

Hidden hotel fees

What UK travellers need to know before booking European hotels



Hotel fees can add up fast. This guide covers tourist fees, service charges, credit card holds, and how to avoid them.

Good to know:

📍 Tourist fees can tack on £15–£60/night and are common across major cities like Amsterdam, Paris and Rome.

📍 Destination or amenity fees are on the rise in London, Berlin and Barcelona.

💳 Hotels may charge £80–£160/night on your credit card for incidental purchases.

💡 Tip: Always read the fine print, check multiple booking sites and call ahead to confirm fees.

Common hidden hotel fees in the UK and Europe

When you look at hotel prices in the UK and Europe, the nightly rate advertised online is often not the whole story. In addition to taxes, many hotels charge mandatory fees on top of the listed price. These are added on for anything from Wi-Fi service to pool entry. A room that seems to cost £120 a night can easily end up being £160 or more when you add on tourist fees, parking, and service charges.

Unlike upgrades that you choose, these fees may be assessed even if you don't use any of the amenities.

Tourist fees

Tourist fees are daily mandatory charges for bundled amenities.. They're usually £15–£40 and are added to your bill each day in exchange for access to the Wi-Fi, pool, fitness centre or "complimentary" coffee. You'll usually see them in the bigger cities like Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, and Barcelona. Hotels claim they're "bundling" your amenities into one fee, but travellers see it as a lack of price transparency.

Destination fees

What is a destination fee hotel? Think big, bustling cities, and think extra charges.

A destination fee is just another way a hotel describes its mandatory "urban fees" that cover basic amenities. Although newer to the scene, they're normally charged in big cities like London, Berlin, and Barcelona, and range from £8 to £32 per night. A destination fee hotel is one that automatically adds a nightly urban fee to your bill, which may include local calls, city walking tours, or "free" bottled water.

Amenity fees

Amenity fees are a bit like tourist or destination fees, but are tied to certain property amenities. Spa access, fitness classes and pool towels are all examples of amenity fees. Ask at the front desk if there are any you can expect on your bill, and whether you can opt out.

Hotel service charges

A hotel service fee is not a tip. It's a mandatory percentage charge of 5–20% that some boutique or luxury hotels apply to your bill for "service."

Extra person charges

The fee per night for having more than two guests in a room can range from £8 to £24 per person. Check occupancy guidelines before pre-booking a room to see if you can avoid it.

Early check-in and late check-out fees

Depending on the hotel, this could be a charge of £20–£60 for arriving before official check-in or leaving after check-out.

Parking and valet fees

Fees are charged for the use of on-site parking or valet parking and typically cost £12–£56/night in large cities. Some hotels may also charge for oversized vehicles.

Pet fees

If you want to bring your dog or cat to stay with you, you'll have to pay for them, too. There may be a flat cleaning fee of £40–£120 per stay and/or a per-night pet fee of £16–£60.

Minibar (mini-fridge) and in-room charges

Charging a customer just for touching an item in the minibar (mini-fridge) is possible with the use of sensors. There could also be in-room charges for coffee pods, water bottles, or safes.

Hotel credit card pre-authorisations and deposits

Hotels often place a temporary hold (or pre-authorisation) on your credit card for incidental damages or charges. The typical amount held is £80 to £160 per night, with the money being released three to seven business days after checkout.

Note: This is not a fee, but your money isn't available to use until the hold is released.





Amsterdam	Tourist fees are practically impossible in the “city of bikes.” They usually run £28 to £40 per night and even budget hotels charge them.
London	Destination fees are common in mid-range and upscale hotels, typically £16 to £32/night.
Paris & Rome	High tourist fees rule here, justified by pools, gyms, and city services that you may never use.
Barcelona	Hotels across the city are particularly fond of both tourist and parking fees, dramatically inflating nightly rates.

FAQs: Answering the most common traveller questions

Hidden hotel fees and unexpected charges can be confusing. Here are simple answers to the most common questions from travellers about tourist fees, credit card holds and other hotel charges.

💡 Can you refuse to pay tourist fees?	▼
💡 Do hotels have to disclose tourist fees?	▼
💡 What is the average tourist fee?	▼
💡 What are hotel taxes and fees?	▼
💡 How can you avoid the extra person charge at hotels?	▼
💡 What is a hotel penalty fee?	▼
💡 Why do hotels charge a surcharge?	▼
💡 Do hotels charge when you get there?	▼
💡 What is an incidental purchase/damage at a hotel? Do they get refunded?	▼
💡 Is a service charge the same as a tip?	▼
💡 Do hotels charge you for not checking out?	▼
💡 What is a typical hotel management fee?	▼

Smart tips to avoid or reduce hidden fees

Book through sites that display total prices

Some travel sites now offer a “full stay cost” option that includes tourist fees in the total price.

Call the hotel directly

Ask for a full list of mandatory fees up front before booking.

Take advantage of hotel loyalty programmes

Tourist or parking fees can sometimes be waived for elite members of the hotel's loyalty programme.

Use travel credit cards

Many travel credit cards offer credits that can be applied to tourist fees or incidentals.

Consider staying elsewhere

Holiday lets or self-catering rentals booked on Airbnb or similar platforms often charge cleaning fees, but no tourist fee or destination fee.

Negotiate at the front desk

When checking in, ask if fees can be waived if you do not use certain services or facilities.

Understand penalty fee policies

Know the deadline to cancel for free and avoid penalty fees.

The bottom line

Tucked away in the fine print of many hotel bills in the UK and Europe are charges that can add up quickly. Tourist fees, destination fees, parking charges and more can inflate the cost of your stay if you're not careful. Luckily, you can do your homework, ask the right questions and use these booking tips to avoid hidden hotel fees.

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