

September 2024

UK Electronic Travel Authorisation

Immigration and Business Travel



VIALTO
PARTNERS

Frequently Asked Questions

What is ETA?

An Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) is a digital permit that gives an individual 'permission to travel' to the UK. ETAs are not new and are currently operating in several countries around the world, the most obvious one being the United States of America and its Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and Australia's ETA.

Individuals who will require an ETA are typically referred to as 'non-visa' or 'visa-free' nationals, meaning that they do not require a visa to travel to the UK for business activities. Those who need to apply for a business visa to enter the UK will not need to obtain an ETA prior to their travel.

Why is the UK introducing an ETA?

Since the referendum to leave the European Union in 2016, the UK Government planned to introduce a system mirroring the US's ESTA, which would be light touch and help with tackling security risks at the border. The UK Government also wants to enhance its border control and law enforcement by allowing them to capture more information on people travelling to the UK.

When and how is ETA being rolled out?

ETA is being rolled out in different phases per nationality. There are three confirmed phases:

- **First phase**

The ETA became mandatory for Qatari nationals from 15th November 2023. The roll out was then widened to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nationals (Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, and UAE), as well as Jordan from 22 February 2024. Jordan has since been removed from the non-visa category and Jordanian nationals will now need to apply for a visa to visit the UK.

In September 2024, the UK Government announced plans to expand its Electronic Travel Authorisation rollout to include 83 non-visa countries. The full list of nationals can be found [here](#).

- **Second phase**

From 8th January 2025, all non-EU nationals who are eligible to travel to the UK as visitors from non-visa countries (such as Australia, Canada, Japan and the US) will be required to hold valid ETA in order to travel to the UK as a visitor. Applications can be made from 27th November 2024.

- **Third phase**

From 2nd April 2025, all EU nationals traveling to the UK as visitors will be required to hold valid ETA. Applications can be made from 5th March 2025.

How will this impact your programme?

An estimated 38 million people come to the UK as visitors every year, and around 16 million of these visitors arrive for business specific purposes. All of these visitors will now require either an ETA or an entry clearance visa before arriving at the UK's borders.

The need to travel to the UK will have to be reviewed more thoroughly and timeliness for travel will need to be considered against the approval process of getting the ETA. While we expect that the ETA, in a similar application and processing format to the ESTA, will only take a few hours to approve, there could be delays and or refusals that can delay travel, and impact business activities.

ETAs tend to have a limited time of stay (such as 90 days in the US) and the UK's ETA will be fully electronic, which can lead to difficulties for visitors if time-limits are breached. Breaches will lead to the automatic removal of the individual from the UK and may not be able to return.

How much will it cost?

An ETA will cost GBP 10 for each applicant (which is equivalent to 12 Euros and 13 USD). The fee will also cover multiple journeys and be valid for two years 'or until the holder's passport expires – whichever is sooner'.

What actions do I need to take now?

Businesses should review their volumes of travel to the UK and establish a consistent plan on how best to manage the UK's new requirements. The change to process will not be new to many business travelers so we suggest that you take the following 3 steps before the ETA goes fully live:

1. **Map it:** Understand who is traveling to the UK, how often, and the business activities that will be carried in the country. Moreover, expand your current pre-travel arrangements to include the UK and update any tools you have that manage business travel and pre-travel authorisations.
2. **Plan it:** ETA is now live for Qatari nationals and will go live to the rest of the world by the end of 2024 so get your business prepared by having your business traveller teams ready to submit pre-travel authorisation applications as soon as it goes live. ETA's questions are short and will ask specific questions, including work, home address, security, and criminality. If your employees have visited countries that the UK feels are a direct security threat, this may delay the processing of the application.
3. **Communicate it:** Ensure that your employees are updated of these changes, and most critically, make sure that they are aware of what is required before they travel to the UK.

Carriers will unlikely allow individuals to board without an ETA as this will lead to fines and sanctions for the carrier company. This means that visitors will not be able to travel to the UK without an approved document confirming their permission to travel, and being easily identifiable on the Home Office's advance passenger information (API) system.

How can Vialto support?

Vialto Partners can provide advisory services, assistance and technological tools to manage business travelers and their requirements when traveling to the UK.

Our Vialto team can help you navigate complex governmental relations and rapidly changing immigration laws, so that your employees can move quickly and compliantly across borders. Our team also provides advisory, compliance, consular and tracking services.

Who at Vialto should I contact for more support?

Vialto Partners has a dedicated ETA Team. If you have any questions or queries please reach out to us:

- [Lindsey Barras](#) - Immigration Partner and ETA Lead
- [Scherezade Maestre](#) - Senior Manager Business Travel and Global Immigration and ETA specialist
- [Awale Olad](#) - Advisory and UK Senior Manager

Addendum

Nationalities from the following locations can travel to the UK with an ETA:

1. Nationalities that can apply for an ETA **as of September 2024:**

- Bahrain
- Kuwait
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates

2. Nationalities from the following locations (including associated territories) can **apply for an ETA from 27 November 2024**. They **can travel to the UK with an ETA from 8 January 2025**.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Antigua and Barbuda | • Botswana | • Costa Rica | • Kiribati |
| • Argentina | • Brazil | • Grenada | • Macao Special Administrative Region |
| • Australia | • Brunei | • Guatemala | • Malaysia |
| • The Bahamas | • Canada | • Guyana | • Maldives |
| • Barbados | • Chile | • Hong Kong | • Marshall Islands |
| • Belize | • Colombia | • Israel | • Mauritius |
| | | • Japan | |
| • Mexico | • Panama | • Singapore | • Taiwan |
| • Federated States of Micronesia | • Papua New Guinea | • Solomon Islands | • Tonga |
| • Nauru | • Paraguay | • South Korea | • Trinidad and Tobago |
| • New Zealand | • Peru | • St Kitts and Nevis | • Tuvalu |
| | • Samoa | • St Lucia | • United States |

- Nicaragua
- Palau
- Seychelles
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Uruguay

3. Nationalities from the following locations (including associated territories) can **apply for an ETA from 5 March 2025**. They **can travel to the UK with an ETA from 2 April 2025**.

- Andorra
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Monaco
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- San Marino
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Vatican City

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