

Driving to the airport for drop-off is often a last-minute mad dash. You want to get as close to the terminal as possible, unload your bags, say goodbye, and be on your way. But in the UK, that convenience now comes at a growing cost. Increasingly, airports are quietly introducing—and hiking—barrier drop-off charges, transforming what was once a free service into a surprising daily expense for many travellers.

In this post, we'll explore how much you can save by using **free long stay** and **park & ride** options as a smart alternative to the kerbside drop-off.

We'll look at:

- How much the average drop-off fee is at UK airports, and which airports are the most expensive
- Why drop-off charges are rising quietly—and what that means for your wallet
- How to avoid paying those £7 to £10 fees with free long stay windows
- The time trade-off between convenient kerbside drop-offs vs shuttle buses
- Helpful tools to compare parking and drop-off prices before you plan your journey

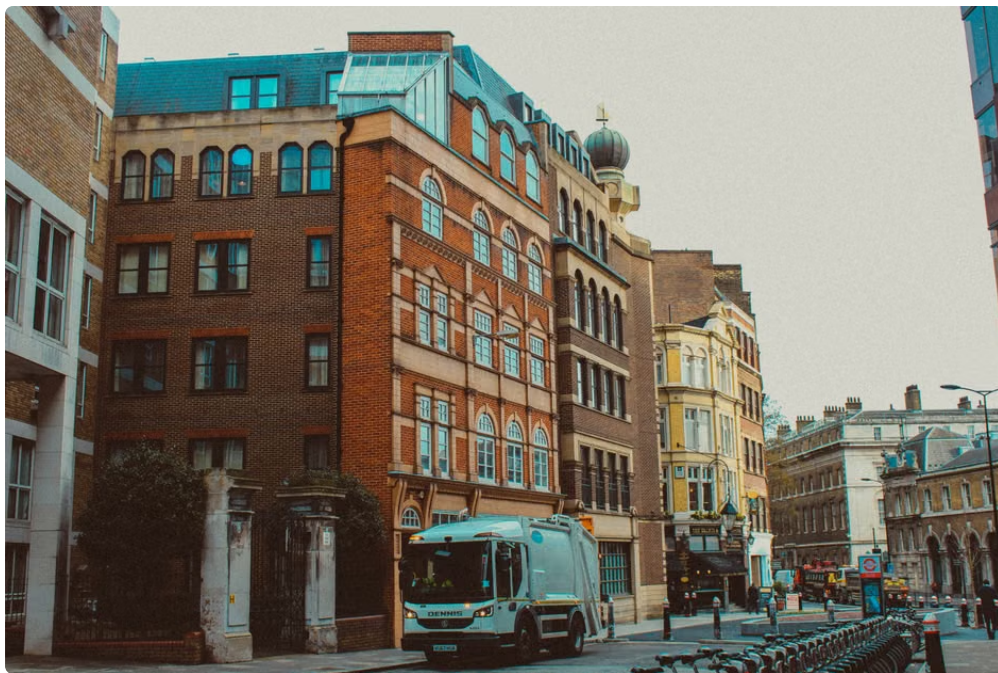
UK Airport Drop-Off Charges: The Rising Cost of Kerbside Convenience

When did it become normal to pay to drop someone off at the airport terminal? For many years a quick 10-15 minute stop at the arrivals or short-stay drop-off zone was free, or at worst involved a small token payment.

That's changing fast. As airports seek to manage congestion and increase revenue, barrier systems have gone up at many short-stay car parks, adding £5-£10 charges to what used to be a free service. And these changes have often flown under the radar—announced with little fanfare and quietly implemented.

Airport Current Drop-Off Fee (Barrier) Notes London Heathrow £8.00 One of the highest fees, rising in 2024 Manchester £7.50 Charges introduced quietly mid-2023 Edinburgh £6.00 Barrier charge but with short grace periods Birmingham £6.50 Average for mid-sized UK airports Glasgow £5.00 Lower end but still a new cost for many

Across the UK, the **average drop-off charge is now around £6.51**. That means for a quick 5-10 minute stop dropping off, you could be paying the equivalent of a slice of your holiday budget just to say goodbye. For many families or frequent travelers, these fees add up quickly.



How to Avoid Pay-to-Stop Fees: Free Long Stay and Park & Ride

Fortunately, all is not lost. Most airports still offer free (or much cheaper) long stay parking options, located a short distance from the terminals with regular shuttle buses or park & ride windows. Using these options allows you to avoid those £7 to £10 drop-off fees and save serious money.

Here's how the free long stay window works:

1. You drive to the designated long stay car park—usually a few minutes away from the terminal
2. Park your vehicle in a free or low-cost long stay zone
3. Hop on an airport shuttle bus or park & ride window service that runs frequently to the terminal building
4. Drop off your friends or family at the terminal
5. When you return, take the shuttle or walk back to your car to pick them up

This method removes the barrier fees at the terminal barriers entirely, replacing them with either a **free parking period** or a flat long stay parking fee that is often lower than the multiple short 5-10-minute charges.

