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Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) Guide

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What Is the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) Scheme?

The UK government has introduced the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme, designed to strengthen pre-arrival screening for non-visa nationals seeking to enter the UK as a Visitor for short stays of up to six months.

An ETA is a digital permission to travel to the UK, linked to an individual's passport.

The ETA requirement applies to all nationals who currently do not need a visa to visit the UK for short stays and who do not hold any other UK immigration status. The initiative represents a significant step in tightening the UK's immigration controls. By requiring visa-exempt travellers to secure an ETA before departure, the UK government aims to better screen and assess travellers for any potential risks before they reach the UK border.

When will the ETA requirement be implemented?

The ETA scheme was first implemented in November 2023 for Qatari nationals and will gradually extend to other countries listed below, with full implementation expected by **April 2025**.

Who requires an ETA to travel to the UK?

Nationals from the following locations (including countries and associated territories) are required to obtain an ETA for visa-free travel to the UK:

a) **for travel to the UK on or after November 15, 2023:** Qatar;

b) **for travel to the UK on or after February 22, 2024:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia;

c) **for travel to the UK on or after January 8, 2025:** Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei,

Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (including British National (Overseas)), Israel, Japan, Kiribati, Macao Special Administrative Region, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall, Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Taiwan (only those who hold a passport issued by Taiwan that includes in it the number of the identification card issued by the competent authority in Taiwan), Tonga, Tuvalu, United States, Uruguay;

d) **for travel to the UK on or after April 2, 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. Nationals from these locations will be able to apply for an ETA from **March 5, 2025**.

Nationals of a country or territory not listed above as requiring an ETA are not eligible for one and must apply for a UK visa before their visit. For example, individuals who currently require a Visitor visa to enter the UK for short stays will continue to do so and should not apply for an ETA. A list of such nationalities can be found here.

How do I apply for an ETA?

You can apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation using the ETA App, or via an online form on the official GOV.UK website.

When applying, you will need to pay a £10 application fee, provide your contact and passport details, upload a valid passport photo, and answer a set of questions about suitability.

Everyone travelling, including babies and children, must have an ETA. You can apply on behalf of others.

You cannot get a refund after you apply.

Typically, you will receive a decision within three working days, although most applicants receive a response much sooner. In some cases, the processing time may exceed three working days.

After you apply

Once your application is processed, you will receive an email confirming your ETA approval. The ETA will be linked to the passport you applied with.

The ETA is valid for 2 years or until your passport expires, whichever is sooner. During this time, you can travel to the UK as many times as you like with the ETA.

What happens if my ETA application is refused?

A refusal of your ETA does not prevent you from entering the UK, but you will need to apply for and be granted a UK visa instead, such as a Standard Visitor visa. In this case, we recommend seeking professional advice. The BSA Legal team is here to assist, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Further Information

BSA members due to welcome international visitors are urged to continue to communicate the new ETA requirement to avoid travel issues.

For the latest published guidance on the ETA scheme please visit the GOV.UK website here.

Should you require further support, please contact the BSA Group Legal team on legal@bsagroup.org.uk or +44 (0)207 798 1583.

Case Study 1:

Louisa, a German national, has been offered a place at a UK independent school to participate in a cultural exchange programme for one term (3 months) starting in September 2025.

As a German national, Louisa currently does not need a visa for short-term visits to the UK lasting up to 6 months. However, with the introduction of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) requirement for European nationals on April 2, 2025, Louisa will need to obtain an ETA before travelling to the UK for her cultural exchange programme. Louisa must apply for and secure her ETA prior to her travel date to the UK.

Case Study 2:

Marcia, a Brazilian national, has been accepted to study a 2-year GCSE course at a UK independent school. To pursue her studies in the UK, she needs to apply for a Child Student visa. If her application is successful, she will receive an eVisa, digital permission replacing traditional physical documents, such as Biometric Residence Permits.

As of January 8, 2025, Brazilian nationals are required to apply for an ETA for short trips to the UK. However, since Marcia will be applying for a Child Student visa to study in the UK for more than 6 months, she will not need to apply for the ETA. Instead, her eVisa will grant her permission to study and to travel to the UK.


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