

National press release: Monday 7 October

Generous parents fund travelling student lifestyles

CrossCountry launches student competition to find travel savvy bloggers

Parents are regularly funding their children's travel home from university and are willing to pay over the odds to help broaden their horizons.

Over the course of a year parents say they spend more than £500 broadening their child's horizons with more than half (55%) splashing out on travel and holidays.

Research from leading train company CrossCountry also revealed that 62% of parents have paid for their child to get home from university, with nearly a third (30%) taking on the cost at least three times a year.

Regardless of whether parents are feeling the pinch, they're keen to fund their child's personal development outside of their education with 31% saying they would spend more than £1000 on a new experience for their offspring.

With less than half (42%) of students frequently visiting different cities and towns around the UK whilst they study, CrossCountry is offering a helping hand to students keen to expand their horizons (and their parents' purse-strings) by launching a competition to help budding bloggers become published travel writers.

UK students are invited to enter the 'Student Blogger Competition' where up to five winners will be selected to become travel bloggers for CrossCountry, receiving a mentoring session with a leading journalist.

Tom Hall, travel writer and Editor of Lonely Planet's award-winning website is supporting the competition and will be mentoring the five lucky bloggers: "When CrossCountry first approached me about the competition I was eager to help out.

"Working with student writers is something I've always wanted to do. I know how tough the industry is and think this programme is a great opportunity for student writers to get ahead of the competition while unlocking the secrets of the UK's cities to a wider audience."

Clare Shufflebotham, Partnerships Manager at CrossCountry said: "We know that cash-strapped students have little money to spend on travelling and quite often their parents end up footing the bill. That's why we developed the exclusive deal for NUS extra card holders to make rail travel more affordable for students.

“We wanted to go one step further and not only offer students a chance to explore other cities and towns along our route but provide them with a tangible opportunity to test their writing abilities and gain invaluable industry advice.”

Fans of the Student Rail Deals Facebook Page can enter the competition by joining the ‘Student Blogger Competition’ event and then providing an example of their writing in the comment box on the event page. This can be something the entrant has written especially for the competition or an existing piece of writing. The competition closes at 5pm on Thursday 31 October 2013

CrossCountry run services to and from some of the most popular university cities, including Edinburgh, Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol. This year, almost seven-thousand students* across the UK have taken advantage of the exclusive CrossCountry deal developed for NUS extra card holders, which gives students an extra 10% off Advance tickets with CrossCountry on top of the discount they already get with a 16-25 Railcard.

CrossCountry run to 118 stations – covering more of Britain than any other train operator.

Ends

For further information, please contact Kelly Mortlock or Jack Storry on 020 7025 7522 or email crosscountry@grayling.com.

Notes to editors

*Figure based on NUS sales figures between January and September 2013.

Research methodology:

Census interviewed a random sample of 1,000 adults with kids who are at university/have been to university in the last five years through its online panel between 19 and 25 September 2013. Further information is available at www.censuswide.com.

CrossCountry

For further information on CrossCountry services visit crosscountrytrains.co.uk or follow them online via Twitter at @crosscountryuk, Facebook.com/crosscountrytrains and their student Facebook page, Facebook.com/studentraildeals.

CrossCountry bookings

Passengers can buy tickets for any rail journey in Britain, with any train company and with no booking fee at crosscountrytrains.co.uk or via the free CrossCountry Train Tickets app. Download the app by visiting your app store or by texting TRAVEL to 87080.

The Student Competition

Entries to the competition must be made via the Student Blogger Competition tab through the Student Rail Deals Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/studentraildeals. Students are required to submit an example of their writing - this can be something the entrant has written especially for the competition or an existing piece of writing. There is a 200 word limit for entries. Anyone posting their writing on the Student Rail Deals Facebook timeline and not in

the dedicated competition tab will not be considered. Entries can be submitted from Friday 4 October 2013 until 5pm on Thursday 31 October 2013.