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Rip-off airport car park charges – travellers further penalised...

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More than half of UK's largest airports raise pick-up parking fees in 2018

More than half of the UK's biggest airports have raised their fees for drivers picking up friends or family members this summer, analysis of parking prices by the RAC has found.*

Thirteen airports have hiked their pick-up parking prices with London Luton having raised its prices by more than any other airport this year.

It now costs a staggering initial £8 for a stay of up to 30 minutes at London Luton, which is



£1 more than in 2017 when the minimum permitted stay was longer at 40 minutes. The airport recently closed its short-stay car park, advising drivers to use its new multi-storey for close terminal pick-ups.

London Stansted is the second most expensive, with motorists facing an initial charge of £5.50 for a stay of up to half an hour, followed by Birmingham where the fee is £5.10 for stopping for up to an hour – with the airports raising their prices by 50p and 20p respectively in 2018.

Four airports share fourth spot with initial pick-up charges of £4, but in real terms Edinburgh is the most expensive as its fee only gives drivers a measly 15 minutes in stark contrast to both Heathrow and Gatwick which give motorists a more generous 30 minutes parking.

In terms of airports which have increased their prices the most, Southampton tops the table by doubling its initial fee from £1 to £2, although drivers can now stay for up to 15 minutes rather than the previous 10. Glasgow has raised its minimum charge by 50% from £2 to £3, with drivers now being permitted to park for 20 minutes – twice as long as before.

Motorists heading for Belfast, Liverpool John Lennon and Leeds Bradford airports will find these are the only three major airports in the UK that still permit free short-stay pick-ups – although in Northern Ireland drivers will need to be very quick at picking up as the free period only lasts 10 minutes.

Dropping off

While it is good news that there are far fewer price rises when it comes to using handy drop-off (or so called 'kiss-and-drop') zones at UK airports, the costs still remain sky-high at some airports.

London Stansted has the most expensive initial charge for dropping off, at £3.50 for a stay up to 10 minutes. But the accolade for the most expensive place to park on an equivalent



'per minute' basis goes to Manchester which introduced charges for the first time in 2018, having previously operated a free drop-off zone outside the airport. A five-minute stay costs £3, the equivalent of 60p per minute.

These airports are followed by London Luton (£3 for 10 minutes), Liverpool John Lennon (£3 for 20 minutes) and Leeds Bradford (£3 for 30 minutes) when ranked by price.

Other than Manchester, which only began charging for drop-off parking this year, Southampton is the only airport to increase its standard fees, doing so by £1 but giving drivers an extra five minutes parking from the previous 10 minutes.

It is worth highlighting that four of the UK's biggest airports meanwhile still allow drivers to drop off passengers free-of-charge outside their terminals - they are: London Heathrow, Gatwick, City and Cardiff.

Overstaying

Drivers also need to be very wary of overstaying in any drop-off zones, with fees quickly rocketing after a minimum stay has been exceeded at many airports. Leeds Bradford charges £9 for stops of between 30 and 60 minutes, while those overstaying at London Luton, London Stansted and East Midlands are effectively put on a meter after the maximum stay is exceeded - each charge a whopping £1 for every additional minute.**

RAC spokesperson Rod Dennis said: "As we enter the summer holiday season, the UK's airports are about to see some of their busiest weeks of the year. With thousands of motorists driving to airports to pick up and drop off friends and family members many will unfortunately find themselves shocked by some of the extortionate parking tariffs operated by some airports.

Our advice is to check parking fees and time limits well before setting out for an airport this summer so as to avoid a nasty shock.



Drivers should also be aware of just how high some charges can be if they inadvertently stay longer picking up or dropping off than they originally meant to. We advise doing some research before heading to the airport and seeing if there are any cheaper parking options available; some airports offer more affordable spaces further from the terminal building, and some better rates for reserving a space online.

If picking up, it is wise to make sure you know when a friend or a family member is landing and leave additional time for them to pick up their luggage.

