

If you've been to a UK airport recently, you might have noticed a little extra charge when dropping someone off at the terminal kerbside. These drop-off fees have been rising quietly but steadily across the country, adding up to a surprising extra cost on what was once a simple courtesy. In this post, we'll break down how much you can save by skipping the barrier short-stay drop-off zones and opting for free long stay drop-off windows or park & ride alternatives instead.

What Are Drop-off Charges and How Much Are They?

Many UK airports now charge for kerbside drop-offs to reduce congestion and encourage shared or public transport. While these fees are often small, they can add up quickly, especially for repeat travellers or frequent flyers. The **average drop-off fee in the UK is currently around £6.51**, but some airports charge up to £7 to £10 per visit.

Airport Average Drop-off Fee (£) Price Range (£) London Heathrow £8.00 £7 - £10 Manchester £6.50 £6 - £7 Edinburgh £5.00 £4.50 - £5.50 Birmingham £6.75 £6 - £7 Average Across UK £6.51 N/A

Why Are Drop-off Fees Rising Quietly?

Many airports have introduced or raised these charges in recent years to discourage congestion caused by multiple car trips to the drop-off zone. It's a way to encourage car sharing, public transport, and long stay parking options, and to reduce pollution around terminals.

But the rise hasn't always been very publicised. Many drivers only find out about the cost when they scan the barrier payment machines or try parking apps, which can feel like a sneaky extra expense thrown onto airport travel bills.

Free Long Stay Window: A Smart Way to Avoid £7 to £10 Fees

If you want to avoid spending £7 to £10 each time you drop someone at the airport terminal, the **free long stay window** is a fantastic alternative. Instead of paying the kerbside fees, you can park in the long stay car park and use shuttle buses to reach the terminal. These shuttle buses are usually very frequent and reliable, offering door-to-door transport without any cost beyond your parking fee.

Most [cheapest way to pick up](#) airports offer this service, and many park & ride facilities operate at similar prices but provide free drop-off. This method can save you money over time, especially if you frequently drop off family or friends.

The Time Trade-Off: Shuttle vs Kerbside Convenience

The biggest trade-off when choosing free long stay drop-off windows over terminal barriers is time and convenience. Kerbside drop-off zones are right at the terminal entrance, allowing quick loading and unloading without a shuttle trip. But that convenience comes at a price—often £6.50 on average or more.

With free long stay drop-off options, you will need to park a short distance away and take a shuttle bus. Depending on the airport, shuttle frequency and journey time can vary from 5 to 15 minutes. For some travellers, this extra time is more than worth the money saved.

- **Kerbside drop-off:** quick access, costs £6.50+ per drop-off

- **Free long stay drop-off:** shuttle ride typically 5-15 minutes, no drop-off fee
- **Park & Ride in surrounding areas:** sometimes available with free shuttle buses to the airport

Planning Your Airport Drop-off: How to Save

To get the best deal and avoid surprise charges, it is worth planning your airport drop-offs in advance:

1. **Check the drop-off fees for your airport** — Visit the official airport website or use trusted tools like the Holiday Extras airport parking comparison pages to compare fees and parking options.
2. **Consider the free long stay drop-off window** — Identify the designated long stay car park with free shuttle service at your airport. Most major UK airports offer this.
3. **Factor in shuttle times** — Check how often shuttles run and how long the trip takes. Decide if saving money is worth the extra time.
4. **Look for Park & Ride or local parking with shuttle options** — Some airports partner with external parking lots near the airport offering cheaper or free drop-off zones with shuttles.
5. **Book in advance when possible** — Pre-book long stay parking for the best rates and guaranteed availability using affiliate tools like Holiday Extras via Awin.

Example Cost Comparison: Paying Barrier Fees vs Free Long Stay

Imagine you have a trip planned where you will be dropped off at the airport twice (going and returning separately). Here's how the costs could stack up:

Option	Drop-off Fee per Visit	Number of Visits	Total Drop-off Fees	Additional Shuttle Time (Minutes)	Total	Barrier
Kerbside Drop-off	£6.51 (average)	2	£13.02	0	£13.02	Free Long Stay Parking Drop-off
Free Long Stay Parking Drop-off	£0 (no charge)	2	£0	20 (approx. 10 mins each way)	£0	

Total money saved by using free long stay drop-off windows: £13.02

Granted, you add roughly 20 minutes of shuttle riding time, but if you're planning to spend hours in airport queues or lounges anyway, this is a reasonable trade-off for saving over £13 on fees alone.

Summary: Should You Use Free Long Stay Drop-off?

With recent increases in kerbside drop-off charges across UK airports—from Manchester to Heathrow—the average £6.51 fee can quickly become a repeated cost many travellers would rather avoid. Using the free long stay window or park & ride shuttle options can save you upwards of £7 to £10 per drop-off, depending on the airport.



Yes, this involves a shuttle ride that can add 5 to 15 minutes to your journey to the terminal. But for many, the money saved is well worth the small inconvenience, especially if you drop off family or friends regularly.

Our advice:

- Check your airport's drop-off charges before you travel.
- Compare parking and shuttle options on Holiday Extras to find the best deals.
- Plan your trip to allow time for a shuttle ride and avoid surprise fees.

To explore the latest prices and book long stay parking with shuttle access, check out the Holiday Extras airport parking comparison pages, where you can also benefit from exclusive offers via affiliate partners like Awin.

Final Tip: Don't Let Airport Drop-off Fees Take You By Surprise

Whether you're a frequent flyer or occasional traveller, familiarising yourself with drop-off fees and free long stay alternatives is a smart way to keep travel costs under control. Save your money for the holiday itself and avoid the small but annoying charge for the convenience of kerbside drop-off.



Safe travels!