

## Bike blog



## Train companies: we're trying to be bike-friendly

Despite the occasional horror stories rail firms are doing their best to make cyclists welcome, says the Association of Train Operating Companies



A cyclist pushing his bike through Marylebone station, London. Photograph: Andrew Drysdale/Rex Features

**Earlier this year we [wrote about the efforts of the Association of Train Operating Companies \(Atoc\)](#) to make cyclists more welcome both on trains and at stations. Now, Alex Veitch, Atoc's integrated transport manager – and a keen cyclist himself – explains how the worlds of [cycling](#) and rail can get on better, and asks for your views.**

A lot of [negative stuff gets written](#) about bikes and trains, and I believe that some of this criticism is unfair. First, at the risk of [sounding like Rafa Benitez](#), let's set out some facts.

Independent surveys by [Passenger Focus](#) show that nationally in 2009, 2.2% of rail passengers got to the station by bicycle. Of these, 1.3% took their bike on the train, and 0.9% parked at the station.

While these are small percentages, in real terms this means there were around 28m bike-rail journeys in 2009 – or 77,000 a day (based on Department for Transport rail journey figures). This represents a huge increase. In 2007 there were just 19.5m bike-rail journeys in total.

Why has this stupendous growth happened? There are two main reasons.

First, there has been an explosion in the use of [folding bikes](#) by rail commuters. This growth will continue, as train companies are committed to allowing compact folding bikes to travel for free at all times.

Second, there has been steady growth in the number of people parking their bicycle at

rail stations. There are now around 25,000 cycle spaces in the UK, with thousands more planned.

The new flagship development will be the [Leeds Cyclepoint](#), which will open for business next month and will be the first Dutch-style cycle storage, hire and maintenance service at a UK railway station. Several similar facilities will be opening soon, albeit on a smaller scale, for example at Southport station in Merseyside.

To make it easier to park your bicycle, [National Rail Enquiries](#) has a web-based information service with photographs and detailed plans of cycle parking at every station in the country; simply search for your station here then click on "Stations Made Easy".

If you plan to take to take your full size bicycle on the train, then you should go online to plan your journey. The National Rail Enquiries website will automatically tell you whether you need to reserve a bicycle space, and how to do this if needs be. It also has detailed information about cycle carriage terms and conditions on the different operators. If you buy your tickets online from East Coast, then you can book your bike as part of your online transaction.

With this many bike and rail journeys, there are always going to be some horror stories where cyclists have a particularly bad time using the train, but the vast majority are undertaken without any fuss.

That said, we acknowledge that we still have a lot to learn, in particular from cycle-rail users, and will be looking at comments on this blog to get your thoughts.

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