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Europe's roads are paved with gold in the eyes of British motorists

With Britain's roads riddled with potholes and plagued by congestion, and the Government taking 70% of the price of fuel in tax, it seems – according to a new study by [RAC European Breakdown](#)* – the appeal of driving in Europe has never been greater.

While nearly two-thirds of Brits (64%) have enjoyed taking car journeys to Europe, primarily for the travel flexibility driving brings, almost a fifth (17%) of those surveyed said they chose to drive to the continent simply because of the better quality roads.

It seems for many the roads of Europe are paved with gold rather than worn-out tarmac, with 80% saying there are fewer potholes on the continent than on UK roads in stark contrast to the 18% who claimed there was little difference. Three-quarters (74%) also think there is less congestion in Europe than in the UK with the remaining 26% maintaining it's much the same.

However, when it comes to the contentious issue of the price of petrol and diesel, motorists were very clear that they get a better deal at the pump in Europe than they do at home. Two-thirds (65%) claimed that a litre of fuel is cheaper in Europe than in Britain with only 30% feeling there was little difference.

And, of course, those that said it was cheaper are right as fuel prices are generally lower on the continent as a result of the UK government charging more duty on diesel than any other EU country and having the fourth highest duty rate on petrol. Fuel duty, which stands at 57.95p, or €0.67, a litre, is charged on both petrol and diesel, generating more than £26bn for the Treasury in 2015** (for UK v Europe fuel price comparisons see Notes to Editors).

On the subject of service stations, there was a smaller divide between the UK and Europe with 49% believing the quality to be very similar, but a significant minority (38%) feeling European service stations are better than their British equivalents.

But despite all the perceived advantages of driving in Europe the RAC European Breakdown research found there are several issues to contend with, ranging from getting there to not being aware of some important road laws.

Six in 10 (62%) of those surveyed planning to go to Europe by car say the migrant crisis at the Channel Tunnel has affected their decision to travel while three in 10 (29%) claim not to be using the Channel Tunnel to get to the continent because of the crisis. A fifth (22%) say they have put off going to Europe at all by any means and 10% will be going by ferry instead, whereas a resolute 38% say they will still use the tunnel.

The survey also revealed that awareness of French speed limits is not as good as it could be with only 30% correctly knowing that the limit in built-up areas is 50km per hour and only 23% knowing that the limit on a rural motorway in good weather is 130km per hour.

In addition, British motorists driving in Europe need to be very careful they obey speed limits as 59% find it hard to spot speed cameras which are often very different to UK-style ones.

Illegal or legal in France?

- 19% didn't know it's illegal to use a handheld phone while driving in France
- 59% didn't know it's illegal to use a sat-nav with speed camera alerts
- 38% didn't know that it's illegal not to have a personal breathalyser kit in France
- But on a positive note only 10% didn't know it's illegal not to have a [warning triangle and reflective jacket](#)

RAC European Breakdown spokesman Simon Williams said: "Europe is clearly a big hit with British motorists as the quality and traffic-free nature of its roads make for a marked contrast with our own.

"The cheaper price of fuel is also very welcome, and even though we are currently enjoying an extended period of lower prices, the level of tax we pay to the Government always limits how far pump prices can fall when the cost of oil is low. In Europe where fuel duty rates are lower the price of petrol and diesel is noticeably cheaper.

"But to take advantage of these continental driving benefits motorists need to ensure they are properly prepared with adequate breakdown cover to ensure their trip isn't spoilt by a something going wrong with their vehicle as well as being fully up to speed with the rules of the road in the country they are visiting."

Notes to Editors

* RAC Opinion Panel research with 1,164 respondents. Of those surveyed 45% had driven in Europe and 19% had been driven by someone else.

** At the end of August 2016, a litre of unleaded cost €1.28 (approx. 109p of which duty 57.95p) in the UK making it the ninth most expensive in Europe.

At €1.30 (approx. 111p) a litre, UK diesel was the most expensive in the EU

About the RAC

With more than eight million members, the RAC is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's roadside assistance, insurance, buying a used car, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level, including advancing levels of road safety, supporting the needs of young drivers and voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring. The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). This is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

Contacts



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