

News

UK highest flyer for airport drop-off fees

Laurence Sleanor
Transport Correspondent

In the aviation world, it is the US that serves the most passengers, has the most flights and has the most airports.

But there is one part of the sector in which the United Kingdom is the world leader: airport drop-off fees.

Analysis has revealed that all big airports in Britain charge drivers at least £5 to stop at the terminal doors for a so-called "kiss and fly" drop-off, a fee almost unheard of abroad.

Gatwick charges £10 — double its fee five years ago — for a ten-minute stay. Each extra minute costs £1. London City imposes an £8 fee for stays of up to five minutes and also charges £1 for each extra minute. At Bristol airport, the fee is £8.50 for up to ten minutes.

Heathrow is Europe's busiest airport, serving more than 200,000 passengers

a day. This month its charge rose by £1, to £7 per drop-off. Waiting is not allowed. Most airports fine drivers up to £100 for exceeding a time limit or if they do not pay the same day as the drop-off.

The Business Travel Association (BTA) compared UK drop-off policies with those of airports abroad, including Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta — the world's busiest — New York's JFK, Beijing and Seoul. It found that few foreign airports charged fees.

BTA said 80 per cent of big European airports did not charge, and those that did were far cheaper than in Britain.

The group estimated that UK airports are bringing in more than £300 million a year from drop-off charges. Heathrow, which is owned by foreign investors, including Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, made a pre-tax profit of more than £900 million in 2024. Gatwick, partly owned by BlackRock's Global Infrastructure Partners, made more than £450 million.

Clive Wratten, chief executive of the BTA, said: "This isn't just a financial burden, it's a fairness issue. Public transport simply isn't a realistic option for many early-morning flights, especially people travelling for work or those with mobility needs, and those are the passengers being hit hardest."

Airports UK, the trade body, said that because many airports were privately owned, they were dependent on extra revenue. Most offered free drop-offs further from the terminals, it said.

Terminal toll

| | Drop-off fee | Time limit, minutes |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| London City* | £13 | 10 |
| Gatwick | £10 | 10 |
| Bristol | £8.50 | 10 |
| Heathrow | £7 | 10 |
| Stansted | £7 | 15 |
| Manchester | £6.40 | 10 |

*London City charges £8 for 5 minutes, then £1 per additional minute for 6-10 minutes, the most expensive per minute. 10-minute limit



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Holiday plans on hold over tax concerns

Laurence Sleanor

Holidaymakers are delaying booking their summer breaks because of Rachel Reeve's tax rises, the boss of a leading tour operator has said.

Steve Heapy, chief executive officer of Jet2 plc, said customers were postponing booking to go abroad in the hope of instead securing much cheaper last-minute discounts.

Heapy, who oversees both the airline and the package holiday provider, said "tax pressures" in the UK had increased, meaning that disposable income was lower and customers were "opting for caution".

In the budget the chancellor extended a freeze on tax thresholds, pushing millions into paying more tax. She also increased air passenger duty, charged to passengers flying from Britain.

Heapy said that Jet2 had been expecting a surge in bookings on the first Saturday of January, usually one of the busiest days of the year, but this failed to materialise.

He said inflation was affecting tourist destinations usually popular with Britons, such as Spain.

The Treasury said: "Real wages are up more in the first year of this government than in the first decade under the previous government and living standards are higher than they were in the previous parliament meaning people have more money to spend."

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