

Summer savings scheme helped families cut costs with over 14 million free bus journeys

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The scheme's success is part of the government's wider effort to make bus travel more affordable and accessible for everyone in the UK.

Over 14.5 million children used the bus for free this summer, thanks to the government's Great British Summer Savings Scheme, according to new figures.

Thanks to the Scheme's Summer Bus Fare Offer, millions of children aged between 5 and 15 across England enjoyed free journeys during their holidays.

Kids were able to travel to beaches, national parks and other fun days out for absolutely nothing, all while helping give their families more room to breathe. Bus companies across the country have reported major increases in passengers, according to figures from the Confederation of Passenger Transport and participating operators.

With child fares typically costing up to £2, families were able to save on the cost of travel on all participating buses from 1 August until 31 August 2026.

Buses and Local Transport Minister, Simon Lightwood, said:

Whether it's a trip to the seaside, a park or a museum, it's great to see that millions of children used the bus for free this summer.

The Great British Summer Savings Scheme has given families room to breathe from the cost-of-living squeeze. We're getting passengers back on the bus, transforming services across the country, from capping fares at £2 from next year to 24/7 bus services for disabled passengers.

Graham Vidler, Chief Executive of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, said:

Our members are proud to have delivered over 14 million free child journeys this summer – equivalent to two for every young person in England. Millions of children and their families have explored their local area and experienced the freedom of travelling by bus.

As we head into autumn, the nation's buses are still there to get children to school and for customers to continue exploring, with great value ticketing options available up and down the country.

Lydia Horbury, Chief Executive of Bus Users UK, said:

This is a fantastic result. Free bus travel has helped families make the most of the summer, while giving millions of young people the freedom to get out, explore and enjoy

everything their local communities have to offer.

This September's Catch the Bus Month is all about challenging outdated perceptions and encouraging people to give the bus a go. These figures show what's possible when we break down barriers and make bus travel an affordable, convenient and genuinely attractive choice.

When young people discover for themselves what the bus can offer, those experiences can help turn bus travel into a habit for life. That's good news for passengers, communities and the future of sustainable travel.

Whether it's the north-east, the East Midlands or the south-west, the free bus fares have helped more young people travel by bus across the country.

One bus service in the north-east recorded 710% more child passengers compared to the previous summer. The Bee Network in Greater Manchester had nearly 1.7 million children on their buses this summer, 748,000 more than at the same time last year, while buses in the East Midlands nearly doubled their passengers.

The success of the scheme forms part of the government's wider work to make bus travel more affordable and accessible, including the £2 bus fare cap, which will be introduced in January 2027 and giving disabled pass holders free bus travel 24 hours a day.

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