

Car Rental Tips For International Travelers

Unless you know a Tipo from a Vauxhall Cavalier, you will want to ask questions to familiarize yourself with car models available for international rentals. Check statistics that will help you make reasonable comparisons: truck space in cubic feet, size of engine, length, body type and miles per gallon/liter. Always tell the rental agent how many people need to be comfortably accommodated and what your luggage requirements will be.

The least expensive rentals are likely to be appreciably smaller than American subcompacts.

Cars with automatic transmissions are not plentiful in all locations and will generally cost more.

Air conditioning is often not a standard feature. If it's important to you, be prepared to rent at least a mid-size car and be sure to confirm that air conditioning is included.

Locking trunks don't exist in hatchback vehicles, which are prevalent in most international rentals.

Airport rental agency counters, except in major gateway cities, don't have 24-hour service. Many in-city rental offices have restricted weekend hours and some European locations close for lunch. Take into account the business hours prior to returning the vehicle to avoid any additional charges for late returns for any time that might lapse between your arrival and the time the employee reappears.

Emergency road service availability varies by country. Get emergency contact numbers before leaving the rental agency and make sure that any special procedures have been explained fully.

Check out the car before proceeding, for example the gas and brake pedals which may be closer together than on U.S. rental vehicles.

Rental agencies should provide you with written safety guides that include the most commonly used road signs.

Seat belts are often mandatory for both back and front seats, check with the rental agent for legal requirements.

Orient your mind to basic differences, e.g. driving on the left side of the road. Drive competently and defensively when driving on expressways and super-roads. Slower traffic stays to the right side of the road and be prepared to be passed by other vehicles in no-passing areas.

Fuel is charged by the liter. One gallon of gas equals 3.79 liters. Be familiar with local terms for gasoline e.g. in the U.K. gas is referred to as petrol, diesel is called gasoil.

Converting kilometers to miles is easy ... divide kilometers in ten and multiply by six. Sixty kilometers per hour is roughly 35 miles per hour.