

Electric vehicles for ridesharing in London

The popularity of electric vehicles has significantly increased in the past years given several important factors — improved technology leading to increasing range, an extensive ever-growing charging network, environmental sensitivity and public and private institutions' financial incentives to encourage EV adoption.

Temps de lecture : minute

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In 2022, 10.5 million electric cars were sold, accounting for 14,2% of the total car sales. To put it in perspective, one in every seven cars sold in 2022 was an electric vehicle. And for more context on the EV sales evolution, in 2017, one in every 70 cars sold was an EV.

The United Kingdom ranks as the fifth nation worldwide (EU included as a single country) in EV sales in 2022, with 267,203 fully electric cars sold, making it the best year for EV sales yet.

But 2023 was even more surprising, with EV sales reaching record highs, with 287,825 EVs sold just in Q1 in the UK. By the end of May 2023, over 780,000 fully electric cars can be found on UK roads.

Government support for EV drivers

The UK Government started making considerable efforts to support EV adoption in 2011 when introducing the Plug-in Car Grant to offer drivers a grant of 25%, capped at £5,000 towards the cost of an EV⁷. Now, the grant is reduced to £3,000.

UK Government also offers an incentive to help drivers install a dedicated home EV charging unit — drivers can claim 75% of the purchase and installation cost of up to two charge points at a residential address. *The grant is currently capped at £350.*

Green mobility in the rideshare industry

The rideshare industry is responsible for a significant share of the increasing EV sales. One of the factors contributing to the explosion of EV sales in the past months is the latest regulations the UK government introduced for the private hire cars industry.

Starting January 1st, 2023, all cars registered for the first time in London as Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) must meet new emission standards - be Zero emission capable (ZEC) and meet the *Euro 6 emission standard.*

If you're just starting rideshare driving or want to buy a new car to use for ridesharing, it must meet these requirements.

All battery-electric cars and hydrogen cars meet these new requirements, as well as some of the plug-in and petrol hybrids.

What it's like to drive an electric car for rideshare?

Driving an EV for Uber and other rideshare platforms has become very common, with all the new regulations and financial incentives EV drivers can access.

Although the initial cost of an EV might be higher compared to a petrol car, you'll likely get back the investment in time due to all the money you're saving as an EV driver.

Let's start with an obvious (or not) one - fuel costs. Energy prices are currently lower than petrol prices, making fuelling an EV up to 50% cheaper. For example, let's take the MG ZS EV and MG ZS Petrol. For a weekly distance of 700 miles, you'd pay £73 to charge your MG ZS EV and £140 to fill up the MG ZS Petrol.

One of the most common misconceptions about EVs is that they're costly to maintain and service. The reality is that EVs have fewer parts to break down, no internal combustion engine, no oil change and an extended battery warranty, so they'll require servicing and spare parts replacement less often.

The benefits of driving an EV in London

Ridershare drivers in electric cars are also exempt from paying several road charges enforced in London and the UK:

- Congestion Charge - a daily £15 for entering London's central area within a specific timetable. Electric cars are exempt from paying it until December 2025.
- Ultra Low Emission Zone Charge - a daily £12.50 charge for cars entering the ULEZ area that don't meet a set of modern emission standards. EVs are zero emission cars, so they're exempt from paying it.
- Vehicle Excise Duty - also known as road tax, an annual tax that must be paid by all drivers with cars registered in the UK. All EVs are exempt from paying the road tax until April 2025.

Certain neighbourhoods or streets in Hackney, Islington and the City of London only allow access to low- or zero-emission vehicles. That gives Uber drivers in electric cars the advantage of being able to pick rides going through these areas.

EV drivers can also access discounted or even free resident parking permits for their cars, depending on their residence borough. This helps rideshare drivers who don't have a driveway or a garage save on the annual cost of a parking permit.

Uber is a big supporter of drivers going green

Last but not least, if driving for Uber, drivers can benefit from the numerous incentives Uber rolls to encourage their drivers to switch to green mobility.

This started with introducing Uber Green, an Uber service where riders can request a ride in a fully electric car for the same fare as a ride in a petrol car. Uber drivers get 10% more per each completed Uber Green ride.

They continue with a grant to buy a new EV through car rental companies – the Uber Clean Air plan. For all trips taken between 16 January 2019 and 14 March 2022, Uber charged riders a small fee, which went into the driver's Clean Air fund, called EV Assistance. Similar to a savings account, drivers can now access the money raised to buy a new car through a rent-to-buy car plan.

Uber also plans to roll out new incentives this year to make switching to green cars even easier – priority pick-up for Uber Green drivers at Heathrow Airport, smart charging features in the Uber Driver App and eco-friendly routes recommended by the Uber app.

Is it worth it going green for rideshare driving?

With all these perks, how could it not be worth it?

However, there are still some aspects drivers need help with regarding EVs. Some find the charging process complicated and time-consuming, others would like to install a home charger but don't meet the conditions and find public charging too expensive. Some drivers aren't happy with the EVs' range, as they need to take multiple trips to the charging stations to go through their day.

Although there are plenty of aspects needing improvement in the EV industry, it's still a good option for rideshare drivers willing to invest their time and effort into charging their EV in exchange for the money they'll be saving with time.

Article by Maddyneess UK