**Embargoed until** **9am 20 September 2017**

**Virgin Trains customers can now bid for last minute First Class upgrades in global first**

* *Virgin Trains brings innovative Seatfrog technology to its east coast customers enabling them to bid for seat upgrades*
* *The partnership gives more Virgin Trains’ customers the opportunity to travel First Class*
* *The easy to use app enables passengers to bid for First Class upgrades from as little as £5\**

**September 20, 2017** – [Virgin Trains](https://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com/) customers can now bid on last minute upgrades for First Class tickets on east coast services via innovative upgrade app Seatfrog. The partnership is a world first for rail passengers and will enable more people than ever to enjoy the perks of First Class.

Virgin Trains’ customers will be able to upgrade right up to 30 minutes before departure from the palm of their hand with just a few taps of their smartphone. Completely seamless and easy-to-use, there’s no hassle of extra paperwork, printing tickets or additional fees.

Virgin Trains is the first travel company to bring the technology to its customers, who will compete against each other in an open and honest auction where upgrades to First Class can cost from as little as £5.

The free app works by creating a live, dynamic bidding system for First Class seats that would otherwise travel empty. Upgrades can be won up to 30 minutes before departure, with each auction opening approximately 2.5 hours before a train departs from its originating station.

Customers who successfully bid on a First Class ticket will be able to enjoy all the luxury benefits of Virgin Trains’ First Class experience, including complimentary food and drink from a menu curated by James Martin, reclining leather seats, additional legroom, mood lighting, free Wi-Fi and, in selected stations, First Class lounges with free Wi-Fi, relaxation areas and refreshments.

Virgin Trains has been leading the way in tackling fare complexity and ensuring a better deal for customers; partnering with Seatfrog is part of the train operator’s commitment to making train travel accessible and affordable. Earlier this year, Virgin Trains confirmed that it is participating in a single-leg pricing trial with the Government which will consider alternative ways to guarantee customers simpler fares.

Suzanne Donnelly, Commercial Director at Virgin Trains on the east coast, said: “We have a strong record of innovating for the benefit of our customers and we are really excited to be partnering with Seatfrog to offer customers more opportunities to experience First Class. Our innovative partnership with Seatfrog means passengers can get last minute upgrades to First Class seats from as little as £5 and there are real deals to be had. Plus, the live bidding element means you can decide at the last minute if you fancy treating yourself and, if you do, bidding to bag a bargain is great way to go about it.”

Iain Griffin, CEO and founder Seatfrog comments: “Modern travel is full of rules and regulations that can make getting to our final destination a frustrating experience. Everyone loves an upgrade, but the excitement of it and the ability to just change your mind at the last minute is suffering because of the many complicated processes that exist today. Seatfrog is giving passengers the power to upgrade easily and transparently, in the palm of their hand. Plus, because we are firm believers that it should never be too late to change your mind, you can upgrade right up to 30 minutes before you go. We’re delighted to be bringing Seatfrog to Virgin Trains’ passengers and to be helping more people than ever to enjoy the perks of First with zero hassle.”

Last minute upgrades will be available on selected Virgin Trains’ east coast services for business and leisure travellers from Monday to Friday for journeys between the following stations (and stations in between), with new routes to be added soon:

* King’s Cross to Leeds including, for example, Doncaster to Wakefield Westgate, and Stevenage to Grantham
* King’s Cross to Newcastle including, for example, Northallerton to York, and Peterborough to Newark North Gate
* King’s Cross to Edinburgh including, for example, Berwick upon Tweed to Darlington, and Durham to Dunbar
* King’s Cross to York including, for example, Grantham to Doncaster, and Retford to Stevenage

How to bid for a First Class upgrade on Virgin Trains’ east coast services with Seatfrog in three simple steps:

1. **Enter your booking reference:** Simply open the app and enter your Virgin Trains booking reference for upcoming trips.
2. **Upgrade now or bid to win:** Seatfrog notifies customers as soon as a seat becomes available and auctions open around 2.5 hours before departure. Customers can then start their bidding to win an upgrade in the auction. If available, there is also an ‘Upgrade Now’ option.
3. **Upgrade in seconds:** Seatfrog issues the new ticket to your phone there and then, so you can find your new seat, sit back and relax (you also need to present it with your original ticket so be sure to travel with both).

Virgin Trains on the east coast is committed to investing one per cent of its revenue in developing ‘new to UK rail’ innovation. It’s the first train company to set up an Innovation Fund and dedicated innovation team, its partnership with Seatfrog came about through the Innovation in Franchising process.