We also strongly urge drivers who are researching longer stay airport parking to only book through reliable parking providers - such as through an official airport website or a parking provider that is a member of the Independent Airport Parking Association (IAPA)."

RAC top five tips to avoid stress and high airport parking charges

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| 1 Do your research | Check out the parking pages on the airport's website to understand fees, payment options and stay times. Some airports may even offer lower online rates. |
| 2 Have your payment ready | Once you have found out how to pay, ensure you have payment ready to hand whether that is adequate change, a debit or credit card or pre-programme the phone payment number into your mobile. |
| 3 Identify a nearby 'holding location' | It is worth checking out nearby free parking places in case your friends or relatives' flight is delayed so you can wait for the plane to land before proceeding to the terminal. If picking up, make sure you keep abreast of the flight's landing time. |
| 4 Keep in touch | Ask your friends or relatives to call you once they have collected their luggage and cleared passport control so you can park at the optimum moment. But remember if you are driving - it must be hands-free. |



- 5 Say your goodbyes before travel Say your farewells with your passengers before you get to the airport to keep goodbyes to a minimum, otherwise they may prove expensive.

2018 airport pick-up charges – ranked by initial pick-up fee

Rank	Airport	Initial pick-up fee	Fees thereafter	Change since 2017	Notes
1	London Luton	£8 for 30 mins	£9 for 30-45; £13 for 45m-1hr; £17 for 1-2hrs	Up £1 (14%) for 10 mins less	
2	London Stansted	£5.50 for 30 mins	£10 for 1hr; £16.50 for 2 hrs	Up £0.50 (10%)	
3	Birmingham	£5.10 for 1hr	£10.20 for 2 hrs	Up £0.20 (4%)	
4	Edinburgh	£4 for 15 mins	£7 for 1hr; £9.90 for 1-2hrs; £14.50 for 2hrs	Up £0.10 (2%)	
5=	London Gatwick	£4 for 30 mins	£8 for 31-60 mins; £13 for 1-2hrs	Up £0.20 (5%)	
5=	London Heathrow	£4 for 30 mins	£7.20 for 30m-1hr; £11.50 for 1-2hrs	Up £0.20 (5%)	
5=	Manchester	£4 for 30 mins	£6.50 for 1 hr; £9.50 for 2 hrs	No change	



8	East Midlands	£3.50 for 30 mins	£4.50 for 1hr; £9 for 2 hrs	Up £0.50 (16%)	
9	London City	£3.20 for 10 mins	£7.50 for 10-30 mins; £27.50 for up to 1hr	Up £0.20 (6%)	
10=	Glasgow	£3 for 20 mins	£6 for 1hr; £12 for 2 hrs	Up £1 (50%) for 10 mins more	
10=	Liverpool John Lennon	£3 for 20 mins	£10 for 1 hr; £20 for 2 hrs; £50 a day	No change	Express drop-off and pick-up area. Another drop off 5 mins walk is free for up to 40 mins
12	Aberdeen	£2.50 for 20 mins	£6 for 1 hr; £10.50 for up to 3hrs	Up £0.50 (25%)	
13	Southampton	£2 for 10 mins	£3.50 for 10-30 mins; £5.00 for 30-60mins; £7.50 for 1-2 hrs	Up £1 (100%) but reduced elsewhere	



14=	Belfast International	£1 for 10 mins	£2.50 for 10-20 mins; £3.50 for 20-30 mins; £3.50 for 30-60 mins; £8.00 up to 2 hrs	No change
14=	Cardiff	£1 for 10 mins	£2 for 20 mins; £3 for 1 hr; £6 for 2 hrs	No change
14=	Newcastle	£1 for 10 mins	£3 for 10-30mins; £4.50 for 30-45 mins; £6 for 45-60 mins; £12 for 2 hrs	No change
17	Bristol	£1 for 20 mins	£3.50 for 20-30mins; £6 for 30-60mins; £8 for 1-2 hrs	Yes, but after minimum stay
	Belfast City	Free for 10 mins	£3 for 10-30 mins; £6 for 30-60 mins; £9 for 1-2hrs	Yes, but after minimum stay
	Leeds Bradford	Free for 1hr	Not specified	No change

