

Heritage train company launches first class service in competition with Avanti West Coast

A heritage train company is launching a charter service between London and the North West to help passengers frustrated by Avanti West Coast's severe disruption.

Crewe-based Locomotive Services Group will begin operating a first class-only charter service to and from London Euston on Friday.

The train's air-conditioned carriages are restored British Rail Mark 3 stock with three-abreast seating, tables, power points and large windows.

The service will only operate on Fridays for the next three weeks, and will run at 110mph using electric locomotives.

It will depart from Crewe at 2.29pm, running non-stop to arrive at London Euston at 4.12pm.

The train will set off to return north at 5.27pm, calling at Birmingham International, Birmingham New Street, Wolverhampton, Stafford, Crewe and Wilmslow before arriving at Manchester Piccadilly at 8.45pm.

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Passengers can travel “in comfort and style without the stress of normal rail services”, according to the operator.

It added: “Say goodbye to packed commuter trains and hello to luxurious legroom and cushioned comfort.”

Fares cost £75 each way.

Avanti West Coast passengers booking at the last minute for travel from London Euston to Manchester Piccadilly on Fridays in standard class are charged £68.60 for an off-peak single.

First-class travel – which, unlike on the charter train, includes food and drink – costs £169.30.



Inside the Locomotive Services Group's first class-only charter service to and from London Euston. Its carriages are restored British Rail Mark 3 stock.

(Image: Locomotive Services Group)

But many customers have faced major disruption in recent weeks.

Timetables have been slashed, with services between Manchester and London [reduced from three per hour to one per hour](#).

Passengers are also being prevented from booking tickets more than a few days in advance.

The company has blamed workers for embarking on "unofficial strike action", as the number of weekly services it is able to operate using drivers voluntarily working on rest days for extra pay has reduced from around 400 to 50.

Drivers' union Aslef accuses the operator of failing to employ enough drivers.

Charter trains have not been used for regular services on Britain's railways since summer 2018.

Heritage operator West Coast Railway ran a shuttle between Windermere and Oxenholme for people visiting the Lake District because Northern stopped serving the route due to major problems with new timetables.

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