Seatfrog can be downloaded free from the App Store and is available for iOS and Android devices. For more information on Seatfrog go to [virgintrainseastcoast.com/upgrades](http://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com/upgrades)

**ENDS**

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N**otes to Editors**

**\*TERMS AND CONDITIONS**  
1. This Seatfrog upgrade auction offer can only be used by recipients of relevant offer emails and accompanying customers travelling on the same booking reference.

2. Seatfrog upgrade auctions are available on selected Virgin Trains East Coast services and are subject to availability, with at least one seat available on each eligible service in operation.  
3. Each First Class upgrade is valid for a single person travelling on the booking reference number entered into the Seatfrog app, and is for the stipulated one way journey only. Upgrades can only be used in conjunction with a Virgin Trains East Coast standard Advance ticket.  
4. Customers travelling in a group on the same booking reference may participate individually in Seatfrog upgrade auctions. Each member of the group must register with Seatfrog and bid independently. Due to the last-minute nature of Seatfrog upgrade auctions we cannot guarantee every member of the group will win an upgrade auction or be sat together if an upgrade bid is successful.  
5. Upon payment of the upgrade fee, customers are issued with a First Class upgrade barcode within the Seatfrog app. The upgrade barcode on your mobile phone, along with your original standard Advance ticket, must be presented to the Train Manager when travelling on board the train. Please also retain your original tickets to pass through the station ticket gates. Without both the First Class upgrade barcode and the original standard Advance ticket, the upgrade is not valid.  
6. Seatfrog upgrades are verified by the Train Manager on board the train. If the customer is unable to produce a valid barcode on their mobile device, they may be charged for a full price upgrade. It is the customer's responsibility to ensure their mobile device is fully charged as verification can take place at any point during the train journey.  
7. First Class upgrades purchased via the Seatfrog app also include access to the Virgin Trains First Class Lounges located along the east coast route at Edinburgh Waverley, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Newcastle, Darlington, Doncaster, Leeds, Wakefield and London King’s Cross.  
8. Upgrades are available across the Virgin Trains East Coast route at a starting price from as little as £5.  
9. The upgrades are also eligible for [Delay Repay](https://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com/the-east-coast-experience/first-class/complimentary-food-and-drink/?utm_source=Comet&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=ServiceLink&utm_campaign=Seatfrog_Launch_FUPnoapp&WT.mc_id=Seatfrog_Launch_FUPnoapp&WT.mc_ev=click) compensation should the service you are travelling on be delayed by 30 minutes or more.

10. If the Virgin Trains East Coast train on which you have purchased an upgrade is cancelled or delayed by more than 60 minutes, special arrangements will be made to accommodate you on the next available Virgin Trains East Coast train (although a seat cannot be guaranteed), or to refund the fee paid for your upgrade provided your journey has not yet commenced.

11. [First Class complimentary service](https://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com/the-east-coast-experience/first-class/complimentary-food-and-drink/?utm_source=Comet&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=ServiceLink&utm_campaign=Seatfrog_Launch_FUPapp&WT.mc_id=Seatfrog_Launch_FUPapp&WT.mc_ev=click) varies according to the time of day and the journey being made.  
12. Seatfrog First Class upgrades are not eligible for Virgin Trains West Coast services.

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the East Coast and West Coast inter-city routes under the Virgin Trains brand. Together, they are on track to revolutionise rail travel across the UK.

The combined network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, York 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 as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. We have already invested £21m to completely revamp our existing fleet and customers can now benefit from 42 additional services (22,000 extra seats) per week between Edinburgh and London. 2018 will see the introduction of completely new Azuma trains being built in the UK by Hitachi.

The West Coast route has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room) - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe [here](http://www.mynewsdesk.com/follow/47939) for regular news from Virgin Trains.

Press Office: 0845 000 3333.

**About Seatfrog**

Seatfrog is a travel technology company transforming the future of rail and airline upgrades. Seatfrog helps rail providers and airlines unlock new ancillary revenue opportunities right up to the departure gate by creating a seamless upgrade experience for passengers on mobile.

it is the world’s most comprehensive automation of the upgrade process and the first mobile focused platform that allows passengers to transparently bid for an upgrade in real time, pay and receive a new boarding pass direct to their mobile right up until the time of departure.

For more information, visit [seatfrog.com](http://seatfrog.com/) or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SeatFrog/) or [Twitter](https://twitter.com/Seatfrog).

For Seatfrog press images or interview requests please contact [seatfrog@hopeandglorypr.com](mailto:seatfrog@hopeandglorypr.com)