

Capital Law

Use of the UK visitor route *for business purposes*



Purpose of the visitor route

The visitor route can be used for anyone to come to the UK:

- for leisure, for example for holiday or to see family and friends.
- for business, or to take part in sports or creative events.
- for another specified reason, for example to receive private medical treatment.

Key principles

- Visitors can come to the UK for up to 6 months per visit.
- Visitors cannot work unless they are doing ‘permitted activities’.
- Visitors must not be paid by a UK source (except in limited circumstances – see below).
- Non-visa nationals (including EU nationals) do not need to apply for a visa in advance.
- Non-visa nationals will need to apply for entry clearance under the ETA scheme (see below).
- Non-visa nationals should carry appropriate evidence that they are here as a visitor (see below).
- Visitors can be refused entry to the UK if they have certain criminal convictions or if they are ‘unsuitable’ such as if they pose a risk to the public or have breached immigration rules.

Visitors must:

- leave the UK at the end of their visit.
- have enough money to support themselves when they are in the UK.

Visitors must not:

- live in the UK for long or frequent periods or make the UK their home.
- take a job in the UK.
- work for a business in the UK (unless it is permitted - see below).
- establish or run a business as a self-employed person.
- do a work placement or internship (although some training is allowed).
- sell directly to the public.
- provide goods or services .
- not access public fund.
- receive money from a UK source.

Some payments are allowed such as reasonable travel expenses or fees for directors attending board meetings.

Permitted business activities

Visitors can do the following business-related activities:

- attend meetings, conferences, seminars, interviews.
- give a one-off or short series of talks and speeches provided these are not organised as commercial events and will not make a profit for the organiser.
- negotiate and sign deals and contracts.
- attend trade fairs, for promotional work only, provided the Visitor is not directly selling.
- carry out site visits and inspections.
- gather information for their employment overseas.
- be briefed on the requirements of a UK based customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside of the UK.

A visitor of an overseas based company may:

- advise and consult
- trouble-shoot
- provide training and
- share skills and knowledge

On a specific internal project with UK employees of the same corporate group, provided no work is carried out directly with clients.

An internal auditor may carry out regulatory or financial audits at a UK branch of the same group of companies as the Visitor's employer overseas.

Employees of an overseas company may receive training from a UK based company in work practices and techniques which are required for the Visitor's employment overseas and not available in their home country.

Employees of overseas companies may install, dismantle, repair, service or advise on machinery, equipment, computer software or hardware (or train UK based workers on the same) where there is a contract with a UK company. There are specific requirements for these activities and advice should be sought.

There are other non-business activities visitors can do in the UK – see the full list [*here*](#).

Additional permitted activities from 31 January 2024:

From this date, visitors from overseas companies may advise, consult, trouble shoot, provide training or share skills and knowledge directly with clients in the UK, provided that:

- there is an intra-corporate arrangement.
- the activities are required for the delivery of a specific project or service by the UK business branch, rather than a project or service being delivered by the overseas business.
- all client-facing activity must also be incidental to the visitor's overseas employment.

Key points for helping ensure activities are permitted:

- Consider the length of the visit. Attending a conference should only be for a few days. Longer visits point to a visitor working in the UK.
- The visitor should be based from the UK company's office while in the UK – not client sites (unless this is for meetings).
- Intra-corporate activities must be linked to a specific project and not general in nature.
- Business activities in general should be linked but incidental to overseas employment.
- Working remotely for the overseas company is allowed when the visitor is in the UK, provided it is not the primary purpose of the trip.
- Unless there is good reason, visitors should not come to the UK frequently.

Documents

Whether a visitor is applying for a visa or seeking entry to the UK at the border (see below), they will need these documents either ready for the application or when they visit:

- their return ticket.
- previous travel documents / passports to show previous entry to the UK.
- proof they have enough funds to support themselves in the UK such as pay slips, bank statements, letters from the employer showing the salary.
- evidence of accommodation in the UK such as hotel bookings.
- evidence of their intended business activities such as.
- a letter from their employer overseas explaining the purpose of the visit.
- a letter from the organisation in the UK inviting them to visit, explaining the purpose of the visit.
- a copy of any conference bookings if relevant.

Visitors can be 'sponsored' by a third party for their trip. This is where someone with a genuine business relationship with the visitor will provide accommodation, travel or

other support to the visitor during their stay.

If there is a sponsor, they will need to have:

- documents showing their ability to sponsor the visitor (such as proof of income).
- proof they are in the UK legally (such as a passport or visa).
- a letter from the sponsor is also advisable.

Helpful guidance on what documents may be needed is [here](#).

Apply

Non-visa nationals (including EU nationals) do not need to apply for a visa to enter the UK as a visitor. For a full list of people who do need a visa to enter the UK as a visitor see [here](#).

Visa nationals apply online [here](#), and must pay the fee of £115.

Applicants need a blank page in their passport for the visa. Their passport should be valid for the whole of their stay in the UK.

Applications can be made up to 3 months before visiting the UK.

ETA scheme

Visitors may need to apply for an electronic travel authorisation (ETA) before coming to the UK. This is a digital permission to travel and it will apply to visitors who do not need a visa for short stays and who do not have any other UK immigration status prior to traveling. If an ETA is required, but the visitor does not have one, they will not be allowed to enter the UK.

The scheme is already in place for nationals from Qatar and from 1 February 2024, the scheme will be introduced for nationals from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. In the future, the scheme will be implemented worldwide for visitors to the UK who do not currently need a visa for short stays, including European nationals.

For more information on the ETA scheme including how to apply, please refer to [this](#) page of the government website.



Scan the QR code or click the button to find out everything you need to know about the new ETA/ETIAS visa scheme.

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