



UK Car Rental & Driving Tips

An Outlandish Extra PDF

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Outlandish Scotland Journey UK Car Rental & Driving Tips

Driving in Great Britain is far less stressful for foreign travelers who become familiar with UK road rules and UK driving differences *before* heading out on holiday—and those who rent a car in which they can be completely comfortable while driving on the **left side** of the road.

We begin with our favorite Internet resources for UK car rental and driving tips. There are a lot of them, but we strongly recommend reading each. The better you prepare, the less stress you'll suffer, allowing you to enjoy your UK driving experience.

Yes, you'll encounter some repetition. Repeated points, however, are those that warrant extra attention.

Following the Internet resources you'll find our **Extra Tips** for renting a car and driving in the UK—tips derived from the personal experiences of A Novel Holiday authors and contributors.

Money-Saving Tips for Car Rentals, by Reid Bramblett

http://www.reidsguides.com/t_au/t_au_rentals.html

- “Do not rent a car for any portion of your vacation during which you will be in a major city.”
- **Read the fine print. CDW can be worth it.**

Check to see if your regular auto insurance covers rentals abroad.

“If [it doesn't], you might want to buy the **Collision Damage Wavier**, or CDW. This [coverage] basically allows you to total the car and not be held liable. Your credit card may cover the CDW if you use it to pay for the rental, so check with your [credit card] company.”

INSPECT the Rental Car *before* you Drive Away.

[See our **Rental Car Checklist**: <http://www.outlandishscotland.com/RentalCarCheckList.pdf>]

GAS IT UP TO THE BRIM BEFORE RETURNING IT.

“You ain't seen nothing like the charges a rental place feels free to impose [to refill the car you return]. Gas charges of over \$100 aren't unheard of.”

Behind the European Wheel, by Rick Steves.

<https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/transportation/driving-europe-tips>

Although this webpage—and Steves' related articles—primarily focuses on European car rental and driving tips, most are equally important to car rental and driving in the UK. For instance:

Learn to love roundabouts.

“In roundabouts, traffic continually flows in a circle around a center island. While you'll see them sporadically throughout continental Europe (where vehicles move counterclockwise), roundabouts are everywhere in the British Isles (where traffic flows clockwise). These work wonderfully if you follow the golden rule: Traffic in roundabouts always has the right-of-way, while entering vehicles yield.

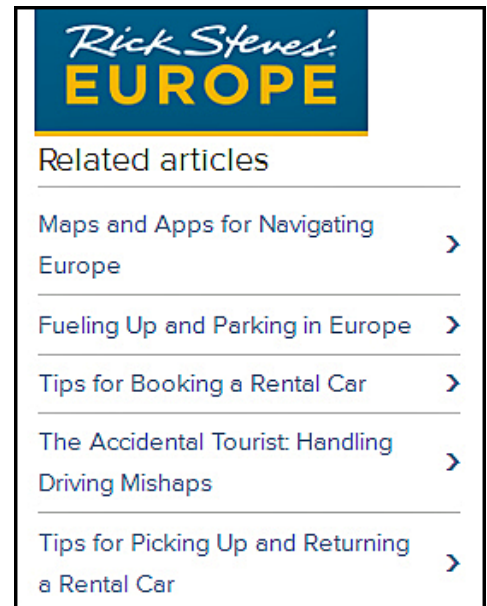
“For many, roundabouts are high-pressure circles that require a snap decision about something you don't completely understand: your exit. To replace the stress with giggles, make it standard operating procedure to take a 360-degree case-out-your-options exploratory circuit.

Discuss the exits with your navigator, go around again if necessary, and then confidently wing off to the exit of your choice. (Don't worry. No other cars will know you've been in there enough times to get dizzy.)"

Steves' related articles (linked on the right side of each page in his Behind the European Wheel series) are loaded with helpful tips.

For instance, from his **Booking a Rental Car** article:

"Picking up a car at an airport usually costs more than picking it up downtown. If you don't need a car immediately after your flight, look into a cheaper rental with a downtown pickup price. But airport pickup may still be worth it; many central car-rental locations have shorter hours (and may close at midday) or are buried in a maze of narrow streets. Also consider traffic—it may be easier to drive away from an airport than a parking garage in the heart of the city."



