



Renting a Car and Driving Somewhere New

Confident on Strange Roads Rental apps, parking, tolls and maps all from your phone

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1611** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1. The Whole Trip in One Glance

If you read only this page, you will still drive away calm and prepared.

Renting a car today is mostly done on your phone. You reserve the car in the rental company's app, breeze past the counter with their free loyalty program, follow spoken directions from Google or Apple Maps on your car's big screen, pay for parking with a tap, and hand the keys back with a few photos for your records.

- Download the rental company's app and join its free loyalty program before you go
- Let the app do your check-in so you can skip the counter line
- Use Google Maps or Apple Maps for turn-by-turn directions, shown on the car screen
- Download the map of your destination before you leave, in case of dead zones
- Reserve parking ahead with SpotHero or ParkMobile
- Watch out for toll roads and decide how you will pay them before you drive
- Take photos of the car when you pick it up and when you drop it off

GOOD TO KNOW

You do not need to learn everything here. Pick the handful of steps that fit your trip. The rest is here for when you want it.

WHAT THIS COVERS

2. What Your Phone Now Does for You

Not long ago, renting a car meant standing in line, signing paper, and unfolding a map on the hood. Your phone quietly replaces all three. It is your reservation desk, your map, your parking meter, and your record-keeper, and once it is set up, most of it happens by itself.

This guide is about renting and driving your own rental car. If you would rather let someone else do the driving around a city, a separate guide covers taxis, rideshare, buses, and trains. Here we stay focused on the car you pick up, drive yourself, and return.

TIP

Do the setup at home, on your own couch, days before the trip. A calm evening with your phone beats fumbling at a busy airport counter.

START AT HOME

3. Download the Rental App Before You Leave

Every major rental company has a free app, and it is the key to a smooth trip. The app holds your reservation, lets you check in ahead, and at many airports lets you walk straight to a car without stopping at the counter. Get it onto your phone before you travel, while you are home and relaxed.

- 1 Open the App Store on an iPhone, or the Play Store on an Android phone
- 2 Search for your rental company by name, such as Hertz, Enterprise, Avis, National, or Budget
- 3 Tap Get or Install and wait for it to download
- 4 Open the app and create a free account, or sign in if you have one
- 5 Find your reservation inside the app, or enter your confirmation number

WATCH OUT

Make sure you download the official app from the real company. Search by the exact company name, and check that the maker listed matches. Skip look-alike apps from unknown makers.

THE FREE CLUB

4. Joining the Free Loyalty Program

Each rental company runs a free membership club, and joining is the single best thing you can do to skip lines. These clubs cost nothing for the basic level, and they are what unlock the skip-the-counter pickup. You simply sign up once, and you are a member for every future rental.

- Hertz calls its free club Gold Plus Rewards
- Enterprise calls its program Enterprise Plus
- Avis calls its free express program Avis Preferred
- National has the Emerald Club, known for letting members pick their own car

GOOD TO KNOW

The free level is all you need. Companies may offer paid upgrades with extra perks, but the no-cost membership is what gets you past the counter.

RESERVING

5. Reserving the Car on Your Phone

You can book the whole rental inside the app, the same way you would on a computer. The app shows you the dates, the pickup location, and the kinds of cars available, with a price for each. You pick a car size, review the total, and confirm.

- 1 Open the app and tap to start a new reservation
- 2 Enter your pickup city or airport and the dates and times
- 3 Choose the car size that suits you, such as compact, midsize, or SUV
- 4 Review the full price, including taxes and any fees, before you confirm
- 5 Tap to book, and your confirmation appears in the app

TIP

Reserve the car size you want, not the exact model. Rental cars are grouped by size, so you are promised a midsize car, not one particular make. Whatever is on the lot that day is what you get.

SKIP THE LINE

6. What Skip-the-Counter Pickup Means

At larger airports, your free membership lets you avoid the rental counter entirely. Instead of waiting in line to show papers, you go straight to a lot or a numbered space, get in a car, show your license and membership at the exit booth, and drive off. It can turn a half-hour wait into a few minutes.

The app often lets you start this process a day or two before pickup, confirming your details ahead of time. Then at the airport you follow signs to the rental area and look for the aisle or counter-bypass lane that matches your club. A guard at the exit checks your license and you are on your way.

