

Rent A Car Ripoff - Travel - Rants - Geek-Rant

Written by The Geek
Thursday, 21 May 2015 16:10

If you find yourself travelling to the fun tourist destination of Orlando, you would do well to steer clear of car rental company "Economy Rent a Car", also known as "Signature Car Rental". This company proved themselves to be a special kind of shady, and I'll share with you my experience and how crooked they are.

So this year for my birthday, I got to go away for a long weekend on my own. My kids are all older now, and I'm able to travel a bit more freely. So, I figured, why not check out Star Wars Weekend in Orlando.

Being a single dad and on a budget, I did what anyone would do. I shopped around for deals. I found a very good rate on Spirit for my flight. Sure, they're no frills but one person travelling light isn't bad. I used Hotels.com to find a good hotel (\$119 a night got me a 1 bedroom suite at the Melia resort in Celebration). And for a rental car, I went to Travelocity.

Now, I've been using both Travelocity and Hotwire for YEARS. Ive used them for trips, hotels, and cars. On this occasion, I just wanted a cheap car to get me around for a few days in Orlando. The best price I find is for a mid-sized car for \$22 a day. The rest of the companies were charging in the \$30s for the same car, so I went with the cheap one.

So, my receipt from Travelocity says:

Base Price

\$88.00

Taxes & Fees

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\$34.48

Total Price \$122.48

Not too bad for 4 days, en total. So I made the reservations back in March and just printed out all of my documents and awaited the weekend in May that I would be travelling.

Finally the weekend arrives. My flight down to Orlando goes off without a hitch, and I find myself in the Orlando International Airport. I walk to the spot where the rental cars are, but I don't see Economy on the list. So I pull out my phone and look them up. Oh, they're not on the airport grounds. You need to call them to come get you. So fine, I make the call and the guy tells me to go outside and walk down to spot B12. I look up, and I'm at something like B37. This may not seem like a big walk, but trust me when I say it's longer than it sounds.

So I finally get down to B12 and take a seat and wait. After about 20 mins, the shuttle pulls in. I stand up and the guy driving points to the back, I'm assuming so he can load my bags. When I get to the back, he said "Give me a moment" and opens the doors and gets ready to load. Right then, a whole group of people come up beside me (like 15 people) and he proceeds to load all of their bags and let them get into the shuttle, while I'm just standing there waiting for him to take my bag. These aren't huge shuttles. They have 3 bench seats that each seat 3 people. If you count the front seat, then there is max occupancy for 10 people plus the driver. So, he lets these 15 people all on before me, then sighs, and adds my bags to the pile.

Luckily, the 15 people didn't figure out the front seat was open, so I got to sit up front while they were sitting all over the top of each other. Definitely not safe, and to be honest, I thought more than once that I would be left behind even though I'd been sitting there first. So off we go, definitely overcrowded and unsafe. As we are driving the driver asks if anyone is just picking up their personal cars. Seems Economy/Signature Cars also allows airport parking at their lot.

When we arrive like 20 mins later, I go around to the back for my luggage while half of the group runs inside to get in line. Well, if I was travelling with someone, I'd do the same thing, so no worries. I get my bag and go inside. After waiting for several minutes I finally get to the front

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and give them my name. They find my reservation without an issue, then ask me if I will be using my own insurance, or if I want to buy theirs.

Yeah, here is where it gets tricky.

I have a full coverage policy with Geico, so I tell the man that I have Geico and I would like to use my own insurance. So he picks up a piece of paper behind the counter and says, "ok, show me your coverage printout". (yes, he pulled this paper out before even asking me about my print-out) Huh? Insurance printout? So he shows me the paper in his hand. It is an example insurance policy printout, showing the amounts covered and such. I don't have a print out, I tell him. I've never needed one before when renting a car. So he tells me that if I "bothered" to read the fine print on Travelocity, there is a section where they have their own requirements. And in this section they say that you MUST bring a print-out of your insurance if you want to use your own. So, I ask him, how much is your insurance?

Their lowest policy starts at \$25/day. Damn!! I used to travel to Lauderdale once a month, and never paid more than \$12-\$13 a day for insurance.

So I complain a little, but here I am now at the rental car company on the first day of my vacation and I don't even know if I'll be able to find a car elsewhere. So fine, let's continue. That's when he shows me the bill, and I about choke. \$248.

Yes, I meant to type \$248.

How the HECK did I get to \$248? Well, first he discounted my daily rate to \$20/day. THEN he did the same to my insurance. So \$20 a day for the car, and \$20 a day for insurance. Times 4 days. In my head, I'm thinking \$160ish. No. There was an additional \$80 in "fees and taxes". What?? So when the absurd total went from \$88 to 160 (just for the car), an additional 50% gets added on TOP for taxes? Yeah, there was a tax for everything possible and it was almost laughable.

So since there was no manager to speak with, I took the keys and went to my car. Oh look, the

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check engine light is on. I ask the clerk and he tells me that the car just had an oil change at 7,000 miles and they must have forgotten to clear the code. Too bad the car already had 8,900 miles on it and blew his story out of the water. He assured me it was ok, and reluctantly left with the car.

The car, a Toyota Camry, actually ran well the whole trip and was excellent on gas. But that's another story.

I get to my hotel and decide to see if I can somehow fix this rate. I call up Economy rent a car. I tell them, "hey i just got to my hotel, can I print and bring in the report so Im not charged the additional insurance for all 4 days?"

"No, you cant do that. All sales and contracts are final", they tell me.

