

Mar 27, 2018 09:00 BST

Arrival of the Easter break to spark almost 19m leisure trips by car

Drivers are expected to complete nearly 19m separate leisure journeys by car this coming weekend* as the arrival of Easter marks the first big getaway of the year.

A study of drivers' plans conducted by the RAC indicates that the largest number of getaway trips will take place on Good Friday with 4.45m individual journeys being taken, closely followed by Maundy Thursday and this coming Saturday which are each expected to see 3.18m individual trips.

It is Thursday that is likely to see the largest overall number of vehicles on the road however, as cars carrying families and friends vie for space with commuter traffic. In total, between this Thursday and Easter Monday, the RAC anticipates some 18.76m separate leisure journeys by car.

But unfortunately for drivers, the arrival of Easter will also coincide with some very unsettled weather for some of us. The Met Office reports that snow showers over some higher ground are possible from Wednesday onwards with much colder air knocking on the door of the UK by the end of the week. Almost everywhere meanwhile will see a combination of rain and strong winds, making driving conditions less than ideal. The RAC is therefore advising motorists check their car is ready to avoid an unnecessary breakdown.

RAC traffic spokesman Rod Dennis said: "While Easter is a little earlier this year than last, our research suggests drivers are just as keen as ever to get away and make the most of the long weekend. In fact, between Thursday and bank holiday Monday our data indicates around a million more confirmed leisure journeys by car than in 2017.

“But if drivers are hoping for the longer days to herald better weather, they are likely to be disappointed. The ‘Beast from the East’ might have departed but much more unsettled conditions look set to make a very unwelcome return – with the risk of snow for some of us, and strong winds and rain for a lot of the country. We strongly recommend motorists keep abreast of the weather forecast through this week to help them organise their trips, especially if they are planning on driving any great distance.

“If you are planning a longer trip, we strongly recommend you ensure your car is up the job before you set out. Spending just a few minutes checking things like the condition of your vehicle’s tyres, its oil and screenwash levels and of course ensuring you have enough fuel for your journey, could make the difference between a trouble-free journey and an undesirable breakdown at the roadside. If conditions turn wintry, it is also advisable to be prepared by taking extra warm clothing, a blanket and a hot flask of drink – and make sure your mobile phone is fully charged so you can reach help if you need it.”

The planned upgrades to some parts of the national rail network will also likely see an increase in road traffic through the weekend, with buses carrying rail passengers in some parts of the north west, south west and east of England.

The better news for motorists is that many major routes – including motorways and some of the country’s busiest A roads – will be free of the majority of planned roadworks as a result of Highways England completing or pausing work in time for Easter.

Highways England’s customer service director, Melanie Clarke, said: “We’re doing everything we can to make journeys as smooth as possible this Easter and that’s why we’re keeping 99 per cent of the road network we manage, free from roadworks.

“Safety is our top imperative and we know from experience that almost half of breakdowns are avoidable and these can easily be avoided with simple vehicle checks. Easter is always a busy period on the road network and we’d urge all motorists to make sure they do their bit to check their vehicle is roadworthy before setting off over this period.”

Met Office Chief Meteorologist, Frank Saunders, said: “It is important to point out that we are not expecting anything on the scale of the last two spells of

unusually cold weather which brought significant and disruptive snowfall.

“Throughout the Easter weekend it will stay unsettled with showers or longer outbreaks of rain for most. There will be some sunshine at times as well though, with the best of any drier and brighter weather expected across the northwest”.

Easter weekend – planned total leisure journeys by car

Maundy Thursday 29 th March	3.18 million
Good Friday 30 th March	4.45 million
Saturday 31 st March	3.18 million
Easter Sunday 1 st April	2.86 million
Bank Holiday Monday 2 nd April	1.91 million
<i>On one of the above days, but no specific date set yet</i>	<i>3.18 million</i>

Easter weekend – suggested best times to travel

Maundy Thursday 29 th March	Before 4pm or after 7pm
Good Friday 30 th March	Before 10am and after 4pm
Saturday 31 st March	Before 10am and after 4pm
Easter Sunday 1 st April	Before 10am and after 4pm
Bank Holiday Monday 2 nd April	Before 12pm and after 4pm

Likely Easter 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

Notes to Editors

* Based on research conducted for the RAC by Ragdoll during w/c 19 March 2018 with 3,258 UK motorists. Daily traffic volumes extrapolated from 31.79m licensed cars. Respondents were asked on which dates they would be using a car to travel on major A roads or motorways in order to get away on a leisure trip/visit family and friends, or return from such a trip (i.e. not travelling for the purposes of work). 3.18m drivers reported they were confident they will be using the car for a leisure trip but had not pinned down a specific day yet.

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 – 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](#). RAC Fuel Watch 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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