WATCH OUT

Skip-the-counter works best at big airports. At small-town branches you will usually still step up to a counter to show your license and collect the keys. That is normal, so do not worry if a smaller location asks you to come in.

ENTERPRISE

7. How Enterprise's Digital Pass Works

Enterprise Plus members can use a feature that gives you a digital pass on your phone, a bit like an airline boarding pass. You check in through the app ahead of your pickup time, and the pass lets a greeter or exit booth confirm your rental quickly without the full counter routine.

- 1 Open the Enterprise app and sign in to your Enterprise Plus account
- 2 Find your upcoming reservation and start the check-in when the app allows it
- 3 Follow the prompts to confirm your details ahead of pickup
- 4 At the location, show the digital pass as directed
- 5 Show your driver's license at the exit, and drive off

GOOD TO KNOW

Features and names change over time and vary by location. If something looks different in the app than described here, follow what the app tells you on screen.

HERTZ

8. Hertz Gold and the Quick Pickup Aisle

With free Hertz Gold Plus Rewards, many large airports have a Gold aisle where your name appears on a board next to a parking space. You find your space, your car is waiting with the keys inside, and you drive to the exit to show your license. The app lets you confirm your information ahead of time so there is nothing to sign at the car.

- Join Gold Plus Rewards for free in the app before your trip
- Look for your last name on the arrivals board at the Gold area
- Go to the numbered space shown beside your name
- The keys are usually in the car, ready to go
- Stop at the exit booth to show your license

WATCH OUT

If your name is not on the board, or you do not see the car size you want, step into the small Gold booth nearby. A quick word with staff sorts it out faster than the main line.

AVIS

9. Avis Preferred and Express Pickup

Avis Preferred is the company's free express program. At major and midsize airport locations, it lets you bypass the counter and head to your car. The Avis app holds your reservation and your preferences, so your paperwork is handled before you arrive.

- Enroll in Avis Preferred at no cost in the app
- At larger airports, follow signs to the Preferred area
- Find your assigned space or check the board for your name
- Show your license at the exit gate
- At smaller branches, you may still visit the counter, which is fine

GOOD TO KNOW

Whatever company you choose, the pattern is the same: join the free club, check in on the app, go to the car, show your license at the gate. Learn it once and every rental feels familiar.

AT THE CAR

10. Checking the Car Before You Drive

Before you pull out of the lot, take two minutes to get to know the car and look it over. A strange car feels less strange once you have found the basics, and a quick look for existing scratches protects you from being blamed for them later.

- 1 Adjust the seat and mirrors so you are comfortable and can see well
- 2 Find the headlights, wipers, turn signals, and the parking brake
- 3 Check the fuel gauge, or the battery level if it is electric
- 4 Walk around the car and note any existing dents or scratches
- 5 Make sure you know how to start it, as many cars use a push-button start

TIP

Can't find the gas cap release, the wiper stalk, or how to shift into reverse? The glovebox has a manual, and a quick web search of the car's make and model answers almost anything in seconds.

PICKUP PHOTOS

11. Taking Pictures at Pickup

Your phone's camera is your friend here. Before you drive away, take a slow walk around the car and photograph it from every side, plus any scratch or ding you spotted. These pictures are your proof of the car's condition when you took it, and they cost you nothing but a minute.

- Photograph all four sides, the roof edge, and the wheels
- Take close-ups of any existing scratches, dents, or chips
- Snap a picture of the fuel gauge or battery level
- Photograph the inside if it has stains or marks
- Keep these photos until the rental is fully closed out

GOOD TO KNOW

Your photos are stamped with the date and time automatically. That timestamp quietly proves exactly when the pictures were taken, which settles most disputes.

PHONE AND MAPS

12. Getting Your Phone Ready to Navigate

Your phone is a far better navigator than any built-in car system you will meet in a rental, because it knows your accounts, your saved places, and the latest roads. The trick is to let it speak the directions out loud and, better still, show them on the car's own screen. We will set both up.

Two map apps cover nearly everyone. iPhones come with Apple Maps built in, and both iPhones and Android phones can use Google Maps, which you download free. Either one gives you spoken, turn-by-turn directions. Pick the one you find friendlier and stick with it.

WATCH OUT

Set up your route before you shift into drive, while the car is still parked. Never type an address while moving. Enter it at the curb, then just listen and follow.