2018 airport drop-off charges – ranked by initial drop-off fee



Rank	Airport	Initial drop-off fee	Fees thereafter	Price change since 2017	Notes
1	London Stansted	£3.50 for 10 mins	£1 per minute for 10-15 mins; £25 for over 15 mins	No change	Express Set Down
2	Manchester	£3 for 5 mins	£4 for 10 mins	Charging began 2018	Drop off area
3	London Luton	£3 for 10 mins	£1 a minute	No change	Some free for a period drop off available in mid-term car park
4	Liverpool John Lennon	£3 for 20 mins	£10 for 1 hr; £20 for 2 hrs; £50 a day	No change	Express drop-off area. Another drop off 5 mins walk is free for up to 40 mins
5	Leeds Bradford	£3 for 30 mins	£9 for 30-60 mins; £18 for 1-2 hrs	No change	Terminal Front express (Free parking exists for 3-4 mins from terminal)



					Prices quoted for 'premium set down' by the terminal entrance. New drop off car park exists which offers 30 mins free, with 10 min walk
6=	Birmingham	£2 for 10 mins	£5 for 15 mins; £10 for 15-20 mins	No change	
6=	East Midlands	£2 for 10 mins	£1 for every minute thereafter	No change	Rapid drop off
6=	Glasgow	£2 for 10 mins	£4 for 11-15 mins; £6 for 16-20 mins, £10 for 21-30mins	No change	New drop-off/pick- up
9=	Aberdeen	£2 for 15 mins	£10 for 30 mins; £30 for 1 hr	No change	Express drop-off
					Priority pick-up and drop off
9=	Southampton	£2 for 15 mins	Not specified	Up £1 (100%) location. Long stay for 5 mins extra	free option provided for 30 mins (with bus needed)



11	Edinburgh	£1 for 5 mins	£3 for 5-10 mins; £5 for 10-20 mins; £7 for 20 mins-1hr; No change thereafter £9 per hr		Ground floor of multi-story
12=	Belfast International	£1 for 10 mins	£3 for 10-20 mins; £5 for 20-60 mins	No change	Drop off zone
12=	Bristol	£1 for 10 mins	£3 for 10-20 mins; £5 for 20-40 mins	No change	Express drop-off car park
12=	Newcastle	£1 for 10 mins	£3 for 10-30 mins	No change	Express car parking. Medium term offers 15 mins free
	Belfast City	Free for 10 mins	£3 for 10-30 mins; £6 for 30-60 mins	No change	Drive up charges
	Cardiff	Free for 10 mins	£5 for every 10 mins thereafter	No change	Drop-off zone. Long Stay 1 offers 20 minutes free
	London City	Free drop-off	No waiting - penalty charges issued (not specified)	No change	Terminal forecourt
	London Gatwick	Free drop-off	No waiting	No change	Outside terminal



London Heathrow	Free drop-off	Police enforcement	No change	Outside terminal
		applies for those waiting		

RAC members can benefit from preferential rates on airport parking via its partners – for details see www.racbenefits.co.uk.

The IAPA has launched an 'Airport Parking Safety Card' with tips on finding a reliable long stay parking provider. See https://youtu.be/OQ6uo7P_uMo.

Wheels-Alive comments, “There is evidence that many travellers are boycotting airports with the most unreasonable parking charges, on principle preferring to travel further to fly rather than to pay rip-off charges. Of course in many cases there are few, if any, alternatives... captive markets and all that. Some travellers have told us that they find it preferable to take a bus, coach or train just to get into, or away from, the immediate confines of an airport with unreasonably high parking charges, to park and say goodbye to, or meet with, relatives in a more user-friendly and cheaper environment elsewhere...”.