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**West Midlanders find traffic jams on the M6 more stressful than Christmas shopping with the in-laws**

* *Traffic jams leave 32 percent of motorists with a headache*
* *Over 1 in 10 dream of playing ‘traffic jam Tinder’, with nearly two-thirds of those stuck in a traffic jam wishing they had taken the train*
* *Former Big Brother psychologist Geoff Beattie reports the psychological impact of a traffic jam in the morning can negatively impact a person’s day on average for 2-3 hours*

New research revealed today shows that commuters who sit in traffic on the M6 find the experience twice as stressful as going to the dentist (14%), with an incredible 22 percent stating they feel more at ease on a first date.

The research, conducted by Virgin Trains in partnership with former-Big Brother psychologist Professor Geoff Beattie, also shows that when directly comparing the ‘commuting stress’ of travelling by car or train from Birmingham to London, taking the train is 42 percent more relaxing than driving.

With new research from traffic analytics specialist INRIX claiming that drivers can spend up with 17 hours a year on the M6 stretch between Wolverhampton and Birmingham, frustration levels are at an all-time high for motorists. With extreme roadworks, due to take place on the M6 over the next few years, stress levels will continue to rise on this route.

When asked what innovations they would like to see to help ease traffic jam stress, 43 percent of drivers believe that roadside toilets would ease stress and a third (32%) wish that they had a traffic viewing periscope so that they can assess the jam ahead. Half of respondents (50%) reported that they dream of time travelling to their destination to avoid the jams.

Interestingly, the impact of car travel stress can last up to 2-3 hours in a day, showing a clear correlation with over half of all respondents (60%) also stating they wish they had taken the train rather than driving.

The biggest things that impact commuters’ state of mind are car travel being a restless affair (53%), they find the experience tiring (50%) and in some cases anger inducing (37%). Traffic can also effect commuters physically with nearly a third (32%) reporting headaches.

Professor Geoff Beattie explains “This research by Virgin Trains seems to show that travelling by car is sometimes a chore to be endured rather than enjoyed. Over half the drivers surveyed reported that a stressful journey can impact their whole day with feelings of frustration, anger and even headaches. In comparison, those people travelling by train felt that they could relax on their journey, catch up on work or watch a film, leaving them in a somewhat better state of mind on arrival”.

The research further found the biggest frustration for drivers on the road was the high volumes of traffic causing jams and delays to their journey (59%). A third (34%) would rather be catching up on TV shows whilst stuck in jams, and 20 percent of motorists wished that they could be catching up on emails. A further 7 percent reported getting lost during their journey, and 13 percent were frustrated that they could never find parking at their destination.

Virgin Trains are able to offer a suite of options to ensure that your journey is comfortable and stress free. This includes wi-fi services, a well-supplied on-board Shop for refreshments and the latest addition of BEAM, the free and unique on-board content platform offering from Virgin Trains featuring popular content as well as exclusive creations.

Geoff Beattie has these top tips to help make a journey – whether by train or car – a more enjoyable process from start to finish.

* *Pack Properly*

Packing the kitchen sink isn’t necessary, however, having a small bag or a few items to make a journey easier for you will help to ease any travel induced stressed. Ensuring that you have snacks on standby in case you get hungry, water and maybe even a flask of tea or coffee in the winter will all help put you in a good frame of mind.

* *Maximise Productivity*

The feeling of being unproductive is one of the biggest contributors to frustration when experiencing journey delays. Planning for productivity will help you to feel that your journey time has been used in the best possible way. Download interesting podcasts, learn a new language via audio tapes or listen in to your favourite radio shows to keep updated with news and current affairs.

* *Factor in Traffic Time*

With so many people travelling around the UK for business and leisure, delays are inevitable and can be hugely frustrating. Planning in an extra half an hour to buffer any delays will help ease the stress if you do get caught up!

**ENDS**

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the East Coast and West Coast inter-city routes under the Virgin Trains brand. Together, they are on track to revolutionise rail travel across the UK.

The combined network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, York and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. We have already invested £21m to completely revamp our existing fleet and customers can now benefit from 42 additional services (22,000 extra seats) per week between Edinburgh and London. 2018 will see the introduction of completely new Azuma trains being built in the UK by Hitachi.

The West Coast route has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

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