Go Left, Young Man: Driving in Great Britain and Ireland

<https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/read/articles/driving-in-great-britain-and-ireland>

This is another marvelous UK driving tips article by Rick Steves.

- "If you want to get a little slack on the roads in Ireland, drop by a gas station or auto shop and buy a red 'L' (new driver with license) sign to put in your car window ... In Britain, though, avoid the 'L' sign as you've got a second option: a green 'P' (probationary driver with license), which you can use on all roads in Britain."

CD Miller very much wishes she'd known about this tip before!

"On previous UK trips I actually considered finding some cardboard and making a sign to stick in the rear window of my rental car saying, 'Sorry! Silly Yank driving!' Although I'm much better at UK driving than I used to be, I will most certainly be buying a green 'P' sign to post in the rear window of my next UK rental car."

- "Horror stories about driving overseas are fun to tell, but driving in the British Isles is really only a problem for those who make it one. The most dangerous creature on the road is the panicked tourist. Drive defensively, observe, fit in, avoid big-city driving when you can, and wear your seat belt."

Cambridge Driving School: How to Drive on Roundabouts in the UK

This is a step-by-step tutorial for how to navigate UK roundabouts—with diagrams.

<http://www.cambridgedrivingschool.net/how-to-drive-on-roundabouts-tutorial/>

Learn what "Staggered Crossroads" are on their crossroads tutorial page:

<http://www.cambridgedrivingschool.net/crossroads-tutorial/>

US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' Website

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/UnitedKingdom.html>

US citizens planning to visit the UK should read *each* section on this page.

Canadians planning to visit the UK can find similarly helpful information at:

<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling>

Travelers from other countries should visit their respective government's website to find UK travel information specific to your needs.

When researching UK driving, however, scroll down and click on the plus sign next to **Travel & Transportation**.

There you'll find helpful tips such as: "Emergency call boxes (orange telephone booths with 'SOS' printed on them) may be found at half-mile intervals along the motorway. ... Emergency call boxes dial directly to a motorway center. **It is best to use these phones rather than a personal cell phone, because motorway center personnel will immediately know the location of a call received from an emergency call box.**"

Driving Regulations in Britain

▶ This is a must-read article found on VisitBritain.com.

<https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/plan-your-trip/getting-around-britain/travelling-around-britain-car>

Below are a few highlights.

- To drive in Britain you need a current driving license with an international driving permit [IDP], if required. You must also carry proof of ownership or a rental agreement in your vehicle, plus any insurance documents.

From <https://www.tripsavvy.com/international-driving-permits-for-the-uk-1662365>

“If you have a valid driving license from your own country, you can drive in the UK for up to 12 months. You may not need an IDP but as they are easy to obtain, it might be a good idea to get one anyway.”

- It is compulsory to wear seatbelts in Britain.
- Drink-driving (aka Drunk-driving) penalties are severe.
- It is illegal to use a mobile phone while driving unless it is operated hands-free.

Another important UK driving document to download and familiarize yourself with is:

Know Your [UK] Traffic Signs [The PDF download is free.]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/know-your-traffic-signs>

UK traffic signs tend to be more pictorial, with fewer explanatory words.

United Kingdom: Driving Tips for Visitors

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186216-c9626/United-Kingdom:Driving.Tips.For.Visitors.html>

This is an excellent TripAdvisor article, and covers the following subjects:

- **Speed Limits**
- **Driving on a Motorway (Freeway)**
- **Right on Red? Never! Left on Red? Nope!**
- **Roundabouts**
- **Box Junctions**
- **Pedestrian and School Crossings**
- **Communicating with Other Drivers**
- **Parking**
- **Lights**
- **Fuel**
- **General Points**

Driving Single Track Roads

<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usfeatures/singletrack/>

Anyone driving to Outlandish Scotland Sites outside of major metropolitan cities may have to traverse single-track roads somewhere along the way. The webpage above is—by far—the best resource for understanding how to navigate single-track roads anywhere in the UK. Here are a few highlights:

- Bear in mind that if the passing place is on the **right** and you reach it first, stop on the **left side of the road opposite the passing place**: pulling across to the right is [prohibited].
- Also bear in mind the ... convention that traffic going **downhill** should [yield to traffic going uphill].
- [There] are times when the only way to pass a herd of cattle or sheep is to stop, turn off your engine, and **wait for the herd to be driven past you**.
- ... the person **closest to a passing place should do the reversing**: but gradient, type of vehicle, and number of vehicles that would have to reverse can be factors too.
- If someone comes up behind you, they're obviously traveling the road faster than you are. [Use] a **passing place to pull over and let them through**.

UK and Ireland Driving Tips

<https://www.tripsavvy.com/driving-in-the-uk-and-ireland-1662401>

This is an excellent TripSavvy.com article by Ferne Arfin—updated in 2019. Many of her tips are repeats from what you’ve already read. Please remember: if they’re repeated, it’s because they are important = doesn’t hurt to read them again!

Driving in Great Britain

<http://my.core.com/%7Ejcnash/driving02.html>

Part of the *England, Scotland, Wales—A Travel Guide* website, by J.C. Nash, this article is particularly helpful for understanding **UK road etiquette**. (Again, you’ll find some repeat tips here, but J.C. offers several new tips well worth reading.)

We disagree, however, with J.C.’s first tip.

“Allow enough time for your body clock to adjust before getting behind the wheel. We like to have a minimum of three or four days before driving a car in Britain.”

We prefer renting a car upon landing in the UK and heading to smaller cities before touring any major UK metropolitan area—especially Edinburgh or London.

Even normally active and physically fit travelers can end up with blistered feet if they spend the first few days of a holiday in a place that demands an inordinate amount of walking. Those who visit a major UK city during the first few days will be *limping* through subsequent sites—literally. Touring smaller cities and villages first allows your feet to gradually become accustomed. Save Edinburgh or London for the middle or end of your trip.

Still, J.C.’s point about your body clock needing time to adjust is valid. Plan on driving to only a few sites on the first day of your trip, and get plenty of rest that evening.

All of J.C.’s other tips are terrific—especially those listed below.

- **'Oops! Sorry' Hand Signal of Apology**
- **Cheers and Thanks!** [Hand Signal]
- **The Etiquette of Wing Mirrors**
- **The Etiquette of Car Horns**
- **You're on a Candid Camera**

BTW: Speed cameras may be present at traffic lights and railroad crossings (called “level crossings” or “grade crossings” in the UK), as well as on the motorways.

Do not speed or run red lights when driving in the UK. The traffic violation tickets *WILL* find you—although it likely will be weeks to months after your return home. Furthermore, it will be charged to the credit card you used to rent your car, along with an exorbitant “handling” fee!

Extra UK Car Rental Tips

(1) Rent an Automatic Transmission Car, Even Though it's More Expensive!

The vast majority of automobiles in the UK have manual (standard) transmissions. These vehicles have a center **stick** for manual **gear shifting** and a **clutch** foot pedal.

Visitors from right-side driving countries who have never driven a stick should *never* rent a manual transmission car in the UK. Learning to shift gears for the first time, while also having to drive on the “wrong” side of the road, is too much—you're just asking for trouble.

Visitors from right-side driving countries who *are* accustomed to operating a manual transmission should *also* avoid renting a manual transmission car in the UK. **While your right hand may be familiar with shifting, your left hand is NOT!**

Try it. Take a friend and a manual transmission car to a large, empty parking lot, such as a major shopping mall after hours—some high schools have a Driver's Ed area in their lots. Have your friend drive the car while you sit in the passenger seat and do the shifting—with your *left hand*. **It's awful!**

The extra expense of renting an automatic transmission car when visiting the UK is well worth it.

If you feel strongly about saving money by renting a car with a stick, PRACTICE before you leave home. The foot pedals in UK cars are configured the same as in countries where you drive on the right: clutch on the left, brake in the middle, accelerator on the right. So, your feet will be happy. All you need do is train your left hand to shift.

