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Be careful not to get caught out by snowballing car hire costs

Organise insurance cover ahead of your ski trip and save hundreds of pounds

DAVID WILLIAMS | Thursday 17 November 2016 |  1 comment





Pricey prospect: car hire costs in European ski locations can be up to six times the price of a ski pass *AFP/Getty Images*

Good news for skiers: Alpine ski resorts have been opening a month early thanks to big snowfalls, with more than a metre in parts.

However, it coincides with exclusive research for this page, revealing that car hire costs in European ski locations can be three to six times the price of a ski pass – once the dreaded extra costs at the rental desk are added on.

In seven European ski locations researched for us, a six-day ski pass ranged from £158 in Bansko, Bulgaria, to £182 in Grandvalira, Andorra, and £234 at Alpe d'Huez, Grenoble.

Meanwhile, a week's car hire – including extra rental desk payments for ski racks, 'winterisation' charges, excess/waiver insurance, extra driver tariffs, sat nav charges and child car seat fees – can total more than £1,000 in Geneva, £928 in Turin, £837 in Barcelona, £761 in Grenoble, £704 in Inverness, £682 in Innsbruck and £458 in Sofia.

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[iCarhireinsurance.com](https://www.icarhireinsurance.com), which provides stand-alone car hire excess insurance, researched seven European ski gateways to see how a skier's costs snowball when they pick up their hire car. Hire companies Avis, Sixt, Europcar, Budget and Hertz were



Geneva emerged as the most expensive place to hire a car for the week, at an average £418, with 'extras' at the rental desk costing, on average, an additional £601, consisting of a ski rack (£53), winterisation costs (£25 for items such as snow tyres/chains), an extra named driver (£90), a sat nav (£142), child's car seat (£61) and £230 for excess waiver policies (£135 for super damage waiver, £51 for super theft waiver and £44 for tyre and windscreen excess waiver).

The costs of extras bought from the rental desk varied widely. Ski racks ranged from £23 with Budget and Sixt in Sofia to more than £60 in Barcelona with Avis and Budget. Winterisation charges ranged from £24 in Geneva with Avis to £95 with the same firm in Barcelona. iCarhireinsurance points out that travellers need to research the driving regulations of the country they are hiring in, otherwise they (not the rental company) could face a fine.




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Extra driver costs ranged from £22 with Avis and Sixt in Sofia, to £106 with Budget in Geneva. For drivers under 25, prices can be prohibitive, with rental companies charging more than £200 for a young driver in Inverness and Grenoble.

Only in Sofia, which had an average sat nav hire cost of £57, did the cost of a unit fall below £80. In Geneva and Turin, the average cost was more than £100. Costs for car seats ranged from £22 with Sixt in Sofia to £158 in Turin with Budget.

As for car hire excess insurance waivers, rental companies often offer three different excess policies: one for theft (average cost £32), one for damage (average cost £110) and one covering tyre and windscreen protection (average cost £33).

Europecar    these policies together in a “Combined Super Waiver” policy across all destinations in the survey (apart from Innsbruck) from between £117 and £254. Other providers also bundle these products, but only in some destinations. For example, Sixt offer it in Barcelona for £82, Avis in Inverness for £119, and Budget offer it in Inverness for £119 and Turin for £289.

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If a hire car is damaged or stolen, even if it’s not the hirer’s fault, the hirer is liable for the first part of the claim (i.e. the excess amount), which can be up to £2,500 (the excess amount in Turin with Europcar).

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This is    hireinsurance comes in. It points out that instead of buying excess policies from the rental company, you can buy a policy from a specialist insurance company for £23.92 for the week (or £37.99 for an annual policy for unlimited European trips). An iCarhireinsurance.com excess policy also includes vulnerable parts of a vehicle, providing up to £6,000 of protection cover.

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It's good advice, and they're not the only ones. When I rented earlier this year, I found a useful website – moneymaxim.co.uk – that helps you find the best deals. I ended up paying just £2.23 a day for excess waiver insurance.

“Don't add to your holiday costs by getting caught out when you pick up your hire car,” says Ernesto Suarez, founder and CEO of iCarhireinsurance.com. “Advance planning can keep costs to a minimum. Save hundreds by buying your excess waiver insurance from a specialist company in advance, take your own sat-nav and car seat, keep extra drivers to a minimum and you won't be looking at a wipe-out at the rental desk.”

More on child car seat charges here: skyscanner.net/news/flying-babies

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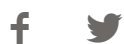
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