

US Travelers Will Need Authorization to Enter the UK in 2025

Starting on January 8, US citizens visiting the UK will need electronic travel authorization—even for layovers. Here's how to apply.

By Sarah James and Hannah Towey December 3, 2024



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Starting on January 8, 2025 US travelers—as well as visitors from [Australia](#) and [Canada](#)—will be required to apply for permission to enter the [UK](#) through a new scheme known as Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA).

After several delays, the UK ETA application portal officially opened for non-European travelers on November 27, 2024. US travelers with trips planned to the UK next year can now apply via the UK ETA [mobile app](#) or [website](#). While most applications are approved the same day, it can take up to 72 hours—so don't risk leaving it to the last minute.

The UK government is in the process of fully digitizing UK borders by the end of 2025. Soon, all visitors to the UK (which includes [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#), and [Northern Ireland](#)) who aren't UK or Irish citizens will be required to receive advanced approval through an ETA or an eVisa.

The UK ETA system is similar to how the US's own ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) system works. “An ETA costs £10, permits multiple journeys, and lasts for two years or until the holder’s passport expires—whichever is sooner,” the UK government explained in a [news release](#). “Once granted, ETAs are digitally

linked to a traveler's passport and allow for stays of up to six months at a time—including both short trips and more extended stays. An ETA is not a visa, it is a digital permission to travel."

Here's everything you need to know about the new UK ETA requirements.

This article has been updated with new information since its original publication date.

Will I need a visa to enter the UK?

This isn't technically a [visa](#)—the ETA system will grant travelers permission to enter the country. You will need to apply for an ETA prior to arrival. If you haven't received permission to travel before arrival, you may be fined or denied boarding.

Do I need an ETA if my layover is in the UK?

An ETA is required for fliers transiting through the UK, even if you never leave the [airport](#). According to the UK government, "requiring transit passengers to obtain an ETA stops people who may use connecting flights to avoid gaining permission to travel to the UK." However, this rule is "under review," per a [news release](#), and could change in the future.

Travelers from the US will soon need to apply for permission to enter or transit through the UK.

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How long will it take to get an ETA?

Travelers are advised to apply for an ETA at least a few days before their journey. Approval should be granted within a few hours of applying but can take up to 72 hours to process.

How long will an ETA last?

After your ETA has been approved, visitors will be granted permission to stay in the UK for up to six months, whether for business or tourism reasons.

The ETA is valid for two years or until your passport expires (whichever comes first)—meaning there's no need to apply for a new one every time you visit within the valid time period.

Visitors with valid ETAs can stay—and travel—in UK for up to six months.

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How much will an ETA cost?

The UK ETA will cost 10 pounds (approximately \$13). The EU is launching a [similar system](#) in 2025, which will cost 7 euro (about \$8). A US ESTA, meanwhile, costs \$21.

Who will need to apply for an ETA?

The UK's new ETA requirements are rolling out in phases, based on nationality. Citizens of [Gulf Cooperation Council countries](#)—which include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—are already required to obtain an ETA prior to travel to the UK. Over 600,000 ETAs have been granted within the past year, according to the latest immigration [statistics](#).

Eligible non-Europeans (including US, Canadian, and Australian citizens) are required to get ETAs starting on January 8, 2025. Meanwhile, Europeans will need an ETA to travel to the UK starting on April 2, 2025, when the rules go fully into effect.

What will I need to apply for an ETA?

You'll need to provide a valid [passport](#), a recent digital headshot that follows the UK's passport [photo requirements](#), an email address, details of your travel plans, as well as a valid debit or credit card to pay the application fees.

To keep up to date with the latest information on the UK ETA, check the [official website](#) for more details as they become available.

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