

7 Fuel Saving Tips

As petrol hits a record high, here are some tips on how to feel less ripped-off at the petrol pumps. Petrol prices are so high that many will be considering swapping their ride for one of those leg-powered Flintstone cars. Anyway, here's an update on the outrageous prices that we Brits now have to pay at the pump.

These 3 latest developments haven't helped petrol prices:

- * the Budget has stuck a penny on a litre (with another penny rise due in October)
- * the pound has lost value against the dollar (down from \$1.61 to \$1.51)
- * the wholesale price of oil (traded in dollars) has increased from \$70 to \$86 a barrel.

...all factors that have helped push the average forecourt unleaded petrol price to a new record high of 120.1p per litre (average price recorded 09/04/10).

Since the biggest slice of your fuel spend (around 65 per cent) goes to the government as duty and VAT, every penny increase levied by the taxman means around £13 a year on your annual petrol spend (roughly based on a car doing 10k miles a year with 35 mpg average fuel economy). That may not seem much, but there's another 1p rise due in October, a further 0.76p rise due in January 2011, and all this on top of the almost 7p in duty increases since December 2008.

Fuel-Saving Tips for Your Motor

1. Tyres

Under-inflated tyres reduce fuel economy due to the increased contact patch (the area of the tyre that touches the road). Therefore, to aid optimum fuel efficiency, always drive with correctly inflated tyres.

2. Weight

The lighter the car, the less engine power it takes to shift it; and the less power required, the less fuel you need. Therefore, ditch any junk that's lying around in your boot or back seat, and practice your 'sorry' expression for the next time you pass a hopeful hitchhiker.

3. Cheap Petrol

Fuel prices vary from filling station to filling station. PetrolPrices.com locates the cheapest fuel near a given postcode. The site also reveals that supermarkets tend to be the cheapest, with 16 of the 20 cheapest forecourts in the land belonging to supermarkets (data correct 07/04/10). So next time you're doing a 'big shop', don't forget to 'fill her up'.

4. Alter Your Driving Style

Changing the way you drive can have a massive impact on fuel consumption. Gently accelerating from a standstill uses much less fuel than simply tearing away. Also, try and leave a generous space between you and the car in front to allow for gentle braking. Aggressive drivers take note - never rev the engine unnecessarily, this simply wastes fuel and money. Whenever it's safe to do so, switch off the engine rather than let it idle - some modern cars now come with this facility built in (such as BMW's Auto Start-Stop).

5. Streamline Your Car

Accessories such as roof/bike racks make a car less aerodynamic - and the less aerodynamic, the more fuel it will take to move it. Therefore, streamline your car by removing external racks when not required.

6. Drive Less

Of course this is no help to people who have to drive, but if you can manage it, avoid using your wheels whenever possible. Consider making shorter trips by foot or bike, or see if you can car share for your daily work commute. Websites like CarShare.com or shareacar.com can hook you up with likeminded locals.

7. Power Down/Go Green

Switching to a less thirsty, less powerful car can slash your fuel bills. Also, depending on the car's CO2 emissions, you could pay less, or even zero, road tax. Your new car may even benefit from Congestion Charge exemption - handy if you regularly drive in the Big Smoke. Changing to a green car may cost more up front, but you could save money in the long term, and you'll benefit the environment.

So those are my tips - implement as many of them as possible and you should start to notice the savings in no time.

About the Author

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