The guy I'm talking to has changed his tone of voice. He is being very adversarial and nearly laughing as he talked.

"Ok, what if I just want to bring the car back and turn it in early?", I asked.

The guy laughed. Yes, he laughed right at me on the phone, and then said, "it wont matter. We charged your car for the full time already and even if you had a death in the family and had to leave right now, you would not get refunded a single penny." Frustrated, I ended my call and went to the web to do some research on this company.

I didn't find much, except for a page on [YELP](#) that talks about them. Seems that I am not the only person with this issue. As a matter of fact, this seems to be a VERY common tactic with them.

The Yelp page (linked above) currently shows 27 reviews for them. Almost all of them are 1 star, and all complain about the same rip-off and needing to have the print-out of your insurance

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at the counter. I read everything, and near the bottom, saw something interesting.

This is part of a response from "Clark G.", listed as the owner of the company:

When asked if you would self insure, or if you would opt for one of our optional CDW packages, you said you would self insure. The agent assisting you asked to see proof of insurance. It can be via the mobile app, etc. You did not have the mobile app. You only had your insurance card that included a policy number, and your name. It does not show any information regarding coverage. This does not tell us if you are fully covered.

What?!?! I could use my Geico App on my phone?! Are you shitting me?!? Anyone who knows me knows that I am a Technophile to the core. I have the Geico app on my phone and, even if I didnt, could download it from the app store in less than 2 minutes. Now, in the yelp page, I find an email address for this "Clark G guy" and send him an email hoping to get this cleared up.

Here's the response I got:

We would like to indicate that Yelp is not a good indicator of any business. For instance, when we rent close to 100 to 200 cars per day, and only have 33 negative reviews, that's a very small margin. Plenty of our guests that have had great experiences also do not feel the need to share their experience, so their voices go unheard.

If you do a quick search on Yelp for car rentals in Orlando, every company seems to have negative ratings, and very few have ratings over 2.5 stars. Again, this is not a good indicator of the company. It's quiet biased to say the least.

As for insurance, it most definitely can be presented via mobile app. Geico does a great job displaying coverages too. All our agents are aware of this, and follow these rules as there is usually a "blind" manager behind the counter at all times to analyze everything, however the customer would never know that's a manager.

After you leave though, it's hard for us to make any changes because guests can simply read other yelp reviews, see what's acceptable, then email us back saying that they really had proof of insurance on their mobile device.

The fact of the matter is simply, if you had insurance and presented it to us on your mobile device via Geico's app, and again, app only, it would've 100% been accepted. Therefore there is nothing we can do anymore after you leave.

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If you email us back with your contract number, found at the top right hand corner, starting with "MCO-xxxx", we can take a look at your rental agreement, review the notes on the agreement made by the agent, and talk to the agent directly.

Best Regards,

So first of all, Yelp is here so people can get an understanding of a business. As far as 100-200 cars a day, thats hillarious because their lot wont hold more than 20-30 cars. Only 33 negative reviews? Well, first lets factor in that not everyone is going to even TRY to find a page to complain. Most people would just take the hit and move on. And those that will complain may not even find the yelp page, or know what yelp is. Finally, from what I can tell this is a somewhat new company (only a few years old). Figure that maybe only 5% (or less) of bad experiences may find their way to Yelp and guess what? It's alot more than only 33 unsatisfied customers.

That being said, "All our agents are aware of this, and follow these rules". Do you think that me, being the geek I am with my Galaxy Note 4 phone would not have the Geico app? Or even just download the damned thing right there on the spot?!? That is nothing more than a complete and utter LIE. I'm SURE these guys are trained NOT TO MENTION the app on your phone. Why would they want to mention the app on your phone when they can charge the HELL out of you with these inflated insurance rates?!? And there is nothing to do once you leave? What a heaping pile of rubbish. This is a system put in place to rip customers off, end of story. Why else would the guy pick up the "sample" insurance print-out before we even started talking about it?

So we go back and forth through email a few times, when finally I get this:

We apologize for the inconvenience. We are not sure where the disconnect stems from exactly, as our terms and conditions are disclosed online and fully transparent when booking your reservation. As a courtesy and in hopes of earning your business again in the future, we have credited you for 50% of your insurance charge. You have been issued a credit for \$40.00

We hope you have a wonderful rest of your day, thank you,

Oh, so they credited me back for HALF of the insurance that I didn't need to start with. So instead of paying \$248, I paid \$208. This is still a full \$80 over what I was originally quoted. If you read the yelp reviews, this seems to be their standard M.O. when it comes to the people

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who complain (giving back half of the insurance). [Read them for yourself](#) .

I plan on telling anyone who will listen not to book with these folks. They were rude, unprofessional, LAUGHED at me, insulted my intelligence, and ripped me off completely. My original \$120 quote was more than doubled when I got to the counter. Do yourself a favor and stick with a well-known name, who is actually AT THE AIRPORT and not like 20 minutes away in an overloaded van.

I sure wish I had.

I'm doing what I can to warn other consumers. See my reviews on these sites:

<http://www.yellowpages.com/orlando-fl/mip/signature-car-rental-airport-parking-468004017#reviews>

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/economy-rent-a-car-orlando-3?hrid=TC2yJ4XTIvnFgo7cAjrVxA>

http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g34515-i19-k8490160-Economy_Rent_a_Car_Orlando_FL-Orlando_Florida.html

I have several more pending, including the Better Business Bureau who (unsurprisingly) rates this company as an "F".