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Busiest summer school holiday getaway for years expected this weekend

With most schools in England and Wales about to break up for summer, drivers are planning an estimated 18.82m separate leisure trips between Friday and Monday, the highest number recorded for these three days since the RAC started tracking summer getaway numbers in 2014.*

Leisure traffic volumes look set to peak on Saturday 23 July with 4.62m separate road trips but Friday and Sunday are expected to be not far behind with 4.29m separate trips on each day. An estimated extra 5.61m journeys by

car will take place between ‘frantic Friday’ 22 July and the end of Sunday by drivers currently unsure as to which day they will get away.

The RAC and transport analytics specialists INRIX are recommending drivers plan well ahead and start their journeys either very early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid the inevitable queues, some of which are expected to form quickly. INRIX data indicates that the M25 could see some of the worst jams, and singles out stretches between Bromley and the Dartford Crossing, Maple Cross to the M3, and the M23 to the M40. The A303 near Stonehenge, M4 between Cardiff and Newport and M5 south of Bristol are also likely to see queuing traffic at various points during the weekend, with unexpected vehicle breakdowns only likely to add to the problems.

The RAC’s research suggests the UK might be in line for its third big ‘staycation summer’ in a row following those caused by the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, although the extremely high fuel prices might have an effect – either reducing the amount of driving people do in the UK or putting people off driving further afield into continental Europe. RAC Fuel Watch data that shows, incredibly, the cost of filling a 55-litre family car with petrol costs £30 more this summer than last, and £42 more than in 2020. The situation with diesel is even more severe, with the cost of a tank up £34 compared to last year and £44 more than a year earlier.

With such an expensive summer on the cards, the RAC is urging drivers to do everything they can to avoid breaking down and potentially be faced with an unexpected garage bill – not least as separate RAC research** found that just a fifth of UK drivers (17%) regularly check their vehicles before setting out on long journeys. Checking oil, coolant and screenwash levels, together with tyre tread and pressures, helps ensure cars are ‘road-ready’ and can significantly cut the chances of a breakdown occurring – potentially saving some drivers’ summer holiday trips from disaster.

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Rod Dennis said:

“The extreme heat that’s affecting much of the UK in the last few days might wane over the next few days, but we still expect the summer getaway to begin with a bang as a potentially record-breaking number of drivers take to the roads this coming weekend – and that’s despite the unbelievably high cost of fuel. With school terms in England and Wales finishing this week and millions of people ready for a well-earned break, we anticipate a ‘frantic

Friday' followed by a woeful weekend on major roads across the country, with traffic and congestion likely peaking on Saturday. The advice to drivers heading off on a holiday by car is therefore clear – leave as early as you can in the morning or expect to be sat in some lengthy queues.

“With this summer set to be one of the most expensive for years – thanks to the record-high price of fuel and the wider cost-of-living crisis – the very last thing drivers want is to break down and at best have to wait to be fixed at the roadside or, at worst, face an unexpected large garage repair bill.

“It’s a fact that a huge proportion of the estimated 260,000 breakdowns our patrols will attend in the coming six weeks are avoidable if drivers make sure they look over their vehicles before any long drive. A breakdown is so much less likely if a vehicle’s oil and coolant levels, as well as tyre pressure and tread depth, have all been checked before setting out.”

INRIX transport analyst Bob Pishue said:

“Drivers should expect traffic congestion to build throughout the day, especially on motorways. Despite high fuel prices, travellers do not appear to be giving up their road trips and holidays.”

National Highways, which is responsible for motorways and major A roads across the country, has launched a campaign reminding drivers to check their tyres regularly and always before long journeys. More than 41,500 people broke down on National Highways roads last year because of tyre issues – that is over 20% of all breakdowns.

National Highways Head of Road Safety, Jeremy Phillips, said:

“With schools breaking up for summer soon there will be more people on the roads and taking longer journeys. We know that breaking down can be a very upsetting experience, nobody wants to start off their holiday stranded at the side of the road, next to fast moving traffic.

“So we are reminding drivers to check their vehicles, particularly the tyres, before setting off. Unsafe tyres put you and others at risk as well as running the risk of attracting a hefty fine and penalty points.

“A simple check on tyre tread and pressure could prevent a breakdown and make sure you get to your destination safe and sound.”

Travel this weekend

Date	Leisure trips by car	Worst times to travel on major roads	Suggested best times to travel on major roads	Roads to watch for delays
'Frantic Friday' 22 July	4.29m	Between 1000 and 1900hrs	Before 0900 and after 1900hrs	<p>M25 anticlockwise J4 Bromley to Dartford Crossing: 60 min delays mid-afternoon</p> <p>M4 eastbound J30 Cardiff East to J24 for the A449 Monmouth: 26 min delays mid-afternoon</p> <p>M25 anticlockwise J17 Maple Cross to J12 for the M3: 50 min delays late afternoon</p>
Saturday 23 July	4.62m	Between 1000 and 1500hrs	Before 0900 and after 1600hrs	<p>A303 westbound past Stonehenge: 27 min delays late morning</p> <p>M25 clockwise J7 for the M23 to J16 for the M40: 52 min delays around middle of the day</p> <p>M5 south J15 Almondsbury Interchange to J23 for A38 Bridgwater: 47 min delays around middle of the day</p> <p>M25 anticlockwise J17 Maple Cross to J12 for the M3: 36 min delays around middle of the day</p>

Sunday 24 July	4.29m	Between 1100 and 1800hrs	Before 1000 and after 2000hrs	M25 clockwise J7 for the M23 to J16 for the M40: 45 min delays around middle of the day M25 anticlockwise J4 Bromley to Dartford Crossing: 31 min delays mid-afternoon M25 anticlockwise J17 Maple Cross to J12 for the M3: 26 min delays mid-afternoon
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Up and up... how the cost of fuel is so much higher this year

	Average cost of a litre of unleaded	Cost to fill a 55-litre family car	Average cost of a litre of diesel	Cost to fill a 55-litre family car
July 2022	£1.90	£104.50	£1.98	£108.90
July 2021	£1.34	£73.70	£1.37	£75.35
July 2020	£1.14	£62.70	£1.18	£64.90
July 2019	£1.29	£70.95	£1.31	£72.05
July 2018	£1.29	£70.95	£1.32	£72.60
<i>Data source: RAC Fuel Watch</i>				

The press office email address is press.enquiries@rac.co.uk and media centre is at media.rac.co.uk. **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to 13 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. The RAC is also at the forefront in helping drivers make the switch to electric vehicles and leads in the development of new solutions for businesses and OEMs, partnering with the best in the motoring and mobility space.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

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