

UK enforces digital permission to travel

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From today (25 February), non-visa nationals will be barred from entering the UK without an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) .

Non-visa nationals who try to enter the UK without an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) will be barred under new rules coming into force.

From today (25 February), it will be mandatory for visitors to the UK to have obtained digital permission to travel. This means that airlines will prevent passengers from boarding if they do not have an ETA, eVisa or have other valid documentation.

Visitors of 85 nationalities, including nationals of the United States, Canada and France, are now legally required to have an ETA when travelling to the UK. An ETA costs £16, permits multiple journeys, and lasts for 2 years or until the holder's passport expires – whichever is sooner.

The cost of an ETA is competitive and in line with other countries including the US ESTA, which costs \$40 and the EU's ETIAS, which is expected to cost €20 when it is implemented.

British and Irish citizens, including dual citizens, are exempt from needing an ETA but will be required to present either a valid British passport or Certificate of Entitlement when travelling to the UK. This is the same approach taken by other countries, including the US, Australia and Canada. At their own discretion, carriers may accept some expired British passports as alternative documentation.

Minister for Migration and Citizenship, Mike Tapp said:

The ETA scheme is a vital part of our work to strengthen the UK's border security, helping to deliver a more efficient and modern service that works for both visitors and the British public.

I'd urge anyone wanting to travel to the UK to ensure they are travel ready and have the right permission, to make their journey much smoother.

ETAs are also mandatory for visitors who travel to the UK to take connecting flights and go through passport control.

Since ETA was introduced in October 2023, over 19 million visitors have successfully applied. As of January 2026, ETA has generated over £383 million in revenue which is reinvested in improving the UK's border and immigration system.

The enforcement of the ETA scheme is a significant step towards digitising the immigration system and paves the way for a contactless UK border in the future. The scheme also helps to keep the border secure, preventing individuals who pose a threat from entering the UK.

The UK has been phasing out physical documents for several years through the transition to eVisas, with over 10 million issued to date. eVisa holders, including those with EU Settlement Scheme status, need to keep their UK Visas and Immigration account up to date with their most recent

passport details, to avoid travel disruption.

As part of ongoing improvements to our services, from tomorrow (26 February), Certificates of Entitlement will be issued in digital format. This means that a certificate only needs to be applied for once, rather than expiring with your passport.

Applying for an ETA through the UK ETA app is quick and easy, and the vast majority of applicants currently receive a decision automatically within minutes, ensuring that spontaneous trips to the UK remain possible. However, it is still recommended that visitors allow up to 3 working days before they plan to travel to receive their decision in time and, to account for the small number of cases that require additional review.

Applicants are required to provide their biographic and biometric details and answer a few questions on suitability and criminality. Once a person has successfully applied, their ETA is digitally linked to their passport.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-enforces-digital-permission-to-travel>