CARPLAY

13. What Apple CarPlay Is

CarPlay is a feature that puts a simple version of your iPhone's screen onto the car's dashboard display. Instead of squinting at the phone in your hand, your map, your music, and your calls appear as big buttons on the car's screen, controlled by touch or by voice. Most rental cars made in the last several years support it.

The beauty of it for a rental is that nothing of yours stays in the car. CarPlay borrows the car's screen only while your phone is connected. Unplug or disconnect at the end, and the car remembers nothing about you.

GOOD TO KNOW

CarPlay is for iPhones. If you carry an Android phone, the matching feature is called Android Auto, and we cover it on the next pages. They do the same job for different phones.

CONNECTING CARPLAY

14. Connecting Your iPhone to CarPlay

Connecting is usually as simple as plugging in a cable, and many newer cars do it without any cable at all. Once connected, your map jumps to the big screen and the directions come through the car speakers.

- 1 Plug your iPhone into the car's USB port with a charging cable, if it has one
- 2 If the car supports wireless CarPlay, look in its screen menu for CarPlay and pick your phone
- 3 Unlock your iPhone and tap Allow if it asks for permission
- 4 Wait a moment for the CarPlay screen to appear on the dash
- 5 Tap Maps on the car screen and enter your destination

WATCH OUT

Rental cars sometimes remember the last renter's phone in their menu. If the car tries to connect to a stranger's phone, go into the car's Bluetooth or CarPlay settings and remove the old device, then add yours.

ANDROID AUTO

15. What Android Auto Is

Android Auto is the Android phone's version of CarPlay. It takes your Google Maps, your music, and your calls and lays them out as large, easy buttons on the car's dashboard screen. It is built for driving, so everything is bigger and simpler than on the phone itself.

Like CarPlay, it leaves nothing behind in the car once you disconnect. It simply uses the car's screen while your phone is linked. Most rental cars from recent model years support it alongside CarPlay.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may need the Android Auto app on your phone. On many Android phones it is already built in. If the car does not pick up your phone, check the Play Store for Android Auto and install it.

CONNECTING ANDROID AUTO

16. Connecting Your Android Phone

The steps mirror CarPlay. Plug in, grant permission, and your map appears on the dash. Some cars connect without a cable once you set them up in the car's menu.

- 1 Plug your Android phone into the car's USB port with a cable
- 2 If the car offers wireless Android Auto, choose it in the car's screen menu
- 3 Unlock your phone and tap Allow or Agree if it asks
- 4 Wait for the Android Auto layout to appear on the dash
- 5 Tap Google Maps on the car screen and say or type where you are going

WATCH OUT

If nothing happens when you plug in, try a different USB port. Some ports in a car only supply power and do not pass the phone's screen through. The port with a little phone or data symbol is the one you want.

WHICH MAP

17. Apple Maps or Google Maps

Both map apps are excellent and free, and either will get you anywhere. The differences are small for everyday driving. What matters most is that you are comfortable with the one you choose, since a familiar app is easier to trust when you are on a strange road.

- Apple Maps comes already on every iPhone, nothing to download
- Google Maps works on both iPhone and Android, and many people already know it
- Both give spoken turn-by-turn directions and show traffic
- Both can download maps for use without a signal, which we cover next
- Both work with CarPlay and Android Auto on the car screen

TIP

Try not to switch back and forth mid-trip. Pick one map app before you leave home, practice with it on a short local drive, and let it become second nature.

STARTING A TRIP

18. Starting a Route in the Map

Beginning a route is the same idea in either app. You tell it where you want to go, it offers a route or two, and you tap Go. From there you can set the phone down and simply listen, glancing at the screen only when it is safe.

- 1 Open the map app on the car screen or your phone
- 2 Tap the search box and type or speak your destination
- 3 Pick the correct address from the list it offers
- 4 Review the route and the arrival time it shows
- 5 Tap Go or Start, and follow the spoken directions

GOOD TO KNOW

You can speak your destination instead of typing. Tap the microphone and say the address or the place name, such as a hotel or a restaurant, and the app finds it for you.

