Tips for Taking a Taxicab in Santa Barbara:

BEFORE GETTING INTO A CAB:

- **Rates Vary so Buyers Must Beware** - There is no fixed rate for taxi fares in Santa Barbara, so rates can vary widely with some companies charging $5 or more to simply begin the trip (see the "first drop" definition below). Always compare the rates posted outside of a taxi before selecting one.
- **Taxi Stand Protocol** - Although it's customary to take the first taxi in line, customers are free to compare rates and select a cab of their choice. If you choose not to take the first taxicab in a line, as a courtesy you should let the people in line behind you go ahead of you until the taxi you want to hire has progressed to the first position in line. If there are no other people waiting in line for a taxi, you may hire any taxi from the line.
- **Discounts** - Many companies offer discounts and lower rates for advance reservations, mid-week fares, or association with a particular group or company. Always ask when arranging a ride.
- **"Minimum Fee" Illegal in City** – Drivers can never charge a "minimum fee" that exceeds the metered rate. Some drivers demand minimum fees from passengers during special events, holidays, busy weekends, or short-distance trips. This is illegal. Drivers who demand a fee that is higher than the rates posted on the cab's exterior should be reported to the Police Technician.
- **Cannot Refuse Short-Distance Fares** - Taxi drivers cannot refuse a fare based on distance. Drivers who refuse short-distance fares should be reported to the Police Technician.
- **Larger Cab, Higher Fee** - Many companies charge higher rates for vans, SUVs, and limo-style cabs. If you have a small group or are alone, choose a car taxi instead of a larger vehicle to avoid paying a higher rate than necessary.
- **Avoid "Rogue" Taxis**. Legitimate taxis must post the company name, a phone number, a taxi ID, and maximum rates on the cab's exterior. Taxis authorized by the City will also have round decals on the rear of the cab indicating authorization to operate through the month listed on the decal. If a taxicab does not have all of the above, it is recommended you take a different taxi.

IN THE CAB:

- **Know Your Cab**! - Always ask the driver for a business card and take note of the cab company and cab number. If you accidentally leave something in the cab, or if you later have a complaint about the cab or driver, that information will be important!
- **Avoid Overcharges** - Drivers can never charge more than the metered rate, regardless of the number of passengers in a group or the distance of the trip. Report drivers who attempt to overcharge.
- Every taxi driver must fully display the following information to passengers:
    - **The driver's permit**: City permits are orange with a photo of the driver, the driver's full name, the permit number, and the permit expiration date. If a permit isn't displayed or if it's partially obstructed, ask to see the full permit to verify that the photo matches your driver and that the expiration date is valid. Some former drivers continue to use expired permits by hiding the expiration date. If a driver's permit isn't fully displayed, it is recommended you use another taxi.
    - **Rate card**: A rate card must be posted on the interior of the taxi listing all rates that that taxi is allowed to charge. Check this card to confirm you aren't being charged a higher rate than applies to your fare.
    - **Complaint Card**: This card lists the contact information for the Police Technician whom you should contact with complaints, questions, or comments about a taxicab, a taxi driver, or about the City's taxi program in general.

TAXI RATES:

- Taxi rates are broken down into three categories: the "first drop"; the "per mile" rate; and the "wait" rate.
    - **The "first drop"** is the starting fee on the meter at the time the taxi is hired.
    - **The "per mile" rate** is the fee charged for each mile traveled, broken into increments that must be listed on the rate card. Watch the meter to confirm it is charging the posted rates.
    - **The "wait" rate** is one that most people are unaware of. This the rate charged when the car travels at 12 mph or slower, or when the cab is stopped for traffic or lights. Meters are

calibrated to charge either the "per mile" rate or the "wait" rate, depending on the speed of the vehicle, but will not charge both at once.   It's important for passengers to be aware of this rate, as a wait rate of $60 per hour means passengers pay $1 per minute when the car is in slow traffic or at a stop light. The cost of a trip can rise quickly with lengthy wait times. Therefore, regardless of the length of the trip, if you know that your route involves many traffic lights, or if you will be traveling during heavy traffic, you will want to find a taxi with a low wait fee.

RATE VARIANCES IN SANTA BARBARA:

There are more than 65 taxi companies authorized to operate in the City of Santa Barbara, and each has its own rates. That means that two separate groups could leave from the same location in separate cabs, travel the same route to the same destination, and end up paying very different fares based on the differences in the rates between the individual cab companies.

Below is a sample range of current rates found among all the taxi companies authorized to operate in the City of Santa Barbara. The comparisons were made using each company's fares for flagged taxis during nighttime weekend hours. As you can see there are significant differences in the rates for each category, with the lowest rates for the first drop and wait time being less than half of the highest rates in those categories:

COMPARISON OF CURRENT SANTA BARBARA TAXI RATES:

	Lowest rate:	Highest rate:
First drop – meter will start with this fare:	$1.50	**$12.00**
Per-mile rate – traveling 12+ mph:	$3.00	**$5.10**
Wait rate – the rate charged when traveling under 12 mph or when stopped:	$25/hour (42¢/minute)	**$60/hour ($1.00/minute)**

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about a taxicab, a taxi driver, or the taxi program in general, you may contact the Police Technician for assistance at (805) 897-2333 or permits@sbpd.com.