Comparing Costs: Barrier Drop-Off vs Free Long Stay

Scenario	Cost	Time	Convenience
Kerbside drop-off with barrier	~£6.51 average fee	5-10 mins	High—door-to-door at terminal
Free long stay parking + shuttle	£0 - £5 (depending on long stay rates)	15-25 mins shuttle time	Moderate—requires shuttle transfer

Saving £6 or more per drop-off may be worth a few extra minutes on a shuttle bus—especially for repeat journeys or when travelling with larger groups.

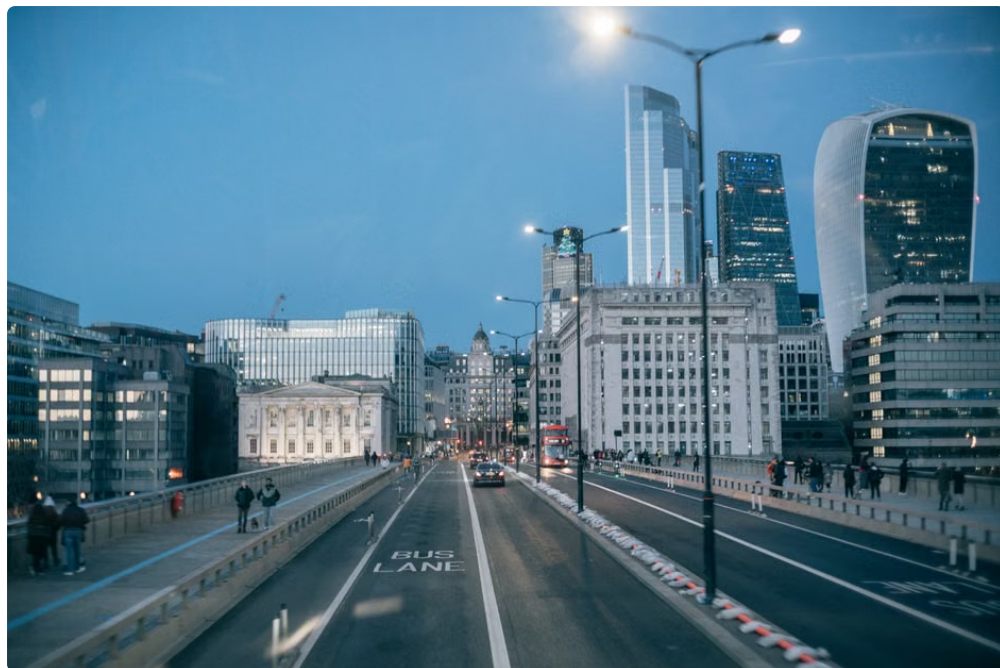
Shuttle vs Kerbside: The Time Trade-Off

Using a free long stay window means sacrificing kerbside convenience for cost savings—and often a slightly longer journey. Airport shuttles run every 5-15 minutes and can take anywhere from 5-15 minutes to reach terminals, depending on airport layout and traffic. Some airports offer park & ride services with convenient windows that bypass longer bus times.

Consider these pros and cons:

- **Kerbside drop-off:** Fastest way to get someone to the terminal, but now comes at a steep fee.
- **Long stay shuttle:** Free or much cheaper but requires parking further away and taking a shuttle bus. Good for those who prioritize saving money over a little extra time.

Often, families with lots of luggage or people with mobility challenges will choose kerbside for convenience, while budget travellers and locals who know the system well save by using the free long stay window.



Planning Ahead: Use Airport Parking and Drop-Off Comparison Tools

Before you travel, it's wise to check the latest prices and options for your airport. Holiday Extras Airport Parking comparison pages provide up-to-date price comparisons for short stay, long stay, drop-off fees, and more—helping you pick the best option for your budget.

By planning ahead, you can:

- Decide if paying for the barrier drop-off is worth your money and time
- Find the most cost-effective free or low-cost long stay parking
- Book in advance to secure discounted prices
- Avoid last-minute stress and unexpected fees

For those ready to save, check out the Holiday Extras airport parking deals via medium.com this affiliate link to find the best offers on long stay parking and avoid paying those kerbside fees altogether.

Summary: Save Money by Using Free Long Stay Instead of Paying the Kerb Barrier

- **Airport kerbside drop-off fees are rising quietly** across UK airports, averaging £6.51, with some fees as high as £8-10.
- **Free long stay and park & ride options** provide a smart, budget-friendly alternative, allowing you to avoid £7 to £10 drop-off fees.

- **The time trade-off** involves a short shuttle bus ride of 10-20 minutes, compared to the 5-10 minutes kerbside stop.
- **Planning ahead with comparison tools** like Holiday Extras airport parking pages can help you make the best choice for your trip.
- Using these options regularly can save you a significant chunk of money over multiple trips—money better spent on holiday experiences or treats!

Next time you drive someone to the airport, consider taking the free long stay window route. It might just save you a nice chunk of change and help you avoid the frustrations of unexpected fees at the barrier.

Safe travels and happy saving!