



The Voice of Leasing and Automotive Rental in Europe

Forward

Whether it is for business or leisure, because your own vehicle is unavailable or not up to the task or perhaps due to the fact that you don't want the hassle and expense of owning one, car and van rental is on the increase.

Renting a car or van should be straightforward, especially if you follow some simple steps. This guide will take you through everything you need to know about renting a vehicle – in your country or abroad.

ABOUT LEASEUROPE

Leaseurope brings together 47 member associations representing the leasing, long term and/or short term automotive rental industries in the 34 European countries in which they are present. The scope of products covered by Leaseurope's members ranges from hire purchase and finance leases to operating leases of all asset categories (automotive, equipment and real estate) and includes the short term rental of cars, vans and trucks. It is estimated that Leaseurope represents approximately 96% of the total European leasing market and the firms represented via its member associations granted new leasing volumes of over €330 billion in 2008.

The Federation's mission is to represent the European leasing and automotive rental industry, ensuring the sector's voice is heard by European and international policy makers. Leaseurope also seeks to promote the leasing and automotive rental products and produces European level statistics describing the markets it represents.

Booking a vehicle

If you are reserving or purchasing a rental over the telephone pay close attention to what is and isn't included. You can ask for further information to be sent to you by email or for directions to a website where you can access the rental terms and conditions. Pay close attention to what is included in the rental rate and what is not, for example:

- Does the rate include unlimited mileage?
- What is the damage excess payment?
- Does it include VAT?
- Is there a location surcharge (many airport sites have one)?
- Are there any restrictions applied to the rate (e.g. 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 and drop off the vehicle in different 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 vehicle category group that best meets your needs, especially if you are carrying luggage and passengers. If you wish to hire additional products, including child car seats, snow chains or satellite navigation, ask about these when you make your booking, and make sure you are aware of any additional costs.

What documentation do I need?

You will need a full driving licence for the type of vehicle you are hiring, a European identity card and/or passport, and possibly other documents such as a valid utility bill, etc. If you have a 'photo' style licence you must take both the photo licence and the 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, and in case of high value vehicles multiple credit cards may be required.

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 their permission. If they permit you to take the vehicle abroad then they can ensure you are provided with the correct vehicle documentation, motor insurance and breakdown cover.

Make sure that you are aware of the driving regulations of any country you are visiting; for example, you may need to carry reflective jackets for you and your passengers or vehicle warning triangles. Your rental company may be able to assist you with the requirements of the country you are travelling to. You can also find this information with the national motoring/tourism associations at:

http://www.fiabrussels.com/en/about_us/european_member_clubs/

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, 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 that you understand the terms of your rental before signing it.

You should also be aware of 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 you return it, or is collected, and has been fully 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 have accepted this cover, you will reduce what you are responsible for to the excess amount shown on your rental agreement.

Theft waiver

Theft waiver provides cover if the rental vehicle is stolen or someone damages it while attempting to steal it. If you have accepted this cover, you will limit what you are responsible for 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, for example windscreens, tyres or roof damage? Always be clear about what is, or is not, included in the waivers provided by the rental company. If you do not understand any aspect of the waivers or you 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

Always check with the rental company before you hire a vehicle what their refuelling policy is and check the fuel levels on both collection and return. When you pick up the vehicle check the type of fuel it takes. A large proportion of 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. If you are unsure as to which type of fuel your vehicle requires check with the rental company before starting your journey.

Checking the Vehicle

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

Inspect the vehicle carefully on collection by walking all the way round it looking for any signs of any 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 make sure this is noted on the rental agreement. However, you must inspect the vehicle within a reasonable length of time after you accept the vehicle and ensure you inform the rental company immediately if you discover any damage. Failing to do so could mean you are 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.

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 you 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

If you commit a road traffic offence whilst in a rental vehicle please be aware that you may be liable for additional costs on top of your fine. Each offence is handled and processed differently, dependent on the type of fine and which rental company you have rented from.

Returning the Vehicle

You will be required to return the vehicle in good condition. You are liable for any repair or refurbishment costs in case of damage or vandalism.

Damage

Allow plenty of time, particularly at busy rental sites such as airport locations, when checking the vehicle in on return. 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 have had an accident you need to complete and sign an accident report form.

If you have caused minor damage to the vehicle, the rental company may not repair the vehicle straight away and may use a pre-calculated estimate of what it will cost to repair the vehicle. 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. In order to mitigate this risk, it is strongly recommended you take photographs of vehicle inside and outside once parked at the drop-off point.

After the rental

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.

How to make a complaint

Each car rental company will have a dedicated customer service department which will be able to address complaints regarding any step in the rental process. Depending on the company the preferred method of contact will be either e-mail, phone or registered letter. Please refer to the company's website for additional information.