

Passengers facing hefty hire car bills count cost of rail strikes

An Australian tourist facing a hefty hire car bill of up to £400 was among the frustrated passengers who were caught out by the rail strikes.

[People](#) have been advised only to travel if necessary on Saturday because of the strike by members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), [Aslef](#), [Unite](#) and the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA).

The 24-hour walkout in a long-running dispute over pay, jobs and conditions could cause the worst rail disruption of the year so far with some areas of the country having no services all day.

However, the first that holidaymaker Antonio Giusti, 19, knew about it was when he turned up at London's [Euston](#) station on Saturday morning to find the gates shut.

The tourist from Sydney, who arrived in London a few days ago, has been quoted £368 for a hire car to get him from London to Manchester.

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Standing at the station with his luggage, he said: "I only found out (about the strike) when I got here (today).

"I have been having to call back home to Australia to try and sort out stuff. I have been trying to communicate with my family about my plans and it is at a time when they are all trying to sleep."

Mr Giusti thinks he will have to pay for a hire car, saying: "I am just going to have to pay it as it will be the most cost-effective thing for me rather than having to pay to stay in London for another night."

He said he sympathises with the strikers, adding that "they are protesting about the Government and not the people".

He said: "I do sympathise with them because everyone in their job should be able to afford their cost of living."

Euston station, which is usually a bustling central London travel hub, was very quiet on Saturday morning.

I feel sorry for anyone who is looking to go to a meeting, has to get home or got an appointment

Management consultant Jonny Hauser, 30, was trying to hire a car to get back to his home in Levenshulme, Manchester, after finding out that trains were not running from the station.

He said: "I was in London for work and I knew there was a strike but I booked a ticket for the wrong day – that's a waste of £70, plus what I am now going to have to pay for the car.

"I am more annoyed at myself rather than the strikers. It would normally be about a two-hour journey on the train but could be maybe three or four in the car."

Student chef Hani Eid Amer, 21, of Stratford, east London, had

to cancel a shopping trip to Hemel Hempstead due to the strike.

He said: "I feel sorry for anyone who is looking to go to a meeting, has to get home or got an appointment.

"It is just a shopping thing for me. I will wait for maybe an hour and will just leave it."

Nearby, a group of rail workers at a picket line broke out into a chant of "What do we want? Fair pay".

They stood behind banners which read "our rail our future" and "defend rail – jobs, pay and conditions" as some passing motorists hooted their horns in support.

Kathy Mazur, of the RMT union, apologised for the disruption but said the safety of the public was also a concern for the strikers.

Speaking at a picket line near Euston, she said: "The way things are going – they won't have a ticket office and they may not even see a guard (on services). We apologise.

"We really do not want to cause disruption, but in the long term would you really want your daughter to be walking through a station late at night when there is nobody around? I certainly wouldn't. It would be a muggers' alley."

Network Rail's chief executive Andrew Haines said that despite efforts to find a breakthrough in talks, rail unions remain were insisting on co-ordinating their strike action causing unnecessary loss of staff pay, passenger disruption and damage to the railway's recovery from the pandemic.

Daniel Mann, director of industry operations at Rail Delivery Group, described the strikes as "unnecessary and damaging", adding that they "disrupt passengers' plans, undermine struggling businesses, hit major events and harm the industry's recovery."

Transport for London has said its services will also be affected by the strikes, with no service expected on London Overground on Saturday and next Wednesday.

Runners and spectators trying to get into the capital in time for the 9.30am start of the marathon in Greenwich on Sunday have been warned they are likely to be frustrated by the strike.