Again, have a friend drive you around an empty parking lot while you do the shifting—with your *left hand*—from the passenger seat. The more often you're able to practice, the less stressful your UK driving experience will be.

(2) Smaller is Smarter

You need to have enough room to be comfortable while motoring, as well as being able to stow luggage for everyone in your party. However! Smaller cars are much easier to maneuver along narrow UK roads, and are far easier to park—particularly in UK parking garages where the spaces tend to be tiny.

Additionally, petrol is exceedingly expensive in the UK. The smaller the car, the better gas mileage you'll get, and the less you'll have to pay for fuel.

Gasoline (Petrol) prices, March 28, 2016

Price per Liter in US Dollars (Petrol is sold in liters in the UK)



Price per Gallon in US Dollars



For current prices: https://www.globalpetrolprices.com/gasoline_prices/

Stay Strong at the Rental Car Desk

Months after renting a small-sized economy car, do not accept anything other than what you have booked when you arrive at the rental car desk.

Here's the problem: If the available number of high-demand, small economy sedans is dwindling, and unbooked larger vehicles are gathering dust on the lot, rental car agents (in *any* country, including the US and Canada) may offer you a mid-sized car or minivan at the same price as the small sedan you booked. They'll make it sound like a serendipitous opportunity for you to enjoy the luxury of extra room at no extra charge. **This offer is NOT a good deal!**

Larger Cars Guzzle More Gas. Even if it costs you the same rental fee as a small-sized economy car, driving a larger vehicle will suck a significant amount of money away from other—far more enjoyable—holiday expenses, as well as being more difficult to **drive and park**. Stay strong and insist on the small-sized economy car that you booked. In most cases, they'll come up with one for you.

In the unusual event that the rental company truly has no small-sized economy cars available to honor their contract with you, tell the agent that you'll only accept a larger car substitution if they charge you the same price, AND compensate you for the additional gas expense you'll incur, by **discounting** your prebooked (often prepaid) economy car rental fee by £10 per day. That will *almost* compensate you for 2 gallons (7.5 liters) of extra fuel each day, and it's a fair offer.

(3) GPS Devices are Lifesavers When Driving in the UK

Once upon a time, visiting drivers had to rely on small-print, paper maps (or Google Maps printouts) for finding their way from one UK point to another. Especially because so many UK street signs are difficult to locate—or *nonexistent*—this can be a nightmare!

Now that GPS devices are so readily available, you MUST have one. A GPS unit will significantly alleviate the stress of navigating in the UK. Still, as Rick Steves aptly notes, *also* having a paper map is helpful in some situations.

<https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/transportation/navigate-european-roads>

From least-to-most expensive, here are options for enjoying a GPS device during your holiday:

- Travelers with Smart Phones can use an online map app. According to Rick Steves:

“Since your favorite online mapping app (such as Google Maps) works just as well for navigating Europe as it does at home, this option can make a lot of sense: You're already familiar with it, you don't have to do any prep work (**beyond arranging for data roaming**), and it can alert you to current road conditions. Online mapping apps used to be prohibitively expensive for overseas travelers—but that was before most carriers started offering affordable international data plans. **If you're already [paying for] a data plan for your trip, this is probably the way to go.**”

[Be sure to read our **UK Phones** PDF: <http://OutlandishScotland.com/UKphones.pdf>]

The downside of using a Map App: Your Smart Phone screen is probably smaller than a GPS unit's display.

- If you already own a portable GPS unit, pack it—in your carryon. Using a device you already own and are familiar with is always the best bet. You will, however, have to purchase and upload

a UK maps package before you leave. (Beware of **regional** map packages that don't have detailed street-by-street maps for all UK cities. Skimping on maps is not a good idea.)

Using your own GPS device also allows you to load your driving itinerary's trip coordinates *before* leaving home—something far more convenient than having to type them in as you go. Title each entry so that it lists in the order you'll be driving for the entire trip. For instance, your first destination's coordinates (the Asda or Tesco Superstore nearest to the car rental location) can be titled, "**01Asda**" or "**01Tesco**." Your second destination—the first tour site you'll be visiting, such as Culross—can be titled, "**02Culross**." And so on.

