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2016's prolonged Christmas getaway will see 28 million trips take place this side of Boxing Day

Drivers will be making 28m separate Christmas getaway car journeys on major roads this year* – but unlike in previous years, plan on spreading their journeys across several days which could mean fewer of the usual jams, new RAC Traffic Watch data suggest.

While Christmas Eve is expected to see the most getaway journeys, with 3.8m planned, it could be Friday 23rd that ends up being the busiest day on the roads – as leisure travellers taking 3.5m trips battle with the last day of regular traffic before Christmas. Christmas Day is expected to see a similar level of getaway traffic, again totalling some 3.5m separate journeys.

Thanks to Christmas falling on a weekend for the first time in five years, drivers have got an opportunity to space out their journeys – potentially meaning there will be fewer jams that affect large parts of the road network shortly before the big day itself.

Unfortunately the cost of visiting family and friends is significantly more expensive this year than last. It currently costs an average of £63.44 to fill the tank of a Ford Focus or Vauxhall Astra, up over £6 on the 2015 cost. Diesel drivers are feeling the recent price increases slightly less acutely – it now costs £64.81 to fill up a family-sized car, up £5.56 on this time last year.

RAC Traffic Watch spokesman Rod Dennis said: “Unlike in recent years, we’ve got a significantly extended Christmas getaway this year. With Christmas Day on a Sunday, and with most schools having broken up yesterday (16 December), it means many more drivers this year have a chance to space out

their Christmas getaway journeys – and that is exactly what our latest data is suggesting.

“The fact we have a lengthy ‘pre-Christmas stretch’ this year is not to say there won’t at times be heavy traffic on the road network through the week, perhaps peaking on the 23rd when many workers finish for Christmas and leisure and commuter traffic take to the roads together. But we’re hopeful things won’t be quite as pressured on our motorways and major A-roads this year as they have been before.

“The latest information from the Met Office suggests a fairly dull, mild and occasionally damp run-up to Christmas – we will be monitoring the forecast closely through next week but right now we’re not anticipating any particularly tricky driving conditions. But breakdowns tend to happen when drivers least expect them, so it pays to be prepared and take a few moments to make sure the family car is in best condition for a long drive.

“A handy acronym to remember is FORCES. If every motorist remembers to check fuel, oil, rubber, coolant, electrics and screenwash before setting out they have the best chance of avoiding an unscheduled stop at the side of the road – and the potential for a late start to Christmas.”

Christmas getaway journeys by day

17 to 21 December	22 to 26 December
Saturday 17 December – 2.9 million journeys	Thursday 22 December – 2.8 million
Sunday 18 December – 2.8 million	Friday 23 December – 3.5 million
Monday 19 December – 3.1 million	Christmas Eve, 24 December – 3.8 million
Tuesday 20 December – 2.8 million	Christmas Day, 25 December – 3.5 million
Wednesday 21 December – 2.9 million	Boxing Day, 26 December – 3.1 million

Anticipated busiest times to travel on the roads

Friday 23 December, between 4pm and 8pm

Saturday 24 December, between 10am and 2pm

Reduce the chances of a breakdown – remember **FORCES**:

F is for **Fuel** – make sure you have enough for your journey

O is for **Oil** – check your levels before you set off and top up if needed

R is for **Rubber** – make sure all your tyres have plenty of tread and enough pressure, and look at the condition of your windscreen wipers too

C is for **Coolant** – again, check you have the right amount before setting out

E is for **Electrics** – with darker days, having fully functioning lights is more important than ever

S is for **Screenwash** – essential in clearing your screen and keeping your view of the road ahead clear

Notes to Editors

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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