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More than 11 million leisure trips by car as schools in England and Wales break up for summer

The arrival of the school summer holidays in England and Wales will be marked by drivers taking an estimated 11.5m leisure trips by car between today and the end of the weekend, a study by the RAC and INRIX suggests.*

The RAC expects today and Friday (23 July) to be the busiest days on the roads in this period with around 2.6m and 2.3m leisure trips made by drivers respectively. Journey times are likely to be severely affected with transport analytics experts INRIX predicting a 29% increase in delays on Friday, compared to typical July travel times.

As millions clamour for space on the UK's roads in a desperate bid to get away for a well-earned break, the RAC and Highways England are urging everyone still prepared to brave the incredibly busy conditions to make sure their cars – and anything they might be towing – are up to the task. With so many cars only having been driven short distances during months of travel restrictions, the risk of breaking down on a long journey increases considerably. Checking tyres, oil, coolant and screenwash levels will be more important this summer than ever and could make the difference between drivers getting safely to their holiday destinations or being broken down at the side of a busy road.

Data from INRIX indicates that some of the roads to watch for jams will be sections of the M25, the A303 in Wiltshire, the M1 in the East Midlands and the M4 west of Newport in South Wales – in addition to other usual hotspots like the M5 through Somerset and Devon and roads leading to other popular destinations like the Lake District and the South Coast.

Separate figures released by the RAC last week indicate the summer of 2021 is likely to be the busiest in years, with international travel restrictions scuppering the plans of millions who would normally jet off in search of the sunshine at this time of year. Just 7% of UK drivers say they expect to take a holiday elsewhere in Europe this summer, down from 10% who said this when questioned in April – with a third of those still hoping for a foreign trip saying they will holiday in the UK instead if they have to.

RAC Breakdown spokesman Simon Williams said:

“We seem to have all the elements of a perfect storm on the UK’s roads this summer – with millions of drivers having already planned their staycation trips, plus the very real prospect of huge numbers more booking last minute if their foreign travel plans end in tatters because of Covid travel restrictions.

“With the current heatwave, the scene is really set for an incredibly busy few weeks on the country’s roads, whether that’s on motorways or on smaller, minor routes that take people to popular tourist destinations by the coast or in the countryside. It’s never been more important to plan ahead to avoid the busiest times.

“With the roads likely to be so busy, we’re expecting the numbers of people needing our help to rocket, but it’s not too late to reduce your chances of breaking down. This is why we can’t stress enough how important checking tyres, oil and coolant levels is.

“We’re taking steps to prepare for the unprecedented demand the breakdown industry is facing this summer due to both the UK staycation and the impact of the current self-isolation rules on staffing levels. We’ll be doing all we can to get to those members who do break down as quickly as possible, in these very challenging circumstances.”

Bob Pishue, transportation analyst at INRIX, said:

“With the possibility of record numbers of people using the roads this summer, drivers – especially around major metro areas – must be prepared for more delays. Knowing when and where congestion will build can help drivers avoid the stress of sitting in traffic, and our advice is to leave as early in the day as possible and to avoid travelling on Friday afternoon if at all

possible.”

Highways England traffic officer Siobhan Wares, who patrols the M25 and other major routes, said:

“You are more likely to experience a breakdown or a collision if your tyres are incorrectly inflated or in a poor condition. It only takes a few minutes to check your tyre pressure before you go on your day trip or staycation this summer, and it could save you time and money in the long run. Help yourself and your family reach your destination safely by checking your vehicle before you go.”

The fastest way for RAC members to log a breakdown and get help is online at www.rac.co.uk/reportbreakdown.

Beat the queues: An at-a-glance guide to travel this weekend (data from INRIX and the RAC)

Expected worst days for delays over this period is **Wednesday 21 and Friday 23 July**

Date	Leisure trips by car**	Major roads likely to be particularly busy between	Major roads likely to be less busy between	Specific roads where delays can be expected (breakdowns or collisions can significantly increase journey times across the road network)
Wednesday 21 July	2.6m	2pm and 6pm	After 6pm	M25 anticlockwise J17 to J12; M25 anticlockwise J4 to J1
Thursday 22 July	2.0m	2pm and 7pm	After 7pm	M25 anticlockwise J4 to J1; M25 clockwise J7 to J16

Friday 23 July	2.3m	11am to 7pm	After 8pm	A303 West Solstice Park to A36; M4 east J29 to J24
Saturday 24 July	2.0m	10am to 4pm	After 5pm	M25 clockwise J7 to J16; M5 south J15 to J23
Sunday 25 July	1.3m	12pm to 6pm	After 7pm	M25 clockwise J7 to J16; M25 Anticlockwise J4 to J1; A303 West Solstice Park to A36

Ben's tips: How to avoid a breakdown this summer from the RAC's patrol of the year, Ben Aldous

Always remember the word 'FORCES':

Fuel – Don't risk running out of fuel, top up before you set out. More people heading onto the roads in the good weather can lead to traffic jams, especially on routes to the beaches

Oil – check it's at the right level, and get your car booked in at a garage if you're topping up more than usual

Rubber – tyres need to be in good condition and inflated to the correct pressures for the load. The legal tread depth is 1.6mm, but it's best to change them well before they reach this point

Coolant – this is vital in ensuring the engine runs at the right temperature. If it's not between the 'min' and 'max' levels, this could be the sign of a problem so contact a good garage without delay

Electrics – if your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights aren't working properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk.

Screenwash – helps keep your windscreen clear of dirt and insects

Visit the RAC website for more information on [how to avoid a summer breakdown.](#)

Notes to Editors

* Getaway trips based on research of drivers' leisure trip plans conducted for the RAC by Ragdoll Research. Base: 1,000 drivers surveyed July 2021. Road-specific information courtesy INRIX

** Total predicted leisure trips over this period is 11.5m – 10.2m between Friday and Sunday (specific day/s planned), plus 1.3m (unsure of which day over this period at time of answering survey)

*** Based on separate research of drivers. See <https://media.rac.co.uk/pressreleases/rac-forecasts-unprecedented-summer-on-the-uks-roads-3117243>

The press office email address is press.enquiries@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.

ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

About the RAC

The RAC provides complete peace of mind to 12m UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. Its services include:

- [Breakdown assistance](#). Its highly-skilled, 1,600-strong branded patrol workforce attends more than two million breakdowns every year, fixing on average four out of five vehicles at the roadside. The RAC's patrol fleet is one of the most advanced in the UK, and was the first to roll out both an [All-Wheels-Up recovery system](#), allowing the vast majority of vehicles to be recovered from a single patrol van, and [EV Boost](#) mobile electric vehicle charging units
- [Insurance](#). The RAC is a top-five [car insurance](#) broker having surpassed the 500,000 policies-in-force milestone in 2018. It also offers ['black box' telematics policies](#), as well as home and

travel insurance

- **Other motoring services.** The RAC leads in the development of new solutions for business, fleets, electric vehicles and future car technology. Its additional products and services include a [personal loans offering](#), a [used car buying website](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#). It also has a network of [Approved Dealers](#) and [Approved Garages](#) which combine the trust of RAC brand with local service and convenience

The RAC also works to support the interests of its members and UK drivers on the most important motoring issues which it identifies via the annual [RAC Report on Motoring](#) and the RAC Opinion Panel. The Report on Motoring is the longest running analysis of driver opinion in the UK having been published every year since 1989.

For more information about the RAC, visit the [RAC website](#).

Contacts



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