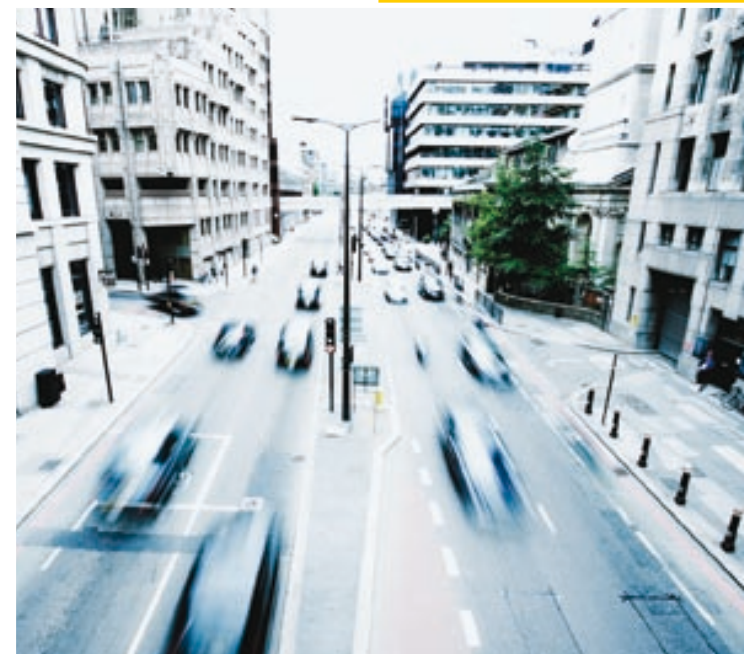


your guide to



renting a car

Why rent a car?

Whether for business or leisure, car rental is a very popular way of getting where you need to go. Every year, Britons hire an estimated 12 million cars in the UK and up to two million abroad.

Why rent a car? Well, with car rental you only pay to use the vehicle when you need it – with prices starting as low as £30 a day. Hiring a car to take family or friends on a journey often works out cheaper than travelling by train – particularly at peak times – and is certainly more flexible. If four or more people are sharing the same vehicle, the carbon emissions per person can be lower too. Rental offers you the option of choosing a vehicle to suit the nature of your journey – an MPV for the large family, an estate car if you have lots of luggage, or a small, handy vehicle for in-town driving.

Whatever your reason for travelling – getting to the beach, visiting sporting or cultural events, a city break or business trip – renting a car should be straightforward. This five-step guide will take you through everything you need to know about renting a vehicle in the UK – from booking it out to taking it back.

But first you need to identify a suitable hire company.

How do I find a car rental company?

If you haven't hired a car before, one of the best ways to find a rental company is through the website of the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association: www.bvrla.co.uk. Just click on the "Member Locator" – you'll be able to search for reputable car rental businesses by either town or company name.

As the representative body for UK vehicle rental companies, one of the BVRLA's main responsibilities is maintaining and enforcing standards across the industry. You can identify our members by the BVRLA logo on their premises, rental contracts and stationery. It is a sign of a rental company's commitment to providing you with the highest levels of service, honesty and integrity. A copy of the BVRLA rental charter, setting out the principles of customer service to which the company has pledged itself, should also be on display.

If our logo isn't apparent, ask for proof that the company is a BVRLA member or check online by visiting the BVRLA website. If the rental company you approach isn't a member of the BVRLA, ask it why not – and why it doesn't subscribe to our code of conduct, with its assurance of good customer service.

Look for this logo
- it's your proof that a rental company
belongs to the BVRLA



Booking a vehicle

If you reserve or pay for a rental car over the phone, pay close attention to what is included in the agreement – and what isn't. For example:

- ▶ Does the rental rate include unlimited mileage?
- ▶ Does it include VAT?
- ▶ What is the damage excess payment?
- ▶ Is there a location surcharge? (Many airports have one.)
- ▶ Are there any restrictions applied to the rate? (Eg weekend rates will normally require you to return the vehicle before a specified time on Monday morning.)
- ▶ Is there an extra fee to pick up or drop off the vehicle at certain locations?
- ▶ Is there an extra fee for travelling into another country?

It is important to select the right vehicle for your needs. Whilst a rental company cannot always guarantee a particular make or model of vehicle, you should select the type of vehicle that best meets your needs, especially if you are carrying luggage and passengers. If you wish to hire additional products, such as child seats, snow chains or satellite navigation, ask about these when you make your booking – and check if they involve any extra costs.

Feel free to ask the rental company to email you further information or direct you to a web page containing the rental terms and conditions.

What documentation do I need?

You will need a full driving licence for the type of vehicle you are hiring, as well as additional identification such as a passport or a utility bill. If you have a photo licence you must take both the licence and its paper counterpart with you. Check with your rental company what else you may need when booking the vehicle. For example, you will need a valid credit card to book with most companies.

