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‘L AMBIENT MEDIA’

THETRAINLINE.COM UNVEILS THE UK’S FIRST SHEEP BILLBOARDS

In a UK first, this week a flock of fame hungry sheep in the South East will become the latest in low-technology advertising.

A flock of 30 Texel-cross sheep have been ‘recruited’ by thetrainline.com to promote the fact that rail passengers can now save on average 43% by booking their tickets at thetrainline.com*. With their model good looks these multi-media sheep will spend the week (20 – 24 April) wearing specially designed coats in a field clearly visible to rail passengers travelling along the Gatwick Airport to Reading line.

In pioneering this new, innovative medium thetrainline.com’s money saving message definitely isn’t woolly.

Commenting on the campaign, Ben Pearson, commercial director for thetrainline.com, says “Sheep are a common sight from train windows right across the country. So, for us, using sheep as ‘billboards’ felt like an interesting and attention-grabbing area to explore, especially since sheep are featured so prominently in our advertising. After weeks of searching for the country’s most talented sheep, we feel we’ve really raised the ‘baa’ in advertising.

“We’re always looking to help our customers find the best deals on rail tickets, especially in the current climate. Sheep advertising seemed like the perfect medium to support our new advertising campaign and communicate the fantastic 43% saving people can make with thetrainline.com.”

Hugh Broom, farmer and owner of the sheep, says “Using sheep to advertise seems like such a simple idea, it’s surprising that nothing like this has been done before in the UK. There is quite a bit of surface area to work, plus it’s sure to brighten up train travel. I just hope my girls don’t start turning into divas!”

thetrainline.com's new advertising campaign featuring sheep both on TV and in outdoor poster ads, breaks on the 19th April. thetrainline.com TV advert was shot in Wellington Station, New Zealand, and features 40 sheep who spent a month being trained by the sheep handler from the film 'Babe'. The sheep were taught, among other things, how to "baa" on demand, step out of taxis and read newspapers. No computer generated imagery was used to manipulate their actions – just their favourite treat of biscuits!

Historically, sheep have played an important part in the media – from the traditional, such as the Young's ram, to the popular like Aardman Creations' Shaun the Sheep. Turning tradition on its head, this new campaign from thetrainline.com takes the sheep out of the media and turns them into the medium.

Just 'baa'rmy: facts about sheep

- The Texel originates from the Island of Texel, one of the north-western islands off Holland where it has been known since Roman times.
- There are about 1 billion sheep on the planet (there are just over 6 billion people.)
- Sheep can recognize individual human and ovine faces, and remember them for years.
- Sheep have scent glands below their eyes, which are used during reproduction, and on their feet.
- A sheep's age can be gauged by counting the number of teeth it possesses. Their first adult teeth come through from the age of 12 months, and thereafter in pairs every year until they have eight teeth at age eight, when they start to break and fall out.
- There are more than 200 breeds, including the most popular sheep for wool, the merino, and the carpet wool sheep, whose name is self-explanatory.
- Sheep's milk is ideal for cheese as it contains more fat and minerals than cow's milk. Feta, pecorino and manchego are all made from sheep's milk.

This week's initial 'sheep trial' is taking place just past Dorking Station and will be visible during the day from onboard trains on the Gatwick Airport to Reading line.

***Average saving buying in advance at thetrainline.com versus buying at the station on the day of travel. Advance fares not available on every route.**

ENDS

For further information, spokesperson comment, photography or video footage, please contact:

thetrainline.com press office at Seventy Seven PR on 020 7492 0974 or e-mail thetrainline@77pr.co.uk.

About thetrainline.com

thetrainline.com is the leading UK rail ticket retailer and rail ticket information provider, offering fast and easy access to timetables, fares, reservations and tickets through its Internet site and contact centre operations in the UK train travel sector. In addition to its own website, www.thetrainline.com, it operates retail websites for 15 Train Operating Companies who sell rail tickets online, as well as providing a rail business travel service direct to a number of blue chip corporations and travel agents.