Unfortunately, some GPS devices limit the number of coordinates that can be input ahead of time. If your Outlandish tour coordinates list is longer than what your device will hold, be sure to bring a list of coordinates for all the sites—and lodgings—you'll be driving to.

- The fee for **renting** a GPS from the UK car rental company may be more than what it would have cost to buy one in the US. Purchase a GPS for use at home, also buying and uploading a detailed UK maps package before you leave. Purchase the device well in advance so that you can familiarize yourself with its use—and load your trip coordinates—before leaving.
- **If none of the above options appeal to you, rent a GPS unit from the car rental company.** When booking your car and GPS unit, be sure to obtain a *guarantee* that your reserved GPS unit will be available when you pick up the car. Pack the guarantee they send you so that you'll have it with you at the rental desk.

Please Note: Our concern about reserved GPS units being unavailable when you pick up the rental car (because all of the company's units are already in use) is based on horrible experiences we encountered several years ago, and may be out-dated.

Given today's degree of improved technology, some UK rental cars may have **built-in** GPS units. If that's what you're offered, get a *guarantee* that your reserved car will have the built-in GPS, or that you'll be given a GPS unit—free of charge—if it doesn't.

(4) Search for the Best Car Rental Deals and Book in Advance

Booking in advance, from your home country, is *always* cheaper than booking after you reach the UK.

Use an online car hire **consolidator** or **aggregator**, as explained by Reid Bramblett in his **Money-Saving Tips for Car Rentals**. http://www.reidsguides.com/t_au/t_au_rentals.html

Open the "How to book a rental car" tab to obtain links to Reid's favorite online rental car sources.

Do your research online, then CALL the company to book.

Having a **live agent** assisting you while booking the car will ensure that you understand all available options, and obtain all the extras you want—like a GPS unit.

(5) Rental Car Insurance—Gotta Have It!

Though not as old as Scotland's standing stones, Murphy's Law is just as powerful. If you don't have an insurance policy to cover damage that occurs while driving in the UK, you *will* suffer rental car damage. If you *do* have rental car damage insurance, absolutely nothing will happen to the car—usually. But, if damage *does* occur, you're covered.

Phone your credit card company (companies) and ask whether UK rental car insurance is offered when you use the card to book your car. If it *is* offered, use that card and you're insured.

Be aware, however, that if an accident occurs, any damage done to your vehicle—or someone else's—will probably be charged to your credit card until the insurance claim is settled. This is a rather expensive rule, but it's a temporary expense. After the claim is settled, your account will be reimbursed—less the deductible.

Phone your personal automobile insurer and ask whether they offer coverage for rental car driving in the UK. Such coverage is rarely part of a normal insurance policy. But, if a **temporary rider** is available, it may be cheaper than any other source of UK rental car insurance. Note the policy's cost, and check other options before purchasing a temporary rider from your insurer.

If UK rental car insurance isn't available through your credit card or personal auto insurance, you should purchase a **collision damage waiver (CDW)** policy from the rental car company.

If you book with a consolidator or aggregator, buy their CDW policy. This policy will almost always be less expensive than the one offered by the company from which you rent your car. Have the paperwork demonstrating your coverage with you when you pick up the car.

If none of the above options proves less expensive than the CDW policy offered by the car rental company from which you'll be renting your car, **buy that policy.** The most reassuring thing about having a CDW policy is the ability to walk away from a damaged car without any expense or hassle after the accident paperwork is filled out.

(6) Be Sure to Bring the Credit Card You Use to Book Your Car with You!

