The Motor Ombudsman takes a glimpse at this year's Christmas get-away by car

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Motor Ombudsman takes a look at 'Car-istmas' to help Britain's motorists ahead of the festive break.

They tell us:

(All words and photographs from The Motor Ombudsman).

- Leaving 48 hours in the lead-up to Christmas Day has emerged as the preferred time for motorists to hit the road for their destination
- Some of the biggest ‘festive fears’ stated by respondents ahead of the holiday season, include getting stuck in traffic for long periods, having to drive in bad weather, and breaking down
- Vehicle accessories, personalised number plates, and tickets to an event, top the Christmas wish list for a car-related gift
- The Motor Ombudsman has published a series of handy tips on its website (TheMotorOmbudsman.org) to help motorists prepare for Christmas

London, 12 November 2024: With only a few weeks to go until Christmas Day, a study conducted by The Motor Ombudsman has revealed a glimpse of 'Car-istmas' for the first time, showcasing what UK drivers are anticipating for the popular festive getaway later next month.

With millions traditionally hitting the road to spend time with friends and relatives for this much-loved annual occasion, the poll of 1,000 people showed that, if they were to travel by car to reach their destination this Christmas, the highest proportion of those surveyed (24%) would look to set off two days before the main event. In contrast, a combined 13% of respondents would choose to leave their journey until the last minute by navigating their way through the peak rush hour Christmas Eve traffic, or on Christmas Day itself once the roads emptied out.

However, when questioned about what their main concerns would be prior to embarking on their journey to celebrate one of the highlights of the winter season, the principal 'festive fears' expressed by respondents were namely, getting stuck in traffic for long periods at a time (31%), and having to travel in conditions such as heavy rain and fog (30%). Similarly, for nearly a quarter of participants (23%), breaking down in bad weather or in a remote area, would equally be considered another nightmare before Christmas, whilst something else going wrong with the car, like a puncture, and having to drive in the dark with poor visibility, are both factors that would weigh on the minds of just over a fifth (21%) of drivers respectively.

Furthermore, with the UK's road network typically congested in the lead-up to the festive break, the latest study revealed that being late to join the celebrations would be a worry for nearly half (49%) of people. In fact, the majority (nearly four in ten or 38%) of respondents who expressed a 'fear of missing out', said that they did not want to forgo spending time with family members or friends, who they may not have seen for a while. It also emerged that 15% did not want to forfeit the chance to open their presents with others, or be greeted with cold turkey on arrival (14%).

If they were planning to set off on a Christmas holiday voyage, around one in two survey participants (56%) cited that they would get behind the wheel of a petrol car, followed by a diesel model (20%). A hybrid would be the transport of choice for 14% of respondents, and 8% would drive an all-electric vehicle – reflecting the ‘current’ situation of there being fewer fully battery-powered cars on the road compared to other fuel types.

When survey participants were quizzed about what they would ask for when it comes to a car-related gift for Christmas, vehicle accessories, including dash cams and cleaning kits, would be top of the wish list for close to a quarter of people (23%), followed by a personalised number plate (17%), and tickets to an event, such as a Formula One race or the Goodwood Festival of Speed (15%). A LEGO set (13%) and model car (13%) round off the five most sought-after 'wants'.

In addition, when it comes to priorities in terms of enjoying a gift, four in ten (40%) UK drivers surveyed said that they would opt for something that they could use all-year round, followed by one that would allow them to spend quality time with other family members (20%), reflecting the aforementioned order of play for the most desired presents.

Bill Fennell, Managing Director and Chief Ombudsman at The Motor Ombudsman, said: "The study paints an interesting picture of the expectations of the nation's motorists at one of the busiest times on the UK's road network. This period is often synonymous with congestion and long queues, when a large proportion of the country are on the move to join friends and family to celebrate together for this special end-of-year occasion."

Bill added: “The underlying message that we are ultimately reinforcing as part of our ‘Car-istmas’ campaign is for drivers to spend time not only preparing for the getaway and checking they have all the luggage they need on board, but also that they get into the spirit of ensuring their vehicle is fully roadworthy and legal ahead of embarking on their journey, not just for their own safety, but also for that of other road users.

If a repair is indeed needed prior to setting off, we advise car owners to visit a repairer that is accredited to The Motor Ombudsman’s Service and Repair Code, as this is a trusted endorsement that the business will deliver the highest level of service and workmanship to consumers when on the ramp and beyond.”

To help drivers prepare for the festive season, The Motor Ombudsman has published a series of handy ‘Car-istmas’ tips, which can be viewed at www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/car-istmas.

About the Opinion Matters survey data

The research was conducted by Opinion Matters, among a sample of 1,000 UK adults with use of a car, and are aged 17+. The data was collected between 23rd and 28th October 2024. Opinion Matters abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Opinion Matters is also a member of the British Polling Council.

About The Motor Ombudsman

The Motor Ombudsman is the independent and impartial Ombudsman dedicated solely to the automotive sector, and self-regulates the UK’s motor industry through its comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Codes of Practice. Thousands of businesses, including vehicle manufacturers, warranty product providers, franchised dealers and independent garages, are accredited to one or more of the Codes, which drive even higher standards of work and service, and give consumers added protection, peace of mind and trust during the vehicle purchase and ownership experience. ownership experience.

For more information on The Motor Ombudsman, visit https://www.themotorombudsman.org/