



Car Rental Twi Travel Tips

<http://TourTheTwilightSaga.com>

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Tour the Twilight Saga **Car Rental TwiTips**

Before beginning your search for a rental car, learn how to avoid unnecessary car rental charges. Below are some articles we found particularly insightful.

Seven Worst Rental-Car Rip-Offs (and How to Beat Them)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/smartertravel/seven-worst-rental-car-ri_b_4214104.html

How to Avoid Unnecessary Rental Car Fees

<http://www.kiplinger.com/article/cars/T009-C000-S002-how-to-avoid-unnecessary-rental-car-fees.html>

How to Rent a Car Without Having An Aneurysm

<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2013/07/02/how-to-rent-a-car-without-having-an-aneurysm/>

Please Note: Many of the reader comments at the end of this article contain helpful tips.

Next, Make a List of What You Need in a Rental Car

If traveling with small children, for example, you'll need to rent a child safety seat for each.

If a member of your party is disabled, you may need a wheelchair-accessible automobile.

How large of a car do you need to rent?

Below you'll find information important to consider before beginning your search for a rental car. Our tips for getting the best rental car deal will follow.



Dollar-Wise, Smaller is Smarter

Smaller Cars Get Better Gas Mileage—It's as Simple as That

Basically, every buck you burn in your rental car's gas tank is a dollar less to spend on Twilicious accommodations, activities, and souvenirs. Canadian gas will cost approximately one US dollar more per gallon in British Columbia than in the US state of Washington.

Additionally, foreign Twilighters—especially those from left-side driving countries—may find it far easier to drive and *park* a small sedan while touring Canada, no matter what size vehicle you're used to operating at home.

Up to four Twilighters, with a modest amount of luggage, can comfortably fit in a small sedan. A luxury car, minivan, or sport utility vehicle (SUV) is needed only if your party numbers more than four, or your companions pack a lot of luggage.

Please Note: There is absolutely no need to rent a 4-wheel-drive vehicle when Twilighting in Canada. All Vancouver, BC Twilight Saga Sites are accessible via paved roads.



Rental Car Insurance—Gotta Have It!

TTTS authors wholeheartedly agree with the **Insurance Information Institute:**

“Properly insuring a rental car can be confusing, frustrating and downright daunting.

Unfortunately, many consumers do not even think about car rental insurance until they get to the counter, which can result in costly mistakes—either wasting money by purchasing unnecessary coverage or having dangerous gaps in coverage.”

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Car rental agents around the world are notorious for telling tales designed to frighten clients into buying *their* insurance packages. They won't mention that:

- Your own vehicle's auto insurance may already include coverage for a car rented in the US or Canada.
- One of your credit cards (American Express, MasterCard, Visa, or the like) may provide rental car insurance.
- Your personal health insurance policy may already cover medical and ambulance expenses for injuries caused in a rental car crash.
- If your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy includes off-premises theft coverage, you may already be covered for theft of belongings from a rental car—minus the deductible (aka the excess).

The Insurance Information Institute is a US organization dedicated to improving public understanding of insurance. Their generic rental car insurance tips article is helpful.

<http://www.iii.org/articles/do-i-need-separate-rental-car-insurance.html>

Drivers in the US and Canada are required to have **liability insurance**. At minimum, you need a **Loss Damage Waiver (LDW)**—aka Collision and Damage Waiver—insurance policy.

To drive in Canada, however, you may need more coverage than what you commonly carry. Read the information at the link below, and share it with your insurance agent when you call to determine whether you are already covered for driving a rental car in Canada.

<http://www.dmv.org/insurance/canadian-car-insurance.php>

Please Note: Obtaining a **Canadian Insurance Card** is no longer required if you are a US citizen traveling to Canada on holiday—whether driving your own car or a rental car. You must, however, bring a valid US insurance ID card with you, to prove that you have adequate coverage.

By taking a little time to research your personal rental car insurance needs before booking a car, Twilighters who prefer to have the most comprehensive amount of coverage can save up to \$300 USD (£180) on insurance for a week-long Canadian car rental.

It also pays to investigate the insurance offered by the rental car companies. If spending \$150 means you can get in a crash, total a rental car and not have to pay another dime or fill out an insurance form, agreeing to the rental car company's insurance may be the way to go for you.



GPS/SatNav Device—Bring One or Rent One

Whether visiting Vancouver from another Canadian province, from the US or another country, having a Global Positioning System (**GPS**), space-based satellite navigation (**SatNav**), personal navigation device (**PND**) will *significantly* improve your Vancouver Twication driving experience.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Positioning_System

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Some day, all rental cars will be equipped with an **in-dash** GPS/SatNav device—just as they now are all equipped with a radio. Until then, however, we believe that it is best to bring your own, stand-alone GPS/SatNav device with you, or rent one from the car rental agency.

Beware of Smart Phone GPS/SatNav Apps

Having a stand-alone GPS/SatNav device in your rental car is far better than relying on a smart phone app, for several reasons.

