

Efforts to give drivers 'peace of mind' about EV touring amid staycation worries



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Most Britons who took a staycation this summer travelled by car but just 6% planned to use an electric vehicle, a survey suggests, as energy firms re-double efforts to break down drivers' "range anxiety".

While drivers are aware that EVs are the "greener" way to travel compared to petrol or diesel, more than a third (38%) worry the vehicle will not have enough battery charge to reach its destination and more than half (52%) have concerns about the lack of charging points, the poll for energy firm Ovo found.

A road trip by PA taking in some of England's most remote and beautiful routes over the summer found that concerns about the

variable extent and quality of roadside infrastructure remain justifiable – although significant improvements are under way.

The road trip in an all-electric SUV began en route to the [Lake District](#), where a second attempt at a top-up charge (the first was so slow it would have had us ready to go by 10.40am the next morning – almost a day later) at a BP Pulse charging station in [Warrington](#) was done within the time it took to have a leisurely coffee.

Severe flooding on the first night at a stop in Borrowdale closed roads out of the village and left the hotel's guests travelling by EV reliant on a single double charging point in the carpark.

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Alex Thwaites, Ovo

One of the point's chargers was out of use and the other had been commandeered overnight by a touring [French](#) couple, who wandered in to the hotel's lounge after 10am the next morning and responded to fellow guests' irritation with a Gallic shrug.

An eventual opportunity allowed for a partial recharge while waiting for the roads to reopen – fortunately, as it turned out, as the nearest public charging point in Keswick appeared not to be working and would not accept payment.

However, the near full charge was easily enough for a 67-mile route out of the Lake District and across the Yorkshire Dales high roads to Askrigg.

A stop at the M6 Tebay services southbound the next day en route to the Peak District found 12 Tesla charging points, but a grand total of four for other makes of EVs. Of these, two

were not working, leaving a queue of disgruntled motorists. Tebay does offer 12 ultra-rapid charging points at its northbound services.

[Ovo Energy](#), which runs the Charge Anytime app for all EV drivers – not just Ovo customers – directing users to 34,000 public chargers across the UK and 400,000 across Europe, acknowledges there is more to be done to boost confidence in the system.

Alex Thwaites, director of electric vehicles at Ovo, said: “We know interest in electric vehicles is growing, our recent research shows that 85% of drivers are interested in making the switch to EV in the next five years.

“One of the most common EV myths is that they can’t go far on a single charge. However, recent stats from the SMMT (Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders) show the average range for new vehicles is close to 300 miles, while the average range for all EVs is 236 miles, the equivalent of a return trip from London to Bristol.”

Mr Thwaites said his firm’s app attempted to provide drivers with “peace of mind”, with access to live updates and availability of chargers “so you can find charging points no matter what journey you’re on”.

A new YouGov poll for the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) has found petrol car drivers have limited understanding of how electric cars are currently charged, mistakenly assume that EV drivers regularly run out of charge and underestimate the savings that EVs generate over running a combustion engine car.

The polling follows the launch of Electric Vehicles UK, a new body which aims to tackle the “clear disconnect” between some perceptions of electric motoring and the “lived experience”.

Around four in five petrol car drivers (78%) think EV drivers

have to use public chargers at least once a week, but less than one in five EV drivers (18%) report having to do so. Almost three-quarters (73%) use them just once a month or less.

More than five in 10 petrol car drivers (54%) think EV drivers run out of charge at least once a year but in reality 82% of EV drivers report never running out of charge.

About nine in 10 (92%) EV drivers reported that they can charge their vehicles at home whereas only 4% of petrol car drivers correctly thought this proportion, the vast majority, can charge at home.

Colin Walker, head of transport at the ECIU, said: "When it comes to EV ownership, this polling reveals a huge gap between perception and reality.

"It appears many petrol car drivers simply have no idea how their EV counterparts actually charge their vehicles and assume EV drivers spend a lot more time visiting charge points than is in fact the case.

"They also massively underestimate the proportion of EV drivers who can charge their vehicles at home, which allow them to power their cars for as little as 2p a mile.

"The transition to EVs is largely going to plan with those who can power up at home leading the charge, but as the number of public chargers ramps up, those who can't are seeing more and more options."

He added: "The previous government's zero emissions vehicle mandate policy is working with competition between manufacturers driving down the upfront cost of new EVs and driving up sales, but crucially it will also build up a pool of second-hand EVs, helping ordinary families buying a used car, as most people do, to make the switch to cheaper motoring, avoiding the 'petrol premium'."

ECIU analysis has shown that petrol car drivers are paying a £700 “petrol premium” over driving an EV because of high fuelling costs compared charging an EV, even when higher new EV sticker prices are taken into account.

Prices of many second-hand electric vehicles are now similar to those for petrol equivalents, according to Autotrader.

Strand Partners surveyed 4,007 UK adults for Ovo between May 3-5.