While many may consider this tip to be common knowledge, we include it here for those who've not traveled extensively. **The card that booked the car MUST be the card used to actually rent the car.**

As a matter of fact; if you used more than one credit card to book various aspects of your holiday itinerary (such as airfare or hotels), **be sure to bring EVERY card you used to book parts of your holiday with you.**

(7) Call Your Credit Card Company and Ask About the Daily Credit Limit

Because people so rarely make a several-hundred-dollar purchase with their credit card on a single day, many are unaware that they *have a daily credit limit*. If your card has a daily limit, ensure that your limit will not be exceeded when the **full car rental cost**—in addition to a **collision security deposit**—is put on it. Most card companies will agree to increase your daily credit limit during the time you are traveling abroad.

(8) UK Rental Car Checklist

These steps are so important, we've created a checklist you can print and pack—or load on your smart phone. **USE IT** before leaving the rental car lot.

<http://www.outlandishscotland.com/RentalCarCheckList.pdf>

Extra UK Driving Tips

▶ Defeating the Left-Side Driving Dilemma PDF!

<http://www.outlandishscotland.com/LeftSideDriving.pdf>

Travelers who live in right-side driving countries (the majority of the world) *will* experience episodes of anxiety and confusion when having to drive on the left side of the road in the UK. It's unavoidable. This PDF contains several tips that have worked for us.

Parking Pointers

Where street parking is available in the UK, cars are allowed to park facing *either* direction.

Observe where and how the natives have parked, and follow their example. Don't be surprised when parked cars have reduced the road to a single lane.

Do not park *anywhere* along single track roads!

Small roadside clearings (lay-bys) or wide access gates found along single track/single lane roads are *not* intended for parking. They are there to facilitate opposing-vehicle-passing, or for turning around.

Avoid parking on the side of *any* country road in the UK.

Vehicles parked in remote locations are tempting targets for thieves. It is best to park only in recognized car parks.



Wherever you park, secure your stuff.

- **Items of any value or importance** that will not be taken with you when you leave the car should be **locked out of sight** in the boot (trunk).
- **Keep all luggage items locked in the boot.**
A suitcase seen on the back seat is a tempting a target.
- **TARRY FOR THE TOOT!**
Get in the habit of pressing the door lock button on your rental car's key fob until you hear the **HORN-HONK** confirming that the lock has engaged before leaving your parked car.

Public Car Parks

Most UK car parks have closed circuit TV cameras recording the license plate numbers of vehicles that enter, and the amount of time they are parked. Failure to follow the rules of any public car park can result in expensive fines, especially if you exceed the expiry time on a Pay and Display ticket. Since you're driving a rental car, it may take several weeks for them to reach you—but, they *will* find you!

Here is a link to the many helpful **Car Parks FAQ** found on the UK's **National Car Parks Ltd** website.
<https://www.ncp.co.uk/help-centre/>

What is a "Pay and Display" Car Park?

"A 'Pay and Display' is a car park with no barriers at entry and exit.

"Typically, these car parks will be open air and not multi-storey. If you're paying by cash, you're required to estimate the amount of time you'll need to park for, and pay for this at the start of your parking session. [Obviously, it's better to *overestimate* the time you'll be parked than to *underestimate* it.]

"You need to display the ticket the machine gives you in clear view on your dashboard. At some of our Pay and Display sites you can also pay using your mobile, using one of the mobile payment service advertised in the car park e.g. PayByPhone. You're not required to display a ticket if you use this payment method."

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/help-centre/general-enquiry/what-is-a-pay-and-display-car-park/>

► **Please Note:** The location for posting your Pay and Display payment voucher varies from car park to car park across the UK! Some require passenger-side front dash placement, and others specify driver's-side front dash placement. Some require the voucher to be affixed to the passenger-side window of the car, the driver's-side window, and so on. Be sure to determine *where* you should post your voucher before leaving the payment machine.

A Novel Holiday Contributor, Tara Miller, Warns:

"This is a REALLY important point. I once used a Pay and Display machine in Bath, England. I looked at other cars around me and thought they had put the voucher on the dash, so that's what I did. Upon my return, a Parking Citation for not properly displaying my voucher was tucked under the windshield wiper. (I was supposed to have posted it on the passenger-side window.)

"I went to a nearby police department to show them my valid payment voucher and try to get the fine waived. But, the police department doesn't handle parking citations—private companies do that.

