

Commuters turn to driver-hire services as Ola, Uber fares surge

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Although cab-hailing apps like Ola and Uber are manna to harried commuters, the rise in cab fares over the last few weeks has induced them to explore alternatives such as on-demand, driver-hire services.

Radhika Menon, a daily commuter, who sold her car three years ago said the prices have surged in the last six months. Waiting time for cabs has shot up and the quality of drivers has gone down significantly.

“There is absolutely no transparency in pricing; today the fare starts at Rs. 290 and will go up to Rs. 320. I regret having sold my car and I am considering other options” she said.

Induja Aravind, another commuter, said: “I have never paid Rs. 29 for Ola Auto, which offers a flat rate of Rs. 29 for 4 kms. The app always shows “increased demand”, even though I travel at different times during the day,” she told *BusinessLine*.

Driver-hire services such as DriveU and Ezi Drive are offering flat rates that don't burn a hole in customer wallets. DriveU, which operates in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune has introduced a flat rate of Rs. 159 valid for a one way drop in your car to anywhere in your city over 90 minutes.

Similarly, Ezi Drive which operates in Bengaluru and Chennai offers a flat rate of Rs. 300 for four hours.

Ramprasad Shastry, CEO of DriveU said: “Demand has doubled since the flat rate of Rs. 159 was introduced in June. People can be driven in the comfort of their own cars at a fraction of the cost of using a taxicab. It is much cheaper to hire a driver to let you finish your errands, catch a doctor's appointment, get dropped to the airport or even be driven back after a night at a pub.”

Ezi Drive which started offering cab hire services three years ago has introduced mobile app-based cab hire services in Bengaluru and Chennai earlier this month. “We have a captive base of 1 lakh customers to use our cab services at fixed charges with no peak-time surcharges. The app fills in all the gaps in our earlier offering such as, ease of booking/cancellation, cashless payment, trip rating, and safety feature through SOS alerts. Demand for our driver and cab services is increasing and we receive 40 new registrations for our driver and cab services every day,” said Ram Prasath, Managing Director, Ezi Drive Tours & Travels Pvt Ltd.