

When you're not booking a "tour group" trip overseas, or even worse sometimes, right here in the USA, car rental can be more expensive than hotel stays. One place to look for lower rates is on the computer at [www.rentalcars.com](http://www.rentalcars.com).

For a selection of most rental cars at the airport/city you select....you can also "google" rental cars and get a list of individual companies. And you can make reservations for your car right there on the computer, quite often for a lesser price than walking up to the counter at the airport. But, just like hotel reservations, if you give your credit card number, be sure you find out if there is a cancellation fee or when you can cancel without being charged! This warning should be considered also for overseas rentals.

Renting a car from the airport where you land is almost always more expensive than renting "in town" ... however, getting to those "in-town" locations via taxi/bus can be bringing the car rental up a little higher. The option at many cities is getting a "courtesy car" to your hotel where they also have a Car Rental desk in the lobby/near by. When making your hotel reservation, query them on the nearest car-rental office. Car-rental offices love to add "extra" on your bill too. Want GPS ... additional insurance ... automatic gas fill-up at their cost ... check the 'add-on' charges. At the airport there are always "airport charges" which can be 10-15%; you will never get away from taxes and state add-on's ... planning to drop-off your car at a place other than where you picked it up??? Big bucks! Plan on 2 to 3 times the daily cost at most car rental agencies ... some will not even allow that! So plan your trip accordingly and consider that it may be cheaper to fly to another destination rather than rent a car and drive. One more item in the rental that can go unnoticed ... free mileage. Often low advertised rates will NOT include free mileage and you will end up paying for each mile you drive. And finally, look at your car before you accept it from the agent ... note any dents or appearance of damage ... and the mileage as noted on your contract ... have the agent witness/sign/change your copy of the contract before leaving. When driving away from the car rental lot, look at gas prices a couple of miles from the lot and remember where the cheap gas was ... a fill-up before turning it back can be expensive near the lot.

With the economy down and fewer people traveling, car rentals have been less during the past year and companies have increased their rates considerably ... get on the computer/800 numbers and look for good prices. Your credit card company and the insurance company for your personal car may cover rental cars ... check!

Renting in Europe? If a travel agent is doing it, understand what you are paying for ... what countries you can drive in with that rental ... ask the rental company before leaving the lot to confirm where you may drive/display certain permits. Avoid getting a rental car in cities such as London/Rome/Paris/Madrid & most major cities ... public transportation is better/cheaper. Parking your car even at many hotels can be costly (read \$5-10 a day). Think trains in Europe. Again, hotel concierges can be your answers to the best of rates/parking/routes ... ask. In many countries you will pay extra for automatic shift, air-conditioning and larger vehicles and don't expect Interstate hiways. ENJOY !