READING DIRECTIONS

19. Following the Directions Without Stress

The map does the hard thinking for you. A calm voice tells you when a turn is coming and which way to go, and the screen shows the road ahead. In busy interchanges, it highlights exactly which lane to be in, so you are never caught in the wrong one.

- Listen for the voice; it warns you well before each turn
- Watch the lane guidance arrows at big highway splits
- The blue dot is you; the line is the road ahead
- If you miss a turn, relax, the app simply reroutes you
- The arrival time updates as traffic changes

WATCH OUT

Turn the spoken directions up loud enough to hear over the road. In the map's settings you can raise the voice volume so a soft voice never leaves you guessing.

NO SIGNAL

20. Downloading a Map for Dead Zones

In the mountains, the desert, or deep country, your phone can lose its signal, and a map that needs the internet goes blank at the worst moment. The fix is simple and free: download the map of your whole destination area before you leave, while you have good Wi-Fi at home. The downloaded map then guides you even with no signal at all.

- 1 In Google Maps, tap your picture, choose Offline maps, then Select your own map
- 2 In Apple Maps, tap your picture, choose Offline Maps, then Download New Map
- 3 Drag and zoom the box to cover the area you will drive
- 4 Tap Download and wait for it to finish, on Wi-Fi
- 5 The area now navigates even in airplane mode or with no bars

WATCH OUT

Live traffic and construction updates need a signal, so those go quiet offline. The turn-by-turn directions still work fine. Download the map while you still have Wi-Fi, never once you are already in the dead zone.

MOUNTING

21. Mounting the Phone So You Can See It

If your rental does not have CarPlay or Android Auto, you will want the phone held up where you can glance at it safely, not flat on the seat. A small phone mount that clips to a vent or sticks to the dash keeps the map in your line of sight and your hands on the wheel.

- A vent clip mount is cheap, packs flat, and fits almost any car
- Position the phone high, near your normal view of the road
- Angle it so you can read it with a quick glance, not a long look
- Plug the phone into the car's charger so the map does not drain the battery
- Set the route before you drive, then do not touch the phone

TIP

Pack a small phone mount and a charging cable in your suitcase. They weigh almost nothing, and a rental car may not have a spot to prop your phone otherwise.

HANDS-FREE

22. Using Your Voice to Stay Safe

The safest driver is the one whose hands stay on the wheel and eyes stay on the road. Your phone lets you do almost everything by voice, so you never have to look down or tap while moving. On CarPlay or Android Auto, a button on the car screen or a word out loud does the trick.

- Say 'Hey Siri' on an iPhone, or 'Hey Google' on an Android, to begin
- Ask it to navigate somewhere, such as 'Take me to the nearest gas station'
- Have it read or send a text so you never type while driving
- Ask it to call someone by name
- Tell it to find parking, coffee, or a rest stop along the way

WATCH OUT

Even hands-free, keep it short, and keep your attention on the road. If a conversation or a search needs real thought, pull over first. No direction is worth a close call.

PARKING APPS

23. Reserving Parking With SpotHero

In a city you do not know, finding parking can be the most stressful part of the drive. SpotHero is a free app that lets you book a garage or lot ahead of time, often at a lower price than driving up, so you arrive knowing exactly where you will leave the car. It covers a long list of U.S. cities.

- 1 Download the free SpotHero app and create an account
- 2 Enter the city, the address, or the event you are parking for
- 3 Enter the date and time you will arrive and leave
- 4 Compare the garages, prices, and distances it shows
- 5 Book and pay in the app, then follow your parking pass instructions at the garage

GOOD TO KNOW

Your booked spot shows up as a pass in the app. At the garage you either scan a code, show the pass, or enter a license plate, exactly as the pass tells you. No cash, no machine to puzzle over.

PARKING APPS

24. Paying for Parking With ParkMobile

ParkMobile is used in thousands of locations for both reserved spots and pay-as-you-go street and lot parking. Where you see a ParkMobile sign with a zone number, you can pay from your phone instead of feeding a meter, and even extend your time from your table at lunch without walking back to the car.

- 1 Download the free ParkMobile app and set up your account and payment
- 2 Look for a ParkMobile sign showing a zone number where you park
- 3 Open the app and enter that zone number
- 4 Enter how long you want to stay and confirm
- 5 Extend the time from the app if you need longer, no walk back required

TIP

Save your rental car's license plate number in your phone's notes as soon as you pick it up. Parking apps ask for the plate, and it is maddening to go read it off the car in the rain.

