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TRAIN BOOKINGS UP AS BRITONS PLAN A STAY-CATION THIS EASTER

STAY-CATIONS are set to be the new vacations this Easter as a rail travel firm announces a surge in advance bookings across the UK.

Advance ticket sales are up 43% on rail routes across the country between Maundy Thursday to Easter Saturday year on year, according to new data released today from leading ticket retailer, thetrainline.com.

Nearly 45,000 people have already booked their ticket for the Easter bank holiday through the website, up from almost 31,000 on the same point last year.

This is against an 11% decline in passenger numbers travelling from key British airports such as Heathrow and Gatwick, reported by the BAA at the end of February*.

Routes seeing a surge in popularity include Birmingham to London with a 238% increase in advance bookings compared to last year, Glasgow to London (up by 320%) and Edinburgh to Manchester (up 141%).

Commenting on the data, Ben Pearson, Commercial Director for thetrainline.com, says:

“Visiting friends and relatives in the UK appears to be a far more popular option this year than a city break on the continent as people continue to keep a tight leash on their wallets.”

“And while rail travel is up generally, advance bookings are particularly on the increase as travellers finally become wise to the savings that can be made by booking in advance rather than buying a ticket on the day of travel from the station.”

While British rail tickets have been billed the most expensive in Europe, the average cost of buying a ticket online through thetrainline.com is actually falling on some of its most popular inter-city routes.

Customers can make an average saving of 39% on advance tickets if booked up to 6pm on the day before departure, compared to 'turn up and go' tickets bought at the station on the day of travel.

As Pearson says, "We're always looking to assist our customers in buying cheaper tickets and helping them to beat the rising cost of rail fares. Through our easy-to-use website and innovative tools like Best Fare Finder and Ticket Alert our customers are buying smarter; selecting single tickets over the often more expensive returns, travelling off peak rather than peak, choosing a time and day to return rather than leaving it open and looking at alternative days and times to travel."

And it's not too late to take advantage of the savings. If booked now a return journey from Glasgow to Newcastle over the Easter bank holiday could cost as little as £17.50 travelling on Easter Friday and £11 returning on Easter Monday - a saving of around 50% when compared with a 'turn up and go' return ticket bought at the station (£56.50**).

ENDS

**All fares correct at time of issue. Tickets and availability cannot be guaranteed.

*BAA Traffic Summary February 2009, released 10 March 2009

For further information, please contact:

thetrainline.com press office at Seventy Seven PR on 020 7492 0974 or e-mail thetrainline@77pr.co.uk

thetrainline.com analysed bookings data 30 days before Easter in both 2008 and 2009 for outbound journeys from Maundy Thursday through to Easter Saturday. Since 1999, thetrainline.com has sold to 3.3 million travellers making over 14 million transactions.

About thetrainline.com

thetrainline.com is the leading UK rail ticket retailer and rail ticket information provider, offering fast and easy access to timetables, fares, reservations and tickets through its Internet site and contact centre operations in the UK train travel sector. In addition to its own website, www.thetrainline.com, it operates retail websites for 15 Train Operating Companies who sell rail tickets online, as well as providing a rail business travel service direct to a number of blue chip corporations and travel agents.