

If you're traveling to the UK, be aware of the new rule

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The United Kingdom has new travel authorization rules that will apply in 2025 to U.S. nationals (as well as others) under the [Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme](#).

Similar to the [U.S. Electronic System for Travel Authorization](#), the UK rule will be required for nationals who currently do not need a visa to visit the UK and do not hold other UK immigration status. The goal is to enhance UK border controls by monitoring who is traveling to or through the country.

The ETA scheme initially launched in October 2023 but applied only to travelers from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The expansion, which will apply to U.S. citizens and others, will take place in two phases:

- **Phase 1 for Non-European Nationals (including all U.S. citizens).** Starting November 27, 2024, travelers from the United States., Singapore, Canada, and other countries can apply for an ETA. The ETA will be required for entry on or after January 9, 2025.
- **Phase 2 for European Nationals (excluding Irish citizens):** Starting March 5, 2025, travelers from France, Germany, Spain, and European nations can apply for an ETA, which will be required for travel on or after April 2, 2025.

More information, including the full list of countries, is available [here](#).

How to apply

Applications can be submitted online through the [UK government's Home Office](#) website or via the "UK ETA" app. The app is easier to use and is recommended.

You'll need to upload a scan of your passport, a photo, and provide basic information, including your immigration history and any criminal convictions. If you use the app you can use the camera on your device to read your passport and take a "selfie." The fee for an ETA is £10 (around \$13 USD), and most applications are processed within 72 hours.

Once you are approved, the ETA will allow multiple trips to the UK for stays of up to six months each. The ETA will remain valid for two years, or until your passport expires, whichever comes first. If your application is denied, you can appeal or apply for a traditional visitor visa. A

traditional visa requires scheduling an appointment, paying visa fees, and attending an interview at the UK embassy/consulate where you reside.

Some tips

- Apply as early as possible, especially if you have prior immigration issues or criminal convictions.
- Each traveler must apply individually. That includes children.
- If you are passing through the UK on your way to another nation, you will still need an ETA.
- The ETA does not authorize any of the following in the UK:
 - Staying longer than six months per visit.
 - Paid or unpaid work, except for short-term engagements.
 - Accessing public funds or establishing residency.
 - Marriage or civil partnership ceremonies.

If you are a U.S. employer with employees who frequently travel to the UK, you should be aware that by April 2025, the ETA will be mandatory for all non-visa nationals except British and Irish citizens. As noted, this includes those who are only passing through the UK on their way to other destinations.

Here are some additional tips for employers:

- Inform employees of the new ETA requirements and timelines.
- Plan business travel schedules and ensure that employees have valid passports.
- Encourage early applications, especially for employees with complex immigration histories or criminal convictions. In such cases, legal advice may be required, and the best choice might be to apply for an actual visa stamp, which often takes 30 or more days to obtain.

Constangy will continue to monitor these developments and provide updates. If you have questions on how these changes may affect business travel or employee immigration needs, please contact a member of Constangy's [Immigration Practice Group](#).

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