STREET METERS

25. When You Still Meet a Meter

Many cities still have physical meters and pay stations, and most now also accept a tap of your phone or a card, not just coins. Look at the meter for a tap symbol or an app name printed on it. A growing number show a zone number for an app like ParkMobile right on the pole.

- Look for a contactless tap symbol to pay with Apple Pay or Google Wallet
- Check the pole for an app name and zone number you can use instead
- Keep a few coins as a backup for the occasional coin-only meter
- Snap a photo of the meter or your receipt in case you need proof
- Note the time your parking expires so you can move or extend it

GOOD TO KNOW

Watch the posted signs near the meter, not just the meter itself. Street signs tell you about street cleaning, rush-hour no-parking, and permit-only times that a meter does not mention.

TOLLS

26. The Toll Roads Nobody Warns You About

Many highways, bridges, and express lanes no longer have a booth where you hand over cash. Instead, a camera reads your license plate and bills the owner, which for a rental is the rental company. If you do not plan ahead, you can rack up tolls without knowing it and get surprised by charges and fees on your rental bill weeks later.

The honest truth is that tolls are the most common unpleasant surprise on a rental. You have a few ways to handle them, and the right one depends on how much toll driving you expect. Decide before you drive, not after the fact.

WATCH OUT

Driving through a cashless toll in a rental without a plan almost always costs more than the toll itself, because the company adds its own fees. It is worth two minutes to choose how you will pay.

TOLL PROGRAMS

27. The Rental Company's Toll Program

Each big rental company offers its own toll program, with names like PlatePass, e-Toll, and TollPass. You opt in, a transponder in the car handles the tolls automatically, and the company bills you for the tolls plus a convenience fee. The fee is usually charged per day you use a toll, sometimes with a cap per rental.

- The programs charge the tolls plus a daily convenience fee
- Fees and caps vary a lot by company and region, so confirm the current terms
- Some programs charge the fee only on days you actually hit a toll
- This is the easy, no-thinking option if you will drive many toll roads
- For a trip with no tolls at all, you pay nothing extra

TIP

Ask at pickup exactly how the toll program is billed and whether the daily fee applies even on days you take no toll road. The answer decides whether it is worth it for your trip. Prices change often, so confirm the current terms.

YOUR OWN PASS

28. Bringing Your Own Transponder

If you own a toll transponder from home, such as an E-ZPass or SunPass, many rental companies let you bring it and avoid their program and fees entirely. You mount your own transponder on the windshield, and the tolls bill to your own account at the plain toll rate, with no rental markup.

This only helps if your home transponder is accepted in the area you are visiting, since toll systems differ around the country. Check your transponder's coverage before you count on it. In its home region, bringing your own pass is often the cheapest way to handle tolls.

WATCH OUT

Tell the rental company you are using your own transponder, or you may still get billed through their program and have to sort out a double charge. When in doubt, ask at the counter.

FUEL CHOICES

29. The Gas Options at Pickup

For a gasoline car, the counter will offer you a few fuel choices, and picking the right one saves money. The simplest and usually cheapest plan is to take the car full and bring it back full, filling up yourself just before you return it.

- Return it full: you fill the tank yourself before dropping it off, usually cheapest
- Prepaid fuel: you pay for a full tank up front and return it however empty, rarely a bargain
- Let them refill: you return it low and they charge a high per-gallon rate plus a fee
- Keep your final gas receipt as proof you filled it
- Fill up within a few miles of the return location so the tank reads full

TIP

Fill the tank at a station close to the airport or return lot, then keep the receipt. That receipt and your fuel-gauge photo together head off any 'you returned it low' charge.

EV RENTALS

30. Renting an Electric Car — The Basics

Electric rental cars are more common now, and they drive beautifully: quiet, smooth, and quick. But they are not like a gas car at fill-up time, so a little know-how saves a lot of worry. The main differences are that you plug in rather than pump, charging takes longer than a gas fill, and you plan your day around where the chargers are.

- An electric car has no gas tank; you charge the battery instead
- A full charge gives a range shown in miles on the dashboard
- Charging from near-empty takes longer than filling a gas tank
- Public chargers are found with apps and maps, which we cover next
- At the counter, ask how to charge it and how they want it returned

TIP

At pickup, ask three plain questions: how do I start a charge, does the car come with any charging card or account, and how charged do you want it back? The answers make the whole rental simple.

