearly a third (31%).

Unbelievably, 18% of men will even hand their wife or girlfriend a present that was chosen by a friend, family member or colleague and pretend they bought it themselves.

**How much Brits spend on their family and best friends**

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| --- | --- |
| Mum £39.30Dad £33.40Brother £27.50Sister £30.70Wife £81.70Husband £63.70Grandma £26.80Grandad £32.70 | Children 0-4 years old £63.20Children 5-11 years old £91.30Children 12-17 years old £89.30Niece £26.40Nephew £27.10Grandson £52.30Granddaughter £50.40Best friend £24.10 |

When looking across the UK as a whole, findings show that Scots are planning to spend the most, splashing out £461.60 and debunking the stereotype of having tight purse strings, while those in Wales will spend on average £80 less, getting all their gifting done for £382.

**UK spend breakdown**

1. **Scotland** £461.60
2. **Northern Ireland** £402.30
3. **England** £385.20
4. **Wales** £382

In terms of a city by city breakdown Liverpool is officially the most generous, spending £503 compared to the people of Cambridge who plan to spend £213.40. For age groups, 25-34 year olds are the most generous, saying they will spend £426.60, compared to 18-24 year olds who plan to spend £313.

**City by city spend breakdown**

1. **Liverpool** £503
2. **Glasgow** £467.10
3. **Birmingham**  £440.10
4. **Manchester**  £440
5. **Bristol** £398.30

**Notes to Editors:**

On Tuesday 13th December, Virgin Trains will be giving away 1,000 Christmas presents at London King’s Cross Station between 07.00 and 12.00. On Thursday 15th a further 1,000 presents will be given away at Birmingham New Street Station between 07.00 and 12.00.

Presents available for lucky travellers include Amazon vouchers, Sony headphones, Smythson Diaries, Kindle Fire, Virgin Train tickets, ipads, robotic puppies, Virgin Wine, Jo Malone travel candles, Virgin Experiences including a balloon ride and a pamper day, Pizza Express and Vue Cinema vouchers, Play Doh party packs, tickets to Alton Towers, and Virgin Active gym memberships.

Virgin Azuma is set to revolutionise UK travel when it arrives on the east coast in 2018. With 65 trains providing an extra 12,200 seats for a new and expanded timetable, the fleet of Virgin Azumas will increase capacity into King’s Cross by 28% during peak time.

\*The research was carried out by Mortar London which conducted an online survey among 2,000 respondents across the UK. The sample of adults was randomly selected from a survey panel and weighted to be representative of the UK population for age, gender and region. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability at the country level was +/- 2.2% at 95% confidence limit. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The research was conducted between 25th and 28th November 2016.

\*\*refers to the Christmas period of 16th December – 2nd January, using passenger numbers from Virgin Trains in 2015