

Hotels charge you (for free)

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Curious about electric cars? On your next vacation, give one a test drive—and instead of paying high gas prices, charge up for free.



Major car rental companies, which have been offering hybrid vehicles for years, are now getting into the electric car (EV) market. And an ever-growing number of hotels, resorts, and even B&Bs are adding free electric-car charging stations to entice guests to get off the grid and plug in their cars when they travel.

For example: the [Kimpton Hotels](#) chain provides free charging stations at many of its locations throughout the U.S., and so does the [LEED](#)-certified [Ritz-Carlton](#) in **Charlotte, South Carolina**. In the **Boston** area alone, free guest car charging can be yours at the [Element Lexington](#), the [Charles Hotel](#) and the [Lenox Hotel](#). As for drivers of hybrid-electric cars, Kimpton will let them park for free at eight properties in the U.S. or receive discounts of up to 50 percent off at a few dozen more.

This trend is not limited to trendy luxury properties, either. In **Portland, Oregon**, the [DoubleTree by Hilton Portland](#) has just installed an electric vehicle (EV) charging station, too. The service complements the hotel's complimentary guest bikes and gives guests alternative transportation options in the city's **Lloyd District**. This DoubleTree, it's worth noting, was the first [Green Seal](#)-certified lodging in Oregon.

Where should you rent your electric getaway vehicle? Compare pricing and availability as you would for any car rental, but know that the big names in the industry are competing for your EV dollars. [Hertz](#) is the first car-rental company to deploy EVs and PHEVs (plug-in hybrid electric) on three continents—in the U.S. (available to the public in **New York, Washington, D.C.** and **San Francisco**), the U.K. (**London**), and China (**Shenzhen**). And it plans to increase its global EV presence in other countries soon. The company is also forming partnerships with charging-station providers, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and others to make EVs easily accessible to consumers.

Bottom line: It won't be long before EVs and their charging stations are as common as the corner gas station (which could become an endangered species in another decade or so). Even **Walgreens**, the giant drugstore chain, is adding 30-minute fast-chargers to more than 300 of its shopping centers in the U.S., so you can recharge your car while you shop for the toiletries and other items you forgot or didn't have room to pack.