CHARGING AN EV

31. Charging the Car on the Road

Public charging almost always runs through an app tied to the charging network, not a simple tap at the pump. You find a charger on a map, plug in, and start the session from the network's app on your phone, which also takes the payment. The car's own screen or map can point you to nearby chargers along your route.

- 1 Use the car's map or a charging app to find a charger that fits the car
- 2 Park, and plug the connector into the car's charging port
- 3 Open the charging network's app and start the session, or tap a card if the station takes one
- 4 Wait while it charges; a fast charger adds a lot of range in half an hour or so
- 5 Unplug when done and move the car promptly to avoid an idle fee

WATCH OUT

Leaving the car plugged in after it is charged can bring an idle fee, a charge for hogging the spot. When the app says it is done, unplug and move along so you are not billed for sitting there.

RETURNING

32. Returning a Gas Car Smoothly

Returning the car is the quickest part if you prepare. You fill up nearby, drive to the return area, let an attendant check you in, and you are done, often without a word of paperwork. The app may even email your receipt before you reach your gate.

- 1 Fill the gas tank at a station near the return lot and keep the receipt
- 2 Follow the signs for Car Return at the airport or location
- 3 Pull into a return lane and leave the keys as directed
- 4 Let the attendant scan the car and confirm the fuel and mileage
- 5 Collect your printed or emailed receipt before you walk away

TIP

Give yourself extra time at the airport for the return. Finding the gas station, the return lot, and the terminal shuttle always takes longer in an unfamiliar place than you expect.

RETURNING AN EV

33. Returning an Electric Car

Returning an electric rental works the same way, except you mind the battery instead of the gas tank. Companies differ on how charged they want the car back, and some offer to charge it for you for a flat fee. Know the rule before you set out on your last day.

- Ask at pickup what charge level they expect on return
- Some companies want it returned near the level you got it
- Some charge a flat fee to top it off for you, which can be worth it
- Returning it very low may bring an extra fee on top
- Photograph the battery level at return, just as you would a gas gauge

GOOD TO KNOW

Charging policies and fees change and vary by company, so confirm the current terms at the counter. A flat 'we'll charge it' fee can beat hunting for a charger on a busy travel day.

RETURN PHOTOS

34. Photos and the Receipt at Drop-Off

Just as you did at pickup, take a slow walk around the car with your phone at return, photographing every side and the fuel or battery reading. These pictures prove the car's condition when you gave it back, which protects you from a damage claim that arrives weeks later for a dent you did not cause.

- Photograph all four sides and the roof edge at return
- Snap the fuel gauge or battery level and the mileage
- If no attendant greets you, photograph the car in the return space
- Keep the photos and the final receipt until the charge settles on your card
- Save the emailed receipt in case you need it later

WATCH OUT

Do not throw away the final receipt or your photos the moment you land home. Hold them until the final charge appears correctly on your card, in case a surprise fee shows up and you need to question it.

FINDING THE CAR

35. Finding Your Car in a Big Lot

In a huge parking garage or a mall lot, a rental car you have driven for only a day is easy to lose. Your phone can remember where you parked, so you walk straight back to it instead of wandering row to row pressing the key fob.

- 1 When you park, open your map app and drop a pin at your spot
- 2 Or let the phone note your parked location automatically, which both Apple and Google can do
- 3 Snap a photo of the level, row, or section sign
- 4 When you return, open the map and follow it back to the pin
- 5 Press the key fob's lock button to hear the car chirp nearby

TIP

A quick photo of the garage level and row number is the oldest trick and still the best. 'Level 3, Blue, near elevator' saves you ten minutes of walking every single time.

CITY DRIVING

36. Calm Habits for an Unfamiliar City

Driving somewhere new is mostly about staying calm and giving yourself room. The map handles the where; you handle the how. A few gentle habits make a strange city feel manageable, even if you have not driven in heavy traffic for a while.