- Phone GPS/SatNav chips aren't as reliable as those in stand-alone devices, thus they periodically lose track of their current position.
The only time stand-alone devices lose satellite connection is when driving within the dense, downtown high-rise canyons of major cities such as Vancouver, British Columbia, or Seattle, Washington. Happily, interrupted stand-alone GPS/SatNav satellite connection normally is rapidly reestablished within a block or two of where you lost it.
- If you use a GPS/SatNav phone app but don't buy a windshield or dashboard mount for your phone, it probably will end up propped on a seat or perched in a cup holder. From there, the phone's app may have trouble picking up a GPS signal and can frequently lose track of your current position. This can cause lengthy rerouting episodes.
- Most GPS/SatNav phone apps are smart enough to automatically switch to an incoming call, and won't resume navigation until the call is finished. Unfortunately, while your **passenger** is on the phone, you'll not be able to hear any driving directions and may miss your turn.
- Stand-alone GPS/SatNav devices commonly have larger screens, making it easier to see the driving map. They also have larger and easier to operate buttons.
- While in operation, GPS/SatNav phone apps are frequently accessing the Internet and downloading an extraordinary amount of data. If your phone plan includes *unlimited* data usage, this isn't a problem. If your data usage is limited, however, be prepared to receive a really big phone bill after returning home from your holiday.
- US Twilighters need to be reminded that you are **visiting a foreign country** after crossing the Canadian border.

Because both the US and Canada are members of the **North American Numbering Plan**, your US cell phone will probably work anywhere within Canada, but **international roaming fees may apply**.

Please be sure to read our **Telephones and Internet Access When Twilighting** TwiTips PDF. <http://www.TourTheTwilightSaga.com/B2Tips/B2PhoneInternet.pdf>

The Best Reason for Having a Stand-Alone GPS/SatNav Device:

Many GPS/SatNav phone apps—such as Google Maps Navigation, VZ Navigator, and AT&T Navigator—rely on a **cellular connection** to download route maps during navigation. Good luck getting directions from a phone app when driving in places with poor cellular coverage—such as Jacob Black's House in Coquitlam (Site #25), the Denali Coven House in Pemberton (Site #35), or the *New Moon* and *Breaking Dawn* Wolf Pack film site beaches on Vancouver Island (Site #37).

Before you decide to rely on a phone GPS/SatNav app, please read the articles below.

<http://gps.toptenreviews.com/navigation/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/travel-advice/9961249/Satnav-or-an-app-for-my-next-driving-holiday.html>
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2363154,00.asp>
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2405680,00.asp>

From Least-to-Most Expensive, Here are Your Stand-Alone GPS/SatNav Device Options:

- Use the portable unit you already own. If you live in Canada or the US, it won't cost you a cent. Your device is already loaded with a US/Canada maps package.

Other foreign national Twilighters who own a portable GPS/SatNav device will need to purchase a US/Canada maps package before leaving on holiday. Although UK Twilighters can expect to pay approximately £45 to update their portable GPS/SatNav unit with US/Canadian maps, this expense is often far less than the cost of renting a car rental agency's device.

- Car rental companies commonly charge \$14 USD (£9) **per day** to rent a GPS/SatNav device. If you'll be renting the car for more than 7 days, consider buying a used or refurbished US/Canadian GPS/SatNav unit from a trusted source such as Amazon.com.
- **Renting a unit from an independent GPS/SatNav rental company** may also be cheaper than paying for the car rental agency's device. While this option has the additional benefit of giving you a day or two to become accustomed to the device's operation, be sure to investigate the cost of renting the device for **the entire duration of your holiday**—perhaps several days longer than you'll have the car.

Why? Because you need to receive the unit at least one day before leaving on your trip, then send it back after returning home. Happily, most GPS/SatNav device rental companies don't charge unit rental fees for the shipping days surrounding your holiday.

Below are some GPS/SatNav device rental company references for Twilighters who live in the UK and US. Other foreign nationals will need to research GPS/SatNav rental companies in your home country.

UK SatNav Rental Companies:

<http://www.cheapsatnavhire.co.uk/>
<http://www.hiregps.co.uk/>
<http://www.zintech.co.uk/>

US GPS Rental Companies:

<https://www.lowergear.com/product.php/cat/27>
<http://www.gpsrentals.biz/>

- Check with the car rental aggregator (see below) that helps you find the best rental car deal. They may offer GPS/SatNav device discounts that the rental car company will have to honor.
- **If none of the above options work for you, rent a GPS/SatNav unit from the car rental company.** It really is helpful to have a stand-alone GPS/SatNav device in the car.



The Right-Side Driving Dilemma

Whether you rent a car in the US or Canada, Twilighters who live in left-side driving countries (e.g., Australia, Japan, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the UK) need to be prepared to experience episodes of anxiety and confusion when having to drive on the right side of the road in the US or Canada.

No car rental option will alleviate right-side-driving-related anxiety and confusion.

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Happily, some psychological techniques—and a handy *device*—are available to minimize right-side-driving-related anxiety and confusion. To learn about them, go to:
<http://www.TourTheTwilightSaga.com/TipsB2/B2RightSideDriving.pdf>



Automatic Transmission Anxieties

The vast majority of US and Canadian rental cars are equipped with an **automatic transmission**. Twilighters accustomed to operating a **manual (standard) transmission** vehicle are sure to experience a degree of driving anxiety related to unusual vehicle operation, in addition to suffering frequent episodes of **Frantic Left Foot Syndrome**.

