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## Bank holiday traffic could spell ‘May’hem for 16m drivers

More than 16m drivers are expected to hit the roads for the first bank holiday weekend in May with traffic well above pre-COVID levels, research from the RAC and transport analytics specialists, INRIX shows.\*

The study suggests getaway traffic will start building on Friday 3 May with 2.7m trips before peaking on Saturday 4 at 3.3m journeys. A further 2.3m and 2.7m separate getaway trips are planned on Sunday 5 and Monday 6 respectively, while another 5.4m are expected to be made at some point over

the weekend by drivers still deciding which day to travel.

When asked how they'll be spending their bank holiday weekend, the largest proportion of drivers said they'll be using their cars to spend a day with family and friends (39%), followed by 14% who intend to go shopping and 8% who are staying with loved ones for a short break.

In addition, 8% of drivers are planning to stay at a holiday home and a further 7% are considering a trip to the coast or the beach. Just 4% are intending to travel to an airport, which is just as well given the planned strikes at Heathrow Airport on Saturday, Sunday and bank holiday Monday.

Transport experts INRIX advise drivers to avoid setting off between 1pm and 7pm on Thursday, 11am and 6pm on Friday, 9am and 2pm on Saturday, and 10am and 3pm on both the Sunday and Monday.

Throughout the weekend, the best times to travel will be before 9am and after 5pm while Friday 3 May will be the worst day for hold-ups, with delays on major routes expected to take 13% longer than usual.

INRIX data also indicates that the long weekend may start as early as Thursday morning in some parts of the UK, with the M53 southbound from Liverpool to Chester hit by mid-morning delays of up to 45 minutes. The busiest route will be the M5 southbound between Bristol and Taunton on Friday afternoon where travel is expected to take nearly two hours longer than usual due to getaway and commuter traffic combining.

Most major routes across the south and south west are likely to take an average of 50% longer than usual to drive on Friday afternoon, while on bank holiday Monday itself, parts of the north west, East Anglia and south west will be hardest hit by returning traffic. Jams are predicted on the M55 eastbound between Blackpool and Preston from 11am, Cornwall to Exeter eastbound on the A30 and A38 from 11.30am and Norwich to Thetford on the A11 southbound from 12.15pm.

Since 2017, RAC figures suggest 14m drivers tend to get away for a leisure journey at some point over the bank holiday weekend. This year's total, in line with the last two years, is well above average, showing drivers' continued post-COVID eagerness to make the most of time spent with friends

and family.

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Alice Simpson said: “With COVID travel restrictions a thing of the past, catching up with friends and family is still the first priority for nearly half of drivers making leisure trips over the bank holiday.

“Since 2022 – the first full year since mobility restrictions lifted – drivers appear to be much more eager to make the most of the May Day weekend, with the total number of getaway trips this year far exceeding the average since 2017.

“We’re anticipating a ‘crescendo of cars’ on the road over the weekend with as many as 3m motorists making leisure trips on Saturday alone. In addition to the majority of motorists planning day trips and short breaks, our data shows local routes to city and out-of-town shopping centres could see heavy traffic, so it’s best to head out early morning or evening if possible.

“For those extending their long weekend breaks into next week, it’s important to plan return journeys in advance as the train strikes between Tuesday 7 and Saturday 11 May will inevitably lead to roads being busier. Industrial action can throw best-laid travel plans into chaos and many commuters who normally rely on the trains instead take to the roads, so our advice is to avoid driving at peak times of day if you can.”

Bob Pishue, transportation analyst at INRIX said: “Although delays won’t be as severe as Easter, drivers should expect the lengthiest hold-ups on major roads to and from popular destinations this weekend. Delays will likely peak on Friday afternoon with some areas seeing usual travel times double as holiday drivers vie for space on the roads with commuters.”

# Best and worst times to drive this May Day bank holiday

Data and research from the RAC and INRIX

Date	Leisure trips by car	Worst times to travel	Best times to travel
Fri 3 May 2024	2,652,376	11am to 6pm	Before 9am
Sat 4 May 2024	3,315,470	9am to 2pm	After 5pm
Sun 5 May 2024	2,320,829	10am to 3pm	After 5pm
Mon 6 May 2024	2,652,376	10am to 3pm	After 5pm
<b>On at least one of these days</b>	<b>5,358,112</b>		



Source: Time recommendations courtesy INRIX; estimated leisure trips data courtesy RAC • Created with Datawrapper

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## About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to nearly 14 million UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. As well as its premium nationwide breakdown assistance service – with an expert branded patrol workforce attending more than two million breakdowns every year – it offers a wide range of market-leading products across insurance, legal services, vehicle inspections and service, maintenance and repair. Included in this is the first-of-its-kind nationwide Mobile Mechanics service which brings the garage to homes and workplaces.

At the forefront of new solutions for business fleets and consumers, the RAC's breakdown service is electric-ready with mobile EV charging technology and can be called on using [myRAC](#) – the all-in-one route planner, fuel finder and breakdown reporting app.



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## Contacts



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