- Let the map speak; keep your eyes on the road, not the screen
- If you are unsure of a turn, it is fine to go around the block
- Give yourself extra following distance in unfamiliar traffic
- Avoid rush hour your first day if you can
- If you miss an exit, stay calm; the map will simply reroute you

GOOD TO KNOW

Missing a turn is not a problem. The map recalculates in a second and finds you a new way. Nothing about a wrong turn is worth a stressful, sudden move across lanes.

ABROAD

37. Driving Abroad, in General Terms

If your trip takes you overseas, driving a rental is very doable, but it pays to prepare. The same map apps work worldwide, and you can download the destination map ahead just as you would at home. The bigger adjustments are the rules of the road, which can differ from what you know, and in some countries driving on the left.

- Download the destination map before you fly, while on home Wi-Fi
- Learn whether the country drives on the left or the right
- Road signs use symbols and sometimes another language; learn the common ones
- Speed limits and distances may be in kilometers, not miles
- Fuel and charging work differently; ask the rental desk how it is done locally

TIP

Drive very gently your first hour abroad, especially where traffic keeps to the left. Pick quiet roads to start, and let the map and your passenger help you with lanes and turns until it feels natural.

ABROAD

38. International Permits and Paperwork

Many countries ask visiting drivers to carry an International Driving Permit along with their regular license. The permit is a simple booklet that translates your license into several languages, and it does not replace your home license; you carry both. Requirements differ by country, so check what your destination expects well before you go.

- An International Driving Permit translates your license for foreign officials
- You carry it together with your normal driver's license, not instead of it
- Rules vary by country, so confirm what your destination requires
- Arrange the permit before you leave home; you cannot get it once abroad
- Check that your travel insurance or credit card covers driving overseas

WATCH OUT

Sort the permit out at home, early. It is a quick errand before your trip but impossible to fix once you have landed and the rental desk asks for it.

STAYING SAFE

39. Phone Down, Eyes Up

The whole point of setting the phone up ahead of time is so you never touch it while moving. Once the route is running, the phone is just a voice and a glanceable map. Everything else waits until you are parked.

- Enter your destination before you shift into drive, never while rolling
- Let the spoken directions guide you; do not read the screen for long
- Pull over safely if you need to study the map or answer a message
- Use voice commands for calls and texts
- If you feel rushed or lost, it is always fine to stop and gather yourself

TIP

Turn on Driving Focus on an iPhone, or the Android driving mode, and your phone holds back notifications and reads messages aloud so the screen stays quiet while you drive.

IF LOST

40. If You Get Lost or the Signal Dies

Even with the best tools, there are moments when the signal drops or the map confuses you. The answer is always the same: do not panic, and do not make a sudden move. Find a safe place to stop, and sort it out there with the car still.

- 1 Pull over somewhere safe, or stop in a parking lot
- 2 Check whether your downloaded offline map still shows your area
- 3 Re-enter your destination and let the route start again
- 4 If you have no signal and no offline map, look for a gas station to ask
- 5 Call your hotel or host; they give directions for their area all the time

GOOD TO KNOW

This is exactly why you download the area map before you leave. An offline map keeps guiding you turn by turn even when the bars disappear entirely.

WHAT TO PACK

41. A Few Things Worth Packing

A handful of small items make renting and driving far smoother, and they all tuck into a corner of your bag. None are expensive, and each one heads off a common headache on the road.

- A phone mount, so the map sits in your line of sight
- A charging cable that fits your phone and the car's USB port
- A car charger adapter, in case the car has only old-style ports
- Your home toll transponder, if it works where you are going
- Your driver's license and, for abroad, an International Driving Permit

TIP

Keep the phone mount and cable in your carry-on, not the checked bag. If a checked bag is delayed, you still have what you need to drive away safely from the airport.

YOUR CHECKLIST

42. Your Pre-Trip Rental Checklist

Run through this before you leave home and the whole rental falls into place.

- Rental app downloaded and free loyalty club joined
- Reservation confirmed in the app
- Map app chosen and the destination area downloaded for offline use
- Phone mount and charging cable packed
- A plan for tolls: company program or your own transponder
- Parking app installed if you will drive into a city
- Driver's license, and a permit if driving abroad

GOOD TO KNOW

Do all of this at home, days ahead, on your own Wi-Fi. The airport is no place to be downloading apps and maps with a line forming behind you.

COMMON WORRIES

43. The Questions I Hear Most

A few worries come up again and again, and the answers are reassuring.