"The Police asked if it was a rental car. I replied that it was, and they said not to worry about it, because the company wouldn't be able to trace it back to me anyway. **THEY WERE WRONG.** A month after my return to the US, I received a Parking Citation charge **on the credit card I used to rent my UK car** for £80 (approximately \$120 at the time!). UGH!"

What is a "Pay on Exit" Car Park?

"These car parks will be barrier car parks where you need to pay when you leave the car park, *either* at a **pay machine** when you're ready to leave or **at the exit barrier** with a debit or credit card. At many of these car parks, you can also park using some of our parking products including Pre-book and NCP ParkPass. Please don't take a ticket on entry if you park using one of these products."

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/help-centre/general-enquiry/what-is-a-pay-on-exit-car-park/>

Please Note: Some Pay on Exit car parks only take cash and often do not give change. Be prepared with plenty of UK coins whenever using a car park.

What is a "Pay at Pay Station" Car Park?

“In [a ‘Pay at Pay Station car park’] you collect your ticket on entry. On returning to your vehicle [go to the pay station closest to where you parked]. Put your ticket into the machine and it can then work out the cost of your stay. Make payment and take the [payment voucher] ticket out of the machine. Drive to the exit barrier and insert your ticket. The barrier will raise and you can leave the car park.”

Please Note: There usually is a time limit between paying and exiting. If you need time to situate items in the car (or program your GPS with your next destination), do that *before* going to the pay station.

A Cautionary Note about Using Multistory Car Parks in the UK

From C.D. Miller:

Parking spaces within many UK multistory parking garages are alarmingly close together. Foreign national Outlanderites may find them particularly difficult to pull into, while still allowing room to exit (and later enter) your car. Especially if you’re not entirely comfortable maneuvering your rental car in *reverse*—**which is the BEST way to park within a UK multistory parking garage**—use a *surface* car park, even if it means having to walk a few extra blocks to reach your destination.

UK Vehicle Terminology

While some of the terms below are included in our UK Terminology PDF, this is a more comprehensive list of automobile-related UK terms and their US translations.

Common UK Automobile-Related Terms

Bonnet = Hood

Boot = Trunk

Car Hire = Car Rental

Glove Box [or “Cubby Hole”] = Glove Compartment: the compartment within a car’s passenger side dash board, where small stuff can be stored.

Handbrake = Parking Brake

Liter = About a Quart: four liters to a US gallon.

Lorry = Truck

Manual Gearbox = A Manual Transmission; a car with a stick shift.

Number Plate = License Plate

Pavement = Sidewalk (*not* the road)

Petrol = Gasoline

Petrol Station = Gas Station

UK (“Imperial”) Gallon = About 1.2 US Gallons (4.5 US quarts)

Windscreen = Windshield

Zebra Crossing = Pedestrian Crosswalk: a section of road with a lane of white stripes painted across it from sidewalk-to-sidewalk (sometimes also marked by striped poles). If a pedestrian is in the Zebra crossing, you must stop and remain stopped until all pedestrians therein have finished crossing and safely reached the opposite side.

Common UK Roadway Terms

Central Reservation = A Median: a physical barrier (wood or metal), or raised section of paved or unpaved ground, separating one or more lanes of opposing directions of travel.

Dual Carriageway = Divided Highway: two carriageways (roads) containing traffic traveling in opposite directions, separated by a central reservation.

Lay-By = A small, widened area periodically found along Single-Track Roads, offered for the purpose of allowing one of two opposing vehicles to pull over so that the other can pass—generally only large enough to accommodate one vehicle.

Motorway = Interstate or Freeway: a major highway consisting of two or more carriageways separated by a central reservation, each carriageway composed of three or more lanes.

Single Carriageway = Undivided Highway: a road with lanes containing traffic traveling in opposite directions *without* a median between them, regardless of the number of lanes on either side of the center line.

Single-Track Road = Single-Lane Road: one lane shared by motorists traveling in both directions, with small widened areas (Lay-Bys) periodically offered as places where one vehicle can pull over to allow the other to pass, or where a vehicle can turn around.