

Airport journeys in the UK are getting pricier—and not just for flights. Many travellers have noticed new fees for drop off and pick up at airport terminals, with some even feeling “double-dipped” when charged twice for short visits. If you recently found yourself paying twice to access the airport forecourt, you’re far from alone.

In this detailed post, we’ll explain why these charges are cropping up, how average fees have risen quietly but steadily, and what you can do to avoid paying twice (or more) when dropping off and collecting passengers. We’ll look at typical short stay collection charges, how split zones at airports play into extra fees, and whether free alternatives like long stay or park & ride options can save you money.

What Are Drop Off and Pick Up Fees?

Many UK airports have introduced or raised charges for vehicles entering the terminal drop off and pick up zones. These **drop off and pick up fees** or **short stay collection charges** are separate from parking fees and are intended to manage congestion and encourage quicker passenger turnover.

The new fee model typically means:

- You pay to enter the airport forecourt to drop off or pick up passengers.
- A short grace period might be free (e.g. 10-15 minutes), but exceeding it incurs a charge.
- If you leave the zone and return shortly after (such as for both dropping off and picking up the same passenger), you may pay again.

Unfortunately, this setup has led to some people feeling they’ve been *charged twice* for what feels like one visit.

Why Was I Charged Twice for Drop Off and Pick Up?

One of the most common reasons drivers report two charges is that the airport uses **split zones** or separate booking systems—and each access is counted independently. For example, if you drive in to drop off your friend, leave, and then come back later to pick them up, the system treats each entry as a new visit and charges you each time.

In addition, some airports charge for both drop off and pick up regardless of how short your stay is. If you don’t carefully plan the timing, you might unexpectedly hit the threshold for a second charge during pick up.

Here’s a typical scenario that leads to double charging:

1. You pay a **short stay collection charge** to drop off someone at the terminal forecourt.
2. You leave the zone, waiting in a free or cheaper parking area elsewhere.
3. You return later to the airport forecourt to collect the same passenger.
4. Since this is a new entry, the airport system triggers another access fee.

How to Check If Your Airport Has Split Zones or Multiple Charges

Before travelling, it’s worth checking the airport’s official website for information on drop off and pick up charges, including whether the zones are split. If they are, pay attention to:

- Is the short stay collection charge applied per vehicle entry? (Hint: Usually yes.)
- Are drop off and pick up treated as separate zones or time slots?
- What is the free grace period, and how is it enforced?

For a quick price comparison and zone details, tools like the Holiday Extras airport parking comparison pages are invaluable. Via partner affiliate programmes such as awin1.com, these sites help you find the best deals on parking and understand drop off pick up fees before you travel.

How Much Are UK Airport Drop Off Fees Really?

The overall trend at UK airports is quietly rising charges for drop off and pick up access. According to our tracking since 2024, the **average UK drop off charge** across major airports currently stands around **£6.51**.



Airport Drop Off Fee (up to 10 mins)	Pick Up Fee (up to 10 mins)	Notes
London Heathrow (LHR) £5.00	£5.00	Split zones, fees charged per entry
Manchester (MAN) £6.50	£6.50	Strict 10 min limit
Gatwick (LGW) £6.00	£6.00	Separate charges for North and South terminals
Birmingham (BHX) £7.00	£7.00	Higher than average fee, no combined tickets
Edinburgh (EDI) £4.00	£4.00	Cheaper but strict enforcement

Some of the busiest and largest airports impose the highest fees. Notably, Birmingham and Manchester Airports top the list due to heavy traffic and attempts to reduce congestion.

Free Alternatives: Long Stay and Park & Ride Options

Many travellers are surprised to discover that completely **free alternatives** exist if you don't mind a bit of travel time and don't need to be kerbside right at the terminal.

- **Long Stay Car Parks:** Park a little further from the terminal at a long stay car park and either your passenger takes a shuttle bus to the terminal or you arrange a pick up on the free shuttle route.
- **Park & Ride Windows:** Some airports have designated park & ride points with free or very cheap parking and shuttle links.

Pros and cons of these methods are:

Option	Cost	Time	Trade-off	Convenience
Long Stay Parking	Lower than drop off fees	Extra 15-30 minutes shuttle time	Less convenient, but no kerbside charges	Park & Ride Windows
Often free or minimal charge	Similar shuttle timing	Requires coordination for pickups	Terminal Drop Off £6.51 average per visit	Direct and fast
Highly convenient but costly if charged twice				

Is It Worth Saving on Fees by Using Park & Ride?

If you're budget-conscious and don't mind adding 20-30 minutes to your journey, these free or low-cost alternatives can add up to significant savings — especially for repeat trips. Using a reliable booking comparator like Holiday Extras can help you find these options easily.

How to Avoid Paying Twice: Our Top Tips

If you want to avoid double pay for drop off and pick up fees, here's what you can do:



- **Share one visit:** Time your drop off and pick up so you can stay in the same session—e.g. wait inside or near the airport area to collect the passenger after they arrive.
- **Use Long Stay parking or Park & Ride:** Drop off on foot or via shuttle to avoid multiple zone entries.
- **Check airport policies:** Each airport's rules vary dramatically. Knowing grace periods and split zone setups can save surprises.
- **Pre-book your parking and drop off:** Many airports offer discounts or package deals if you book in advance through official or partner platforms such as Holiday Extras.
- **Car share or use taxi services:** Avoid personal vehicle fees altogether by using Uber, taxis, or ride-share for airport access.

Summary: What Did I Do Wrong and How to Fix It

If you got charged twice for airport access on drop off and pick up, chances are you unknowingly entered the airport drop off zone more than once, triggering separate fees. This happens because UK airports often charge for each individual entry, and the system treats drop off and pick up as separate uses—even for the same passenger journey.

The solution? Plan ahead. Avoid multiple zone entries by timing drop off and collection to one visit, or consider cheaper and free alternatives like long stay and park & ride options — keeping in mind shuttle times and convenience trade-offs.

Remember, the average drop off charge is about **£6.51**, which can add up if you're charged twice. Use trusted resources medium.com like Holiday Extras airport parking comparison pages to research before travelling and avoid unexpected fees. If you book through their platform (via awin1.com affiliate link), you might even secure special deals.

By being informed about **drop off and pick up fees**, understanding **short stay collection charges**, and recognising the **split zones** many airports use, you can keep your airport run hassle-free and cost-effective.

Further Reading and Resources

- [Holiday Extras Airport Parking Comparison](#)
- [Heathrow Short Stay Parking Information](#)
- [Gatwick Airport Parking and Drop Off Information](#)
- [Manchester Airport Parking Options](#)