Taking a vehicle abroad

If you are planning to take your rental vehicle into another country you must inform the rental company, as you need its permission. If it permits you to take the vehicle abroad then it can ensure you are provided with the correct vehicle documentation, motor insurance and breakdown cover. For cars rented in the UK, a Vehicle On Hire Certificate (VE103) will ensure that you can legally take the vehicle into other European Union countries. This is the only legally recognised substitute to the vehicle registration document (V5C) and must be in the vehicle at all times in most countries on mainland Europe.

Make sure that you are aware of the driving regulations of every country you visit; for example, you may need to carry reflective jackets for you and your passengers, and vehicle warning triangles. Your rental company may be able to assist you with the requirements of the country you are travelling to and you can find more information on the RAC and AA websites: www.rac.co.uk and www.theaa.com.



At the rental desk

Signing the rental agreement

The rental agreement is the formal contract between you and the rental company and sets out the details of the terms and conditions of using the rental vehicle. It includes details of the vehicle, what you've agreed to pay for the rental and any additional items – eg child seats, sat-nav – and when the hire period begins and ends.

Always allow plenty of time to collect your vehicle and to read the rental agreement. Make sure you understand the terms of your rental before signing it.

You should also check the following:

Mileage

If you are required to pay for excess mileage, please ensure that you understand the daily allowance and the basis on which any excess mileage will be calculated and charged. When collecting and returning your vehicle please make sure that the mileage is recorded properly on the rental agreement.

Collision and loss damage waiver

You are liable for any loss and the full cost of any damage to the rental vehicle until it has been returned (or collected) and inspected by a rental company employee. However, in order to protect yourself against this potential cost, the rental company may offer you collision and loss damage cover, details of which will be shown on the rental agreement. If you accept this cover, you will reduce the extent of your liability to the excess amount shown on your rental agreement.

Theft waiver

A theft waiver provides cover if the rental vehicle is stolen or someone damages it while attempting to steal it. If you accept this cover you will limit the extent of your liability to the excess amount shown on your rental agreement.

Exclusions to the theft or damage waiver cover

You should check if there are any waiver exclusions, such as windscreens, tyres or roof damage. Always be clear about what is covered by the rental company's waivers and what isn't. If you do not understand the waivers or are unsure of what is covered, ask the rental company for an explanation before signing your agreement.

Fuel

The majority of rental companies will offer you various options for fuelling your vehicle. There are usually three options to choose from:

- ▶ Purchase a tank of fuel from the rental company and return the vehicle empty
- ▶ Drive the vehicle away with a full tank and return it with a full tank
- ▶ Pay the rental company for the fuel you use

Before hiring a car, check the rental company's refuelling policy. Check the fuel levels on both collection and return. When you collect the vehicle, check what type of fuel it takes. Many vans and an increasing number of cars use diesel. Putting petrol into a diesel engine or diesel into a petrol engine causes severe damage, for which you will be liable.



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Checking the vehicle

A rental company should provide a clean, modern and safe vehicle that has been thoroughly checked prior to each hire period.

Inspect the vehicle carefully on collection by walking all the way round it, looking for any signs of damage. Look out for any scratches, dings, dents or scuffs, no matter how small, and make sure these are noted on the rental agreement. Don't forget to check the interior of the vehicle as well, including whether there is a spare wheel and tools. Make sure that any damage is noted in full on the rental agreement and that you are fully satisfied with the condition of the vehicle before you sign for it.

If you are unable to inspect the vehicle – due to poor weather or bad light, for example – make sure this is noted on the rental agreement.

However, you must inspect the vehicle within a reasonable length of time after you accept it and ensure you inform the rental company immediately if you discover any damage. Failing to do so could result in your being held responsible for any new damage found on the vehicle at the end of the agreement – in other words any damage that was not noted on your rental agreement at the start of your rental period.



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During the rental

What happens in the event of a breakdown?

Most rental vehicles are covered by roadside assistance. If this is provided, you should check which roadside assistance company is used by the rental company and make sure you're given the contact details. If it's not included, then ask your rental company.

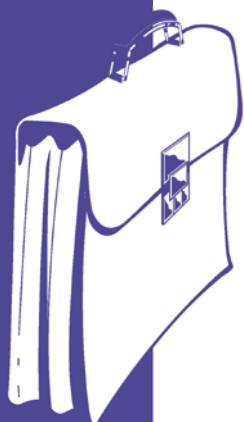
What happens if I have an accident?

If you have an accident you must not admit responsibility to any third party involved in the accident. You should get the names and addresses of everyone involved, including witnesses, and call the

nearest branch of the company from whom you rented the vehicle straight away. You must also complete an accident report form when you return your vehicle.

Road traffic offences

Bear in mind that if you commit a road traffic offence whilst in charge of a rental vehicle you may not only have to pay a fine, but be liable to the rental company for additional costs. Policies vary among rental companies as to the treatment of traffic offences incurred by their customers.



