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RAC study shows drivers slap down UK roads in favour of those the other side of the Channel

Drivers much prefer the experience of driving on the smooth, open roads the other side of Channel – worlds away from the congested and potholed roads of the United Kingdom – according to new research conducted by [RAC European Breakdown](#).*

More than two-thirds of drivers (69%) said they think the condition of motorways and major roads is better in continental Europe than in the UK, while 64% believe traffic congestion on these roads is not as bad abroad.

What's more, 61% believe local roads in countries such as France, Germany and Spain are maintained to a better standard and more than half (53%) of drivers say the frequency of roadworks is better overseas compared to the UK.

Drivers cite the price of fuel as being lower on the continent (50% of respondents) – in the case of diesel they are quite right, with only Italy and Sweden selling more expensive diesel than the UK, despite UK diesel being subject to more tax (fuel duty) than any other country in Europe. But it's less true when it comes to petrol – while Spain's unleaded is a little cheaper, the fuel is more expensive in 12 other EU countries including popular driving destinations such as France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Motorists also think that speed limits on local roads abroad are more appropriate than those in the UK (45% of respondents), and also many believe the quality of motorway service areas and other rest areas, such as the much-loved 'aires' in France, are far superior in other EU countries.

With more vehicle miles driven in the UK in 2016 than at any time in the past, combined with some of the most congested city roads in the whole of Europe, it appears drivers relish the experience of taking their own car to the near continent for a much more pleasant road trip.

RAC European Breakdown spokesman Rod Dennis said: "Our research paints a gloomy picture of the UK's traffic-choked and potholed roads when compared to the smooth asphalt that can be found just across the English Channel.

"While it is perhaps a case of UK motorists looking through rose-tinted holiday glasses when they drive in France, Spain, Germany or the Netherlands, as the experience is such a marked contrast to the drudgery of driving on our heavily-congested roads, the general feeling is that the roads of continental Europe are better.

"And when it comes to things like the standard of roads, the quality of motorway service areas and the price of fuel, it's hard for any driver to understand just why the UK appears to lag so far behind other countries in Europe.

"The UK's major motorways and A-roads are currently enjoying significant investment, with a lot of this focused on helping these roads manage huge

flows of traffic between our big towns and cities and tackling congestion pinch-points. These improvements are often sold to motorists as ‘short-term pain for long-term gain’, but the sight of miles of traffic cones and corresponding tailbacks is enough to make any regular driver start to feel glum.

“And while it’s those domestic roads that are off-the-beaten track that probably offer the most promise to UK motorists looking to enjoy the experience of driving once again, it’s sadly the case that many of these have suffered the most from underinvestment for years – and things don’t look like they are about to improve any time soon.

“So perhaps a trip in the car to Europe is the ideal way for many of us to rediscover just what driving is all about – and perhaps even fall in love with driving all over again. The summer is the ideal time to pack up the car, book a ferry or Eurotunnel trip, and set off to explore the towns, cities and fantastic scenery that can be found in France and beyond. The pound might have lost a lot of value to the Euro in the last 12 months, but our research suggests that a driving trip in Europe is the perfect antidote to the UK’s clogged up highways.”

The only aspects of the survey which the UK scored well in were for its easy-to-understand road signs (with 30% of drivers saying they were better in the UK, compared to just 10% elsewhere in the EU) and roadside information for drivers advising of delays (26% said better in the UK compared to 17% in the rest of the continent), and marginally the driving standard of native drivers (25% say they are better in the UK compared to 23% in continental Europe, but a sizeable 44% said there was little difference).

What drivers told the RAC they prefer about driving in the rest of Europe compared to the UK:

- 1. Condition of motorways and major A-roads (69% said this is better in continental Europe)
- 2. Congestion on motorways and other major roads (64% said this is better in continental Europe)
- 3. Condition of minor roads (61% said this is better in continental Europe)
- 4. Congestion on minor roads (55% said this is better in

- continental Europe)
- 5. Frequency of road works (53% said this is better in continental Europe)
- 6. Cost of fuel (50% said this is better in continental Europe)
- 7. Appropriateness of speed limits (45% these are better in continental Europe)
- 10. Quality of motorway service areas (42% said this is better in continental Europe); price of fuel at motorway service areas (42% said this is better in continental Europe); quality of other rest areas (42% said this is better in continental Europe)

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A guide to where is best when it comes to different aspects of driving, according to drivers surveyed

If you're looking for...	You're better off in...	And it's best in...
Less traffic congestion	The rest of the EU, rather than the UK	France
Good quality roads	The rest of the EU, rather than the UK	Germany
Fewer roadworks	The rest of the EU, rather than the UK	Spain

Good quality rest areas and motorway service areas	The rest of the EU, rather than the UK	Germany
Cheaper fuel	The rest of the EU, rather than the UK	Spain
Courteous and helpful native drivers	Little difference between the UK and the rest of the EU	Little difference between the UK and the rest of the EU
Good driving standard of native drivers	Little difference between the UK and the rest of the EU	Little difference between the UK and the rest of the EU – but those with most experience of driving in Germany say German drivers have the best driving standard

Notes to Editors

* Research carried out online in June 2017 among 1,075 members of the RAC Opinion Panel who have experience of driving both in the UK and elsewhere in the EU.

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 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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