Ok. Frantic Left Foot Syndrome (**FLFS**) doesn't really exist. But, it's the perfect title for symptoms your left foot will suffer when having to drive an automatic transmission vehicle for the first time. Our **Automatic Transmission Anxieties** TwiTips PDF explains FLFS and offers techniques for alleviating it.

<http://www.TourTheTwilightSaga.com/TipsB2/B2AutoTransTips.pdf>

Bottom Line: Twilighters used to operating manual transmission vehicles—especially those who live in left-side driving countries—will *not* avoid automatic transmission anxieties by trying to rent a manual transmission vehicle for Twilighting in Canada or the US. In fact, doing so can actually worsen the anxiety.



How to Find the Best Car Rental Deals

Use an Online Car Rental Aggregator

An aggregator is a website that collects and compares a specific type of information from multiple Internet sources. Popular car rental aggregators include:

- Reid Bramblett's Momondo <http://reidsguides.momondo.com/>
- Rental Cars <http://www.rentalcars.com>
aka, Carhire 3000 <http://www.carhire3000.com/>
(This is the aggregator commonly used by TTTS authors Chas and Tara)
- Auto Slash <http://www.autoslash.com/>
- Do Hop <http://www.dohop.com/cars/>
- Kayak <http://www.kayak.com/>
- Mobissimo http://www.mobissimo.com/search_cars.php

Call the Car Rental Aggregator Company before You Click

After finding the best possible deal on a car rental aggregator's website, call the aggregator's company. Speaking with a **live agent** will ensure that you obtain all the options and extras promised online, at the stipulated price. You may even be able to haggle for additional discounts or extras.

If the car rental aggregator's live agent is unable to offer you the same (or better) deal, go back to the aggregator's website to rent your car—the car rental company you book with will be bound by

their agreement with the online aggregator to honor the deal. Print and pack a record of the deal that you paid for, to ensure that there will be no grousing when you pick up your car.

Bring the Credit Card You Used to Book the Car with You

The card you used to book the car must be with you when you pick it up.

In fact, if you used more than one credit card to book various aspects of your travels (such as airfare or hotels), be sure to **bring every credit card you used with you**.

Before You Leave, Call Your Credit Card Company and Ask If You Have a Daily Credit Limit

Most people rarely rack up several-hundred-dollar purchases with their credit card on a single day. Thus, you may be unaware that you *have* a daily credit limit.

If your card has a daily limit, ensure that your daily limit will not be exceeded when the **full rental car cost**—in addition to a **collision security deposit**—is put on it.

If this expenditure will exceed your normal daily limit, most credit card companies will agree to increase your daily credit limit during the time you are traveling.



Stay Strong at the Rental Car Desk

When you arrive at the rental car desk, months after renting a small-sized economy car for your Twication, do not accept anything other than what you have booked.

Here's the Skinny: When the available number of high-demand economy sedans is dwindling, and unbooked large vehicles are gathering dust on the lot, rental car agents may offer you a minivan or SUV **at the same price as the small car you booked**. They'll make it sound like a serendipitous opportunity for you to enjoy the luxury of extra room at no extra charge.

Remember that large cars are gas guzzlers. Even if it costs you the same rental fee as a small-sized economy car, driving a minivan or SUV will suck a significant amount of money away from other—far more Twilicious—expenses. Stay strong, and demand the small-sized economy car that you booked. In most cases, they'll come up with an economy car for you.

In the unusual event that the rental car company truly has *no* economy cars available to honor their contract with you, tell the agent that you'll only accept a larger car substitution if they compensate you for the additional gas expense you'll incur, by **refunding you \$5 per day** from your booked (often pre-paid), economy car rental fee.

If the agent refuses to give you a \$5-per-day discount, tell her/him that you wish to visit the other rental car company desks before making a final decision. At that time, the agent likely will acquiesce to the discount you requested.

If the agent doesn't acquiesce, trot over to the other rental car company desks before relinquishing your reservation. If you find another rental car company that has a small-sized economy car available, at or below the price you originally booked, take it!

Swing by the original company's desk to cancel your booking—and receive a full refund—as you head out to collect a car from the new company.

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If none of the other companies have a small-sized economy car available, go back to the original company you booked with and accept their large car at the economy car price.



Do Not Leave the Car Rental Lot before Performing an Inspection

When renting a car, it is important that you take time to fully inspect the vehicle and learn how to operate its features, **before leaving the lot**. After all, you'll not want to have to pay the insurance deductible for repair of dings that already exist. Nor do you want to be caught in a Vancouver, BC rainstorm without knowing where the windshield wiper control is—and ensuring that the wipers work.

Rental car inspection steps are so important, we created an inspection checklist to print and pack, or download to your smart phone.

<http://www.TourTheTwilightSaga.com/TipsB2/B2RentalCarCheckList.pdf>