

August 12, 2013

What's the best car-sharing service?

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Car-sharing services are revving up for big business. These services, which allow consumers to rent vehicles on an hourly basis for low rates and are generally coupled with an annual fee, attracted more than 80,000 members in the United States last year—a 44 percent increase since 2011, according to statistics from the Transportation Sustainability Research Center.

In contrast to traditional rental car services, you can rent a car for less than a day, have more flexibility in choosing a vehicle, and can often pick up and return your cars in more convenient locations than traditional car rental offices allow.

Using a car-sharing service has major benefits over car ownership for people who don't need to drive every day, says Anita Daley, spokeswoman for City CarShare. "The bottom line for car ownership is money and hassle," she says. "It costs at least \$600 a month to own and operate a car in US. With car sharing, you save hundreds of dollars every single month."

Whether you want to trade up from the metro bus or get rid of your own car, you might be tempted to try out one of the many car-sharing services available. Here's how some of the most popular options compare.

What's the best car-sharing service?

Zipcar

How it works: Zipcar allows you to pick up a rental vehicle from any Zipcar parking lot or space across the United States, using an electronic "Zipcard" to unlock your car.



Cost: You can pay either by the hour or by the day to rent a car, and pay for your rental online so there's no need to deal with a customer service representative. There is a one-time \$25 registration fee and a \$50 annual membership fee to join Zipcar; car prices vary based on model, but generally cost between \$8 and \$15 per hour.

Availability: Zipcar is available in many large and small U.S. cities; check their website to find out if there are any in your area.

Insurance coverage: Zipcar provides [insurance coverage](#) with limits of up to \$300,000 for renters, though you may be responsible for a damage fee of up to \$750 if you're involved in an accident. If you're 21 or older and had no accidents in the last 12 months, you may purchase a waiver for the damage fee.

Getaround

How it works: Getaround lets you rent cars by the hour direct from regular car owners, giving you a wide variety of make and model options to choose from. You can pay for your rental and unlock the car directly from your phone.

Cost: Getaround is free to join, but rental costs vary greatly depending on the type of car you choose, from a \$4.50/hour Honda Civic to a \$60/hour Tesla Roadster.

Availability: The service operates in San Francisco, Portland, Chicago, Austin, and San Diego, with cars available for pickup directly from their owners' homes.

Insurance coverage: Getaround provides liability coverage up to \$1 million, with comprehensive collision coverage and uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage up to \$60,000 per accident. Renters involved in accidents are responsible for a \$750 deductible.

RelayRides

How it works: Like Getaround, RelayRides is a peer-to-peer car-sharing service that lets car owners rent vehicles out to one another. In addition to hourly rentals, RelayRides offers rentals by the day or week. Some cars can be opened with a smartphone, while you will need to meet with the owner to borrow others.

Cost: Hourly rates are similar to other services; for example, a 2005 Honda CR-V rents for \$8 an hour. There is no membership fee, but RelayRides adds a 10 percent surcharge to the total cost, which includes an emergency towing service.

Availability: RelayRides is available in most major U.S. cities except New York, where the service was suspended in May 2013 due to city regulations.

Insurance: RelayRides provides \$1 million in [liability coverage](#). Renters may choose from three options to insure the car against physical damage: One with a \$500 deductible, one with a \$2500 deductible, and the "decline coverage" option, in which case you are responsible for the full repair cost in the event of an accident.

City CarShare

How it works: City CarShare offers affordable access to a fleet of more than 400 cars, located in private or public parking lots throughout San Francisco Bay Area.

Cost: Monthly fees start at just \$10 plus a one-time \$30 registration fee. Daytime hourly fees start at \$5 plus \$0.35 per mile driven, but if you drive between midnight and 8 AM, you may not need to pay anything except the mileage costs, and you can pay in 15-minute increments, saving money if you don't need a full hour.

Availability: The nonprofit organization is based in the San Francisco Bay area and for now, it plans to limit its growth to that region.

Insurance: The service provides liability coverage up to \$1 million. You are responsible for a \$500 deductible in the event of an accident, or you can choose the "Buck-to-Deduct" plan to reduce your deductible to \$50 by paying an extra \$1 per hour when you rent a car.

Car2Go

How it works: Car2Go is an ideal service for when you need a car for a very short period of time: Unlike other car sharing options, you can rent a vehicle by the minute as well as by the hour. The service lets you pick up a car from anywhere in Seattle, using your member card to automatically unlock the vehicle, and return it to any designated Car2Go parking spot or public parking lot.

Cost: The service costs \$35 for an annual registration fee, with hourly rates up to \$13.99 or charges of \$0.38 per minute.

Availability: Currently, Car2Go operates only in the Seattle metropolitan area.

Insurance: Car2Go provides liability coverage up to \$100,000 per person or \$300,000 per accident. Renters are responsible for a deductible of \$1,000 if the vehicle sustains damage during the course of the rental.

So which service is the best option for you? It depends on what you're looking for. If you want access to a car no matter where you are, Zipcar has the best availability throughout the country; if you're seeking a greater range of makes and models, a peer-to-peer service like RelayRide may be a better option.

Regardless of which company you select, however, using a car-sharing service instead of buying a car can save you thousands of dollars per year over car ownership and encourage you to walk and bike ride more frequently—a great option for people who don't want to commit to buying a car.

http://www.insurancequotes.com/auto/car-sharing#.UglrT53n_cs