- Will the map use a lot of data? A little, but a downloaded offline map uses almost none
- Do I need a brand-new car for CarPlay? No, most cars of recent years have it
- What if I miss a turn? The map reroutes you calmly in a second
- Will tolls surprise me? Only if you do not plan; pick a toll method before you drive
- Can I really skip the counter? At big airports, yes, with the free loyalty club

GOOD TO KNOW

None of this requires you to be a computer person. If you can send a text and tap an app, you can rent, navigate, park, and return a car with confidence.

WHEN TO CALL

44. When It Is Worth Calling Me

Most of this you can set up yourself in a quiet evening at home. But if the apps will not download, if you are unsure how to connect your phone to a car screen, or if you would simply feel better having someone sit with you and walk through it before a big trip, that is exactly what I am here for. I am Bill, I have more than thirty years of professional experience, and I help neighbors across Portage County.

For ninety-nine dollars I will come to your home for a first visit and get your phone trip-ready: the rental app, your map app, offline maps downloaded, your phone mount sorted, and a practice run so it all feels familiar. I follow up within thirty days to make sure it stuck. If a question comes up while you are away, remote screen-share help is forty-nine dollars, and my helper Sophie can point you the right way any time.

TIP

Call me at (330) 200-8042, or email Bill@BillsHomeTech.com. Set it up before the trip, not during it, and you will drive away in a strange city with one less thing on your mind.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy for your trip. It is the short answer to the questions travelers ask most about renting and driving a car somewhere new.

- Download the rental app and join its free loyalty club before you go
- Check in on the app to skip the counter at big airports
- Use Google Maps or Apple Maps, shown on the car screen with CarPlay or Android Auto
- Download the destination map for driving in dead zones
- Book parking ahead with SpotHero, or pay a meter with ParkMobile
- Pick a toll plan before you drive: company program or your own transponder
- For an electric car, ask at pickup how to charge it and how to return it
- Take photos of the car at pickup and at return, and keep every receipt
- Enter your route before you drive, then listen and keep your eyes on the road
- Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

How Will You Pay the Tolls?

Decide before you drive, not after the bill arrives.

Company Program

PlatePass, e-Toll,
TollPass
Tolls plus a daily fee
Easy if many tolls

Your Own Pass

Bring E-ZPass or SunPass
Plain toll, no markup
If accepted in area

Avoid Tolls

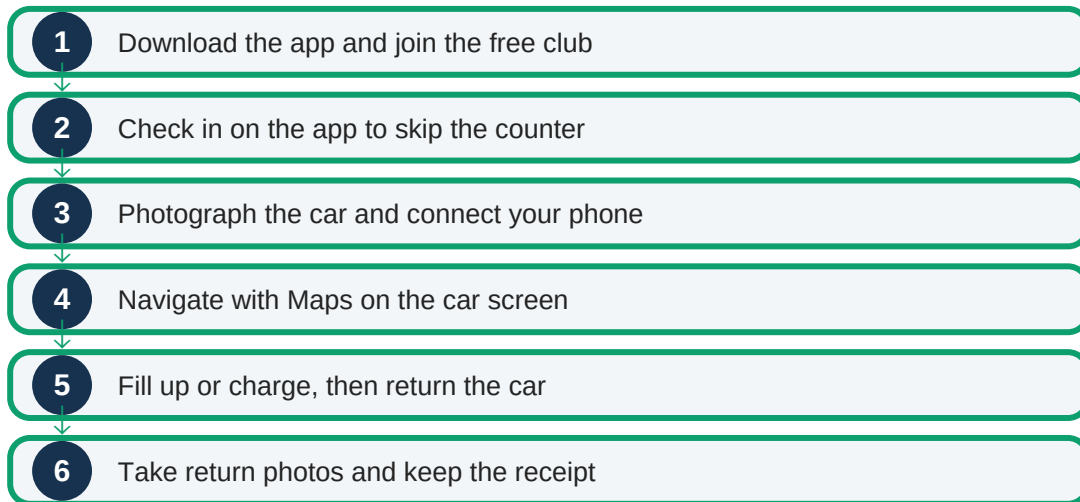
Set map to avoid tolls
No fees at all
May take longer

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

From Reservation to Return

Set it up at home, drive with your phone, return with photos.



BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.