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Returning the vehicle



Cleanliness

Please ensure that the interior and exterior of the vehicle are clean when you return it to the rental branch. If the vehicle is returned dirty a full post-rental inspection may be delayed until the vehicle has been cleaned and you will be liable for any damage found subsequently.

Damage

Allow plenty of time when checking the vehicle in on return, especially at busy rental sites such as airports. Make sure that the vehicle is inspected by a rental company employee and that you both agree, note and sign for any damage on all copies of the rental agreement. If you were involved in an accident during your rental period you will need to complete and sign an accident report form.

If the vehicle has sustained minor damage while in your charge, the rental company might not repair the vehicle straight away and could use a pre-calculated estimate of what it will cost to effect repairs. Alternatively, some rental companies may obtain an estimate from their garage for the actual cost of repairs. If you return the vehicle with damage that renders the vehicle un-rentable you may also be charged for loss of use. This is a charge levied by the rental company to cover lost income when the vehicle is out of service.

What happens if I return the vehicle out of opening hours?

Some rental companies may allow you to return the vehicle when the rental office is closed. However, you should be fully aware of the risks and implications of this before agreeing to it. We strongly recommend that you always return a vehicle within normal opening hours.

If the rental company allows you to return the vehicle out of hours, you will remain responsible for the condition of the vehicle until a member of staff is able to carry out a full inspection. This means that the cost of any damage caused to the vehicle while it remains unattended is your responsibility.

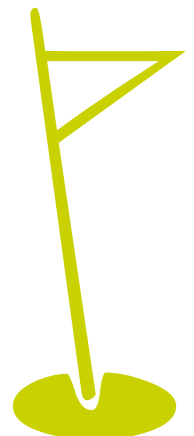
Following completion of your rental you may receive additional charges relating to damage or road traffic offences. If you dispute any of these charges, please ask the rental company for supporting documentation.

What if I'm dissatisfied?

We recommend that when renting a vehicle in the UK you only do so from a BVRLA member. Only then can you be assured of honesty, integrity and value for money, backed up by a robust code of conduct and a reliable customer conciliation service.

If you have a dispute with a BVRLA member that cannot be resolved directly, it can be referred to the BVRLA conciliation service. We can only help you if your rental was booked directly with a BVRLA member – if you booked through a third party you should complain to your booking agent.

If you wish to make a complaint against a BVRLA member, please write to:
Chief Executive, BVRLA, River Lodge,
Badminton Court, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 0DD
or email info@bvrla.co.uk.





Top ten tips for successful car rental

- ① **Before you book** – pay close attention to what is included in the reservation fee and what isn't. For example, some rental companies charge extra if you can't return the vehicle to the same rental branch, are leaving the country or are under or over a certain age.
- ② **Read the paperwork** – make sure you read and understand the terms and conditions of your contract with the rental company. Ask for a copy prior to your rental so that you have plenty of time to read it through.
- ③ **Insurance** – check if there are any exclusions to your loss/damage waiver insurance. For example, in most cases windscreens, tyres, roof damage and undercarriage damage are not covered.
- ④ **Fuel** – your car rental quote will not include fuel. Most companies will give you the option of buying a tank of fuel from them and either returning the car empty or with a full tank. Remember what you agreed to, otherwise you could end up gifting the rental company a free tank of fuel or paying an extra charge to have the tank re-filled.
- ⑤ **Going abroad** – make sure that you tell the rental company if you are planning to take the vehicle abroad. Familiarise yourself with the driving regulations of your destination. You may also need to take additional documentation, such as a VE103 certificate.
- ⑥ **The collection** – do a thorough inspection, inside and out, walking all the way around the vehicle. Note every single chip, dent and scratch. Pay particular attention to the wheels, windscreen and lights, which are common damage areas. Before you drive the hire vehicle away, familiarise yourself with all its controls – lights, windscreen wipers, etc.
- ⑦ **The return** – allow plenty of time, particularly at busy rental sites such as airports. Try and return the vehicle during the rental site's operating hours so that someone can check it over with you. Otherwise you will be liable for any damage that occurs between you returning it and the rental firm inspecting it.
- ⑧ **Additional charges** – rental companies will try to outline the full cost of your rental when you make your booking. If you do receive any additional charge upon your return, make sure it comes with an explanation and some supporting documentation.
- ⑨ **Road traffic offences** – if you commit a road traffic offence or fail to pay toll or congestion charges, the rental company will chase you for payment. You will also be liable for an administrative fee on top of the cost of the fine.
- ⑩ **Complaints** – If you have an unresolved dispute with a rental company that belongs to the BVRLA, you can get it referred to our conciliation service – visit the BVRLA website at www.bvrla.co.uk for further details.



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Tel: 01494 434747 **Fax:** 01494 434499 **Email:** info@bvrla.co.uk **Web:** www.bvrla.co.uk



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