



Image: Getty

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RAC forecasts 'unprecedented summer' on the UK's roads

This summer will see unprecedented levels of traffic on UK roads due to drivers planning in excess of an estimated 29m staycations – 16m of these in the school holidays alone – according to a new study of 2,500 drivers conducted by RAC Breakdown.*

The number of drivers making firm staycation bookings has surged 20% since April, with the RAC figures suggesting the West Country – Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset – will receive the largest numbers of holidaymakers

(30%), followed by Scotland (14%), Yorkshire (8%), the Lake District (6%) and East Anglia (6%).

And while many drivers have already decided which week they'll be going away, a sizeable fifth (18%) are yet to commit to a week. This suggests some people are hoping to grab a last-minute booking or are perhaps holding out to see what the Great British weather has in store before committing.

With the school summer holidays just around the corner and most families already having made their plans for a break, the prospect of lengthy bumper-to-bumper queues on major routes – and a spike in breakdowns – has now shot up. The RAC is therefore urging drivers to make sure their cars – and anything they might be towing – are 'road ready' or risk a breakdown during what could turn out to be one of the busiest summers on the roads in years. Quickly checking a car's tyres, oil, coolant and even fuel levels before setting off makes the difference between a smooth journey and one blighted by a breakdown. Drivers should also check traffic conditions before setting out and avoid travelling on the busiest roads during the busiest periods.

Drivers were also asked how far from home they'll be holidaying in the UK, and results suggest many of us will be travelling much further than usual. The majority (57%) say they'll be more than 150 miles from home, with 17% of these more than 300 miles from home. But interestingly a third of drivers (33%) who had a staycation in 2020 say they'll be driving greater distances in the UK this year, perhaps to explore new corners of the country.

Uncertainty around foreign travel could also have the effect of boosting the volumes of traffic on the UK's roads even further, particularly as Office of National Statistics' data shows as many as 9.4m overseas trips were made in August 2019**. Just 7% of drivers expect to take a summer holiday elsewhere in Europe, down from 10% in April. And of those drivers who are still holding on for a foreign trip this summer, 34% say they will end up holidaying in the UK instead if pandemic restrictions affect their plans.

While the car on its own is the most popular means of going on holiday this year, accounting for 90% of trips that will be made by personal transport, 5% will involve towing a caravan or trailer, and a further 5% will be in a motorhome. When it comes to the types of accommodation drivers will be staying in, self-catering is the most popular (46% of drivers), followed by hotels and B&Bs (22%) and camping or touring sites (17%).

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Rod Dennis said:

“With the school summer holidays just days away, a second ‘staycation summer’ in a row now looks like a certainty and will mean millions of us relying on our cars to get us wherever we want to go.

“Our research shows that while most people have already made their plans, if – as expected – travel restrictions limit the numbers taking foreign holidays, then those booking last-minute trips in the UK will likely soar, adding to what we expect to already be an extremely busy summer on the roads.

“This summer, perhaps more than ever, the last thing anyone wants while they’re away on a well-earned break is a breakdown. Busier roads, especially in the heat, can mean a sudden sharp increase in breakdowns, so we’re calling on every driver to check their car is ‘road ready’ and isn’t about to let them down. It takes moments to check that tyres are properly inflated, have plenty of tread and aren’t damaged, and just a few minutes more to ensure that oil, coolant and screenwash are all at the right levels.

“Checking a car’s ready for a trip is especially important for anyone holidaying a long distance from home, as no-one wants to end – or even start – their holiday with their vehicle on the back of a recovery truck. Yet our research suggests that longer trips will be much more popular this year, with a third of those drivers who had a holiday in the UK last year planning on covering a greater distance in 2021.

“Our expert local patrols, who have kept drivers moving right throughout this pandemic, will be continuing to work tirelessly over the summer to keep people’s staycation plans on track. But it’s important drivers realise that there’s a lot they can do to avoid the need to call them out in the first place.

“Our research also suggests a possible prolonged summer season this year – the return of children to schools in September doesn’t look like it will signal a huge drop in summer holidays, with a third of drivers saying they’re planning to take a UK staycation in September.”

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

Be #RoadReady – tips that can help avoid breakdowns from Ben Aldous, RAC's patrol of the year

- **Fuel (petrol/diesel car) or charge (electric car)** – it sounds obvious, but make sure you have more than enough for the trip you're making, to take account of jams. If you're creeping along in slow moving traffic, you're still using fuel or battery charge.
- **Oil** – it's vital the oil level is checked to avoid a breakdown and potentially expensive engine damage. *RAC video: How and why to check and top up engine oil:*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGvJrB3Y0GA
- **Rubber** – all tyres must be inflated correctly based on the load being carried, check the owners' manual for details. Each tyre should also have plenty of tread and, of course, be free of any damage. *RAC video: How to check tyres have enough tread:*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrZZqUWYv7w
- **Coolant** – an engine running for longer has a much greater chance of overheating if the coolant is low or leaking. Check the level plenty of days before you are due to go away (make sure the engine is completely cold), and get a garage to assist if needed. *RAC video: How and why to check coolant level:*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbmjyYexj4s
- **Electrics** – you'll need your lights on during sudden downpours, and your wipers must be able to clear the windscreen properly (wipers that don't clear effectively are also enough to fail an MOT). *RAC video: How to change your wipers:*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK22e_SMPOg
- **Screenwash** – keep a clear view of the road ahead (and behind) by ensuring the screenwash bottle is topped up. *RAC video: How to check and top up screenwash:*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkotKOEZlaM

Find out more at www.rac.co.uk/drive/travel/driving-in-the-uk/how-to-avoid-a-summer-breakdown/

Drivers' top staycation destinations for summer 2021

Rank (% of staycation drivers)	Most popular destinations
1 (30%)	West Country, of which Devon 11%, Cornwall 11%, Dorset 6%, Somerset 3%
2 (14%)	Scotland, of which Highlands 6%, other mainland 6%, islands 1%
3 (8%)	Yorkshire
4= (6%)	Lake District
4= (6%)	East Anglia – Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire
6 (5%)	North Wales

Notes to Editors

* Research conducted with 2,498 drivers on the RAC Driver Opinion Panel up to 4 July 2021. Total trips estimate based on official data table DRL0101 (estimated 40.48m full licence holders in Great Britain as of March 2021)

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www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/leisureandtourism/bulletins/overseastravelandtourism/august2019provisionalresults

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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