

Foreign Car Rental: Easy

Have you caught the travel bug? Or, should I ask, has the travel bug caught you?

When you're ready to set out to see the world, there's no way that you'll be staying in your hotel room for the duration of your trip. There are places to go, and people to meet. Being flexible and fully mobile is the key to getting the most from your international excursions, and foreign car rentals are a great way to go.

When you travel abroad, visiting the attractions and familiarizing yourself with the exotic locale is your main objective. You want to be free to visit some remarkable landmarks and historical sites, do some shopping and experience the local nightlife. There are many ways that you can freely explore the country you are visiting. You may choose to take public transportation, but this can be quite difficult if you are not familiar with their language and facilities. Maybe your sense of wanderlust won't allow you to be limited by the itineraries set forth by bus routes and tour guides.

Another alternative you can take is to arrange a foreign car rental. Most destinations feature a variety of car rental agencies for you to choose from. With a foreign car rental, you've got the freedom to go where you want, without worrying about the route. With a detailed map of your destination, you can jump into the driver's seat and take control over where you go, and how long you intend to stay there.

Renting a car abroad is a little different than it is in North America. It's important that you are fully aware of the policies of the individual car rental agency before you agree to rent the car. A car rental is viewed as an investment, so there will usually be necessary taxes to be paid before you are issued the use of a car.

If you're uncertain of the expenses that you may incur, and worry that this may eat up too much of your travel budget, you should call ahead to get all of the rate information. Contact your travel agency from three weeks to a month before your departure date. Most travel agents will act on your behalf, explaining your situation to several car rental firms at the place you're visiting, and will pass along the rates and miscellaneous charges to you. Anticipating any extra car rental expenditures is the best way to save some of your hard-earned dollars while on vacation.

Whether you arrange your foreign car rental through a travel agency or directly with the rental company, there will be certain charges and fees payable. Most car rental firms impose the following fees and charges, although the rates that you pay may vary depending upon specific corporate policies:

- * Advance booking charges (paid before your scheduled departure date)
- * Drop-off fees
- * Premium location fees
- * Airport concession fees
- * Overtime/late charges
- * Additional driver fee (optional if you will hire a local driver)
- * Congestion charges
- * Surcharges
- * Service fees
- * Sales tax
- * Value-added tax
- * Daily, weekend or weekly usage rates
- * Time and mileage charges
- * Other required fees

Identify which of these charges apply to the country you are traveling, and use it as a basis when comparing the rates and services offered by different car rental firms. Most rental companies offer discounted car rental packages that may include lower fees and charges depending upon certain conditions, such as your citizenship or membership in an accredited professional organization. Depending upon how much you're willing to spend, you can choose to rent small compact vehicles or larger, luxury cars.

The Internet is a marvelous tool for comparing car rentals. It offers a world of resources about the different vehicles that are available to rent. However, be on the lookout for bogus individuals or groups who are offering mind-boggling "web only" deals. A lower price often comes at the expense of poor service.

Wherever you travel, and however you get there, always remember that the bottom line is just having fun. Find the easiest and safest method for you to get out there and enjoy the world.