

Rail fares outstrip cost of living rises

Walk on fares on some of the countries busiest rail routes have gone up three times faster than inflation since privatisation, according research by a transport union.



Train operators have complete freedom to set the price of some tickets Photo: ALAMY

By David Millward, Transport Editor

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A journey to Manchester which cost £50 in 1995 now costs £154, representing a rise of 208 per cent.

Meanwhile a single journey to Exeter, which cost £37.50 in 1995 has increased by 205 per cent to £114.50.

Over the same period the retail price index has increased by 66 per cent.

The figures were supplied to the Transport and Salaried Staffs Association by Barry Doe, an expert on the rail industry and author of Doe's Directory of Printed Bus & Rail Timetables, Web Sites and Enquiry Offices.

While the Government controls some fares, including season tickets, train operators are given complete freedom to set others as they wish.

"Private rail firms were given a licence to print money in the 1990s and they have been ripping off passengers ever since," said Manuel Cortes, the union's general secretary.

"This demolishes the Tories' claim when they sold off British Rail-namely that fares would get cheaper.

*What we have seen is little more than legalised day daylight robbery on a grand scale," added the union leader.

"Passengers have suffered all the pain while private operators have seen all the gains. Now we are number one in Europe for the highest fares."

However the Association of Train Operating Companies said the figures were misleading. "The TSSA has only looked at a handful of the most expensive tickets which only a tiny minority of passengers buy.

"Based on figures from the rail regulator, the average price paid for a single journey is £4.95 compared with £4.82 in 1995 when inflation is taken into account."

Top ten fare increases:

Any time single fare from London

	1995	2013	%
Manchester	£50	£154	208%
Exeter	£37.50	£114.50	205%
Cardiff	£35	£103.50	196%
Swindon	£20	£58.50	193%
Birmingham	£28.50	£79	177%
Nottingham	£29.50	£78.50	166%
Glasgow	£65	£169	160%
Leeds	£48	£124.50	159%
Edinburgh	£65	£152	134%
Norwich	£29	£64.10	121%