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## Drivers planning 20 million getaway trips as the country breaks for Christmas

**As many as 20 million individual Christmas leisure trips will take place this week in the run-up to Christmas, a study of drivers' travel plans and congestion forecasts conducted by the RAC and INRIX reveals.\***

The research suggests a staggered spread of getaway traffic throughout this week, peaking towards the weekend as large volumes of everyday commuter traffic combine with people making leisure journeys. Consequently, Thursday 20th and the festive but 'frantic' Friday 21st are likely to be some of the worst days with 2.5 million and 2.8 million individual journeys expected to be taken respectively.

Data from travel analytics specialists INRIX indicates Wednesday through to Friday will see some significant congestion on major roads, with drivers travelling on the M25, M6 and M40 all likely to face long delays. On Thursday, delays of up to three hours are expected on one section of the northbound M6, while on Friday part of the southbound M40 could see drivers queuing for more than an hour and a half.

However, when it comes to pure leisure journeys over Christmas, traffic is likely to peak on Boxing Day when some 6.8 million individual trips will be made as drivers cross the country to see family and friends, followed by Thursday 27th December when 4.4 million journeys are expected to be taken.

The anticipated jams will be compounded by extensive disruption to the rail network – both planned and unplanned – that could force more people onto the roads. Strikes are likely to affect routes run by Northern Rail and South Western Railway, and Network Rail is planning extensive engineering work on lines running into major stations including London Paddington and

Victoria.

**RAC Patrol of the Year Mark Souster said:** “The run-up to Christmas is traditionally a very busy time on the roads and for us as Patrols, and 2018 looks to be no exception – although our data suggests drivers are planning on getting away early in some cases and spreading their journeys across a number of days, which would certainly be no bad thing.

“It’s vitally important every driver planning a trip gives their car a once over to make sure it’s up to the job, as a single breakdown can bring some roads to a grinding halt, slowing down the Christmas getaway for all of us. A few moments spent checking things like fuel, oil, coolant and screenwash levels and the condition and pressure of tyres could make the difference between a stress-free journey and one plagued by a breakdown. It might feel like yet another thing to think about before Christmas but it’s a fact that many of the breakdowns we see are avoidable if drivers just do these few checks before they set out.”

**INRIX data scientist Joshua Kidd said:** “Our data shows that compared to a normal day, Thursday 20th December will see the biggest increase in cars on the road. With most drivers setting out mid-morning, traffic will become heavier over the course of the afternoon and stay congested into the evening. But it’s not just those off to see family and friends - commuters, last-ditch shoppers and online deliveries will contribute to clogging the roads. Drivers are advised to seek out alternative routes to their destinations and use the latest technology for real-time updates.”

**Highways England’s customer service director, Melanie Clarke, said:** “We’re doing everything we can to make journeys as smooth as possible for this Christmas getaway and that’s why we’re keeping more than 97 per cent of our road network free from roadworks.

“We know that the Christmas period is one of the busiest times on our roads and we’d also like to remind people about the importance of checking their vehicle before setting off on their journeys. Simple things like checking your fuel and oil levels, tyre pressures and that all lights are working properly, can keep you moving and the network flowing.”

**Met Office spokesman Grahame Madge said:** “With millions of journeys being made over the festive holidays, we’re urging travellers to check the forecast

before they travel. Winter weather can bring many risks, but knowing the forecast in advance and being aware of any potentially hazardous weather conditions you may face will help you prepare and it will make all the difference to your journey. Surprises have their place at Christmas, but it's best to reserve them for the giving of presents, rather than being needlessly caught out by the weather.”

### **In numbers: expected Christmas getaway trips and traffic conditions**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Planned leisure trips</b>	<b>Worst times to travel</b>	<b>Best times to travel</b>	<b>Worst road for long delays</b>
Wed 19th December	2.8m	3pm to 6.30pm	After 7.30pm	M25 clockwise from J20 to J28 from 3.30pm. Up to 80min delay
Thu 20th December	2.5m	11.30am to 6.30pm	After 8pm	M6 north J15 to J25 from 12.30pm. Up to 181min delay
Fri 21th December	2.8m	11.30am to 6pm	After 7.30pm	M40 south from M42 Warwickshire to J8A (Oxford). Up to 110min delay
Sat 22nd December	2.2m	10.30am to 4pm	Before 9.30am or after 7.30pm	M40 north from J8A (Oxford) to M42 Warwickshire. Up to 61min delay
Sun 23th December	1.9m	4pm to 6.30pm	Before 11am or after 8pm	-
Mon 24th December	2.5m	11am to 1pm	At other times	M1 north J21 (Coventry/Leicester) to J26 (Nottingham/Ripley). Up to 22min delay

### **In full: roads expected to be worst affected**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Peak congestion from</b>	<b>Predicted travel time (mins)</b>	<b>Total delay (mins)</b>
<b>19th December</b>				
Greater London	M25 Clockwise J20 (Hemel Hempstead) to J28 (Chelmsford)	3.30pm	114	79
Greater London	M25 Anticlockwise J20 (Hemel Hempstead) to J11 (Woking)	3.15pm	86	58
North West England	M62 West J27 (Batley) to J18 (Manchester ring road)	6.30pm	76	48
South West England	M5 South J16 (Thornbury) to J19 (Portishead)	5.30pm	41	31
North West England	M60 clockwise J6 (Sale) to J19 (Manchester)	3pm	44	28
<b>20th December</b>				
West Midlands	M6 North J15 (Stoke-on-Trent) to J25 (Wigan)	12.30pm	229	181
Greater London	M25 Anticlockwise J20 (Hemel Hempstead) to J11 (Woking)	5pm	131	86
South East England	M20 East J8 (Lenham) to J13 (Folkestone)	7.30pm	82	56
South East England	M3 South J6 (Basingstoke) to J13 (Bournemouth)	3pm	65	44
Greater London	M25 Anticlockwise J4 (Bromley) to J30 (London E & C)	2.30pm	54	39
<b>21st December</b>				
West Midlands	M40 South (M42) to J8A (Aylesbury)	2.30pm	157	110

West Midlands	M40 North J8A (Aylesbury) to M42	12pm	84	35
West Midlands	M6 South J20 (Macclesfield) to J16 (Newcastle-under-Lyme)	5.15pm	58	33
West Midlands	M5 North J4A M42 to Ray Hall interchange	7.45pm	39	21
Scotland	M8 West J12 (Riddrie) to J29 (Paisley)	12.15pm	21	8
<b>22nd December</b>				
West Midlands	M40 North J8A (Aylesbury) to M42	5.45pm	105	61
West Midlands	M6 North J15 (Stoke-on-Trent) to J25 (Wigan)	7.15am	104	59
South West England	A303 West Salisbury Road to A350	2.45pm	46	19
West Midlands	M6 South J20 (Macclesfield) to J16 (Newcastle-under-Lyme)	12.30pm	43	18
West Midlands	M5 North J4A (M42) to Ray Hall interchange	6pm	31	14

*A map showing some significant congestion by UK region can be found below.*

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## **Notes to Editors**

\* About the data in this release: planned leisure trips based on RAC survey of drivers' travel plans (sample size 2,400 UK motorists); congestion information based on INRIX data. Globally, INRIX analyses 500 Terabytes of data from 300 million different sources covering over 5 million miles of road. The data used is the congested or uncongested status of every segment of road for every minute of the day

## **About the RAC**

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of drivers 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 drivers 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.

## Contacts



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