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Indian railways , which is the fourth largest rail track after United States, Russia and China, has 114500 km track length, operating 65000 km routes and catering 7500 rail stations. It transports over 30 million passengers and 2.8 million tons of freight every day. About 1.36 employees are involved in these operations.

Indian railway reservation for passenger travel is an important activity in Indian railways operations. With limited capacity available for travel in most of the sections and abundant requirement of travel, advance reservation of seats is the only way to regulate comfortable travel by passengers.

In the initial days, reservation in Indian railways was all done through railway counters established in selected railway stations , when manual reservation process was in vogue. Now, with the introduction of computerization during the past three decades, the facility for seat reservations has been improved stage by stage, with today's online booking facilities enabling a passenger to do Indian railway reservation right from one's home, with corresponding online payment facilities through net banking or credit card usage.

Still Indian railway reservation through rail station counters is the most popular method, although most of the affluent society members choose to do online booking facilitated through Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited, an exclusive business process operator constituted by the Ministry of Railways for doing Indian railway reservation. IRCTC, as it is popularly known, charges a fee for online booking, scheduled according to the class of travel and charged per ticket booked.

Reservation of Indian railways is also obtainable through Travel agents authorized by the Ministry of Railways and these agents are permitted to charge a small fee for the services, over and above the train fare and reservation charges.

In Indian railway reservation, a certain percentage of seats are assigned for reservation for specific categories of travelers, such as senior citizens, physically handicapped, emergency requirements as decided by the divisional office etc. Likewise, reservation in Indian railways is obtainable from specific quota of seats allotted for in between stations in a particular route.

Indian railway reservation is possible three months ahead of travel in all sections. The reservation and the ticket purchased can be cancelled at any point of time, even after 6 hours of the scheduled departure time. However, the fare refund is reduced according to the time of cancellation, like before 24 hours, a flat fee according to class of travel, 25% if it is within 24 hours before departure, and 50% of the fare if it is within 6 hours of the travel.

It is needless to say that advance booking of your tickets through Indian railway reservation is the best way to travel in comfort and without hassle.

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