

More than third of major airports raise drop-off fees

More than a third of major airports have raised drop-off fees for drivers in the past year, according to new research. The RAC, which carried out the study, said it is “bordering on the ridiculous” for drivers to pay up to £7 for “the briefest of stops”.

Seven out of 20 airports analysed have raised so-called “kiss and fly” charges – which are typically levied for dropping off someone as close to a terminal as possible – since last summer.

The four which have increased fees by £1 are Gatwick (which now charges £6 for 10 minutes), Edinburgh (£5 for 10 minutes), Birmingham (£5 for 15 minutes) and Bristol (£6 for 10 minutes).

Three others – Glasgow, Leeds Bradford and Aberdeen – have raised their prices by 50p.

Despite not raising its price this year, Stansted continues to top the table for the most expensive drop-off cost. The Essex airport’s initial fee is £7 for 15 minutes.

A total of nine airports have frozen their prices this year. That includes Manchester, which offers the worst value among all major airports by charging £5 for just a five-minute stay. Heathrow, the UK’s busiest airport, charges the same amount but with no time limit.

Passengers being dropped off at airports by taxis and private hire vehicles generally have the fees added to their fares.

Cardiff, Inverness and London City were the only airports analysed which allow free drop-offs outside terminals.

Following a car park fire in October last year, Luton has a free drop-off area near its Mid Stay Car Park, which is a 10-minute walk or a shuttle bus ride from the terminal.

Many airports offer free options for dropping passengers off in mid- or long-stay car parks connected to terminals by buses.

More than a third (37%) of respondents to an RAC-commissioned survey who had dropped someone off at an airport in the previous 12 months said there was no feasible public transport alternative. Some 59% of those polled said the reason for driving was the impracticality of airline passengers travelling with lots of luggage on public transport.

RAC senior policy officer Rod Dennis said: "It's depressing, if perhaps unsurprising given what's happened in the past, to see seven airports have hiked their drop-off charges once again this year.

"To have to pay £5, £6 or even £7 for the briefest of stops to simply open the boot and take some luggage out for a friend or loved one is bordering on the ridiculous. Increased charges at airports that have relatively poor public transport access – for instance, no direct rail or tram link – also seems pretty unreasonable.

"Some airports say the reason they charge for drop-offs at all is to discourage people from driving in the first place, but if the alternatives are non-existent, expensive or unreliable then what choice do people really have?"

A spokesman for trade body Airports UK said: "UK airports offer a range of options for those travelling to and from terminals, with many providing free drop-off facilities at various locations.

"Non-aeronautical income such as drop-off fees allow airports to keep charges to airlines low and to invest in sustainable

transport options, benefiting travellers through lower air fares and increased connectivity.

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“It also supports the record investments airports are making in improved facilities and infrastructure to create the best possible experience for passengers, as well as encourage people travelling to airports to make use of other, more sustainable forms of transport.”

– The survey was carried out by research company Online95 in May. A total of 1,841 drivers were questioned, of whom 72% had driven to an airport to drop someone off before a flight within the previous 12 months.