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14m drivers have firm plans for making the most of the bank holiday

With much of Britain set to bask in some early summer heat this coming bank holiday weekend, new research of drivers' plans conducted by the RAC suggests at least 14m individual leisure trips on major roads will be taken between Friday and Monday.

The research of 2,500 motorists' plans for the bank holiday* found that the Friday before the bank holiday (25 May) is once again likely to be busiest with leisure and everyday commuter traffic on the road at the same time – on this day some 4.5m getaway trips are likely to be taken, on top of the millions of normal Friday journeys.

Saturday is likely to be the next most hectic with around 3.8m separate leisure journeys, followed by the Sunday and bank holiday Monday itself, each seeing around 2.9m individual trips planned. A further 4.8 million drivers told the RAC that they were planning a trip at some point around or on the bank holiday, but hadn't decided on any precise dates yet.

The reality may see even more of us take to the roads based on current forecasts from the Met Office. With the exception of some eastern areas, early indications are that the weather will warm up significantly with temperatures widely reaching the mid-20s – albeit with the possibility of some sharp thundery showers that could catch some drivers out.

Unfortunately, the cost of filling up the car with petrol or diesel is far higher this year compared to 2017 and 2016. It is currently £6 more expensive than last year to fill an average 55-litre family car that runs on unleaded, and nearly £7 more expensive for a similar diesel car. Compared to 2016, it is nearly £10 more expensive to fill a petrol-powered car, and £11 more costly

to fill an equivalent diesel one. Forecourt prices are continuing to rise, and will do through the bank holiday, largely as a result of climbing oil prices caused by the US abandoning the Iran nuclear deal.

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RAC traffic spokesman Rod Dennis said: “Our research focuses on those leisure trips drivers are planning especially because of the bank holiday – so journeys like day trips with friends and family, or perhaps departing for a short break or half-term holiday.

“Motorists planning on covering any significant distance should try to avoid Friday afternoon and evening and get away early on Saturday or Sunday to miss the worst of the jams. But with the UK’s constrained road space, and with road traffic at an all-time high, it doesn’t take much for congestion to occur so the message is to expect queues on some of the busiest routes, especially if the current weather forecasts become true. The fine weather a lot of us enjoyed over the last bank holiday sparked congestion on some parts of the network and this weekend is likely to be no different.

“Sadly though, taking a break by car this year is going to cost a lot more than in the last few years. Motorists have already endured more than three weeks of rising fuel prices at the pumps, and current data suggests they are not about to stop.

“Those looking to save the number of trips they need to make to fill up the car should follow some basic tips for driving as efficiently as possible:

accelerate and brake gently (dropping gears to use engine braking where possible), change up the gears early in a manual car and stick to speed limits – in fact driving faster than about 55mph to 60mph sees the efficiency of car's deteriorate significantly.

"It's also a good idea to ensure that every tyre on a car is properly inflated, as this can also help improve efficiency. Some other tips to boost a car's 'mpg' (miles per gallon) – such as packing lightly and not using the air conditioning – are unlikely to be terribly popular among many drivers this bank holiday weekend.

A spokesperson for the Met Office said: "It'll be a warm Bank Holiday weekend with temperatures reaching the low to mid-20s for many, however it'll be cooler along eastern coastal areas. Although many areas will be dry, there is a risk of some sharp thundery showers developing across the south, where temperatures could push into the high-twenties."

	Planned leisure trips by car	Expected busiest times on the road
Friday May 25th	4.45 million	4pm to 7pm
Saturday May 26th	3.82 million	10am to 4pm
Sunday May 27th	2.86 million	10am to 4pm
Monday May 28th	2.86 million	12pm to 4pm
Planning a trip between 22nd and 29th May, but no date set yet	*4.77 million*	

Popular bank holiday traffic hotspots

- M25 between Gatwick Airport and M1
- M3 south west of London
- M4 west of London and between Cardiff and Swansea
- A23/M23 to Brighton

- A47 Swaffham to Great Yarmouth
- M4/M5 around Bristol
- M5 from Bristol to Taunton
- A303 Stonehenge
- A30 and A38 Exeter to Cornwall
- M55 between Preston and Blackpool
- A14 between the Midlands and the coast
- A66 between M6 and the coast
- M53 between Liverpool and Chester
- A55 North Wales Expressway, Chester to Bangor

The RAC website carries advice to drivers on how to reduce the chances of a vehicle breakdown. Highways England, together with THINK!, is also running a campaign on the importance of conducting 'pre-drive checks'.

Notes to Editors

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and 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. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual Report on Motoring – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and 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. It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

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