

Arts
Infopoint
UK

Visiting the UK

A visa guide
for international artists and
creative professionals

Welcome to the Arts Infopoint UK Visa Guide

[Version updated January 2025]

This Visa Guide has been created to help organisations and individuals understand the different visa options available when arranging a visit to the UK for work purposes. It aims to help international and UK-based organisations, creative sector bodies, and artists and creative professionals who are currently planning to visit the UK for creative work purposes.

Information about visas can be overwhelming, and there are many options available to you depending on different factors such as, but not limited to:

- your nationality
- where you're coming from
- what kind of work you are planning to do whilst in the UK
- the amount of time you will spend here
- whether you will be paid for that work

Because of this complexity, this Visa Guide has been drafted by legal professionals, and is guided by official UK Government information, to ensure that the guide is accurate at the time of publication. Some of the language we use is in line with terminology that you will find whilst navigating the visa system, and from official sources of information such as the Home Office and UK Government websites. You will find a glossary of definitions and acronyms towards the end of this guide that can help you understand some of this terminology.

However, the content of this guide does not constitute legal advice. If you do need legal advice, you should get in touch with a suitably qualified lawyer. You can read our full legal disclaimer on our website [here](#). We aim to revise this guide on an annual basis, to ensure that the information we provide remains up to date. You can find out when the guide was last updated at the top of this page, next to 'Version updated'.

Throughout this guide, we **link to relevant pages** on the UK Government website as there may be further reading on a particular subject. Not all of the information in this guide may be relevant to your situation, and we have provided buttons on some pages to help you find your way to the next relevant page. However, we do recommend that you consider all of the information in this guide, so that you are aware of all of the visa options available. This is especially important if you are planning a creative visit with more than one individual coming to the UK, where one visa option may not be the most appropriate option for all individuals.

This aim of this guide is to be a useful and practical resource for a range of individuals and organisations working across the arts sector, and we welcome feedback at any point. Please e-mail infopoint@wai.org.uk with your feedback.

The original publication of this guide has been created for Arts Infopoint UK by Tamizdat in collaboration with Latitude Law and Newfields Law.

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Contents

This guide highlights all the visa options available to those planning a creative visit to the UK. Some factors will affect the options available to you, and we have grouped the information by visa nationality status, the type of work you may undertake whilst in the UK (paid or unpaid), and your length of stay (short term, longer term, living in the UK). Although you may already know which of these factors are relevant to your situation, we recommend you consider all the information and options available to you in this guide.

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This is the first step in understanding which visa options are available to you. In this section we look at how nationalities are defined by the UK Government and how your nationality affects whether you need to apply for a visa before coming to the UK.

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In this section, we outline how you can visit the UK as a 'standard visitor', which is how tourists visit the UK for general travel and leisure purposes, this includes some of the **limited unpaid activities** that creative professionals are allowed to do as a visitor to the UK.

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In this section we outline which visas and sponsorship options allow creative professionals to be in the UK for longer term paid work, including the eligibility criteria and how to apply.

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In this section we outline sponsorship options for creative professionals who would like to spend a prolonged amount of time living and working in the UK.

Am I a Visa National or Non-Visa National?

This is the first step in understanding which visa options are available to you. In this section we look at how nationalities are defined by the UK Government, and how your nationality affects whether you need to apply for a visa before coming to the UK.

UK law defines citizens of all other countries in two categories: 'Visa Nationals' and 'Non-Visa Nationals.' To understand how the law applies to you, you need to know which of these you are.

Visa National

Foreign nationals who must obtain a visa before coming to the UK for any reason.

'Visa National' countries are listed on the Visa National List, which you can find on the UK Government website [here](#).

The Visa National List includes many African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries. Visa Nationals who are performing artists must always obtain some kind of visa before travelling to the UK. The type of visa performing artists will need depends on what you will be doing whilst in the UK.

Non-Visa National

Foreign nationals who do not need to get a visa before coming to the UK for tourism or limited professional activities.

Non-visa countries include Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the U.S, and others. **Since 1 January 2021**, European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), and Swiss citizens are classified as 'Non-Visa Nationals'.

Other than some limited exceptions, Non-Visa Nationals who are performing artists may need to get employment visas before coming to the UK to perform, and the type of visa you will need depends on what you will be doing whilst in the UK.

Am I a Visa National or Non-Visa National?

There is a separate agreement between the UK, Ireland and the islands of Jersey, Guernsey and Isle of Man called the Common Travel Area (CTA). It is a long-standing arrangement that predates British and Irish EU membership and sits as an independent agreement.

Find out more about the Common Travel Area here: [Common Travel Area Guidance](#)

Throughout this document, we refer to the CTA and its articles, and how they apply to those travelling to the UK via Ireland. This is because additional rules exist that you need to be aware of.

Irish citizens **do not require a visa** to live and work in the UK. Under the CTA, British and Irish citizens can move freely and reside in either country, and have associated rights and privileges, including the right to work, study and vote in certain elections, as well as to access social welfare benefits and health services.

Now that you know whether you are a Visa National or a Non-Visa National, select the following situation that best describes what you want to do in the United Kingdom:

Unpaid Activities

I need to travel to the UK to have meetings, give unpaid promotional performances, or other unpaid work.

Paid Activities

I am a performing artist, and I need to travel to the UK to perform, get paid, and leave.

Living in the UK

I need to travel to the UK to live and work.

Unpaid Activities

I need to travel to the UK to have meetings, give unpaid promotional performances, or other unpaid work

As of 1 January 2021, in most circumstances, if you are an international artist who does not have British or Irish citizenship or does not have settled or pre-settled status in the UK, you will need a specific offer of employment in place by a licensed organisation before travelling to the UK. However, there are some activities that international artists can do as a standard visitor in the UK without requiring an employment offer in advance.

In the case of these specific, limited activities, the cost of travel, maintenance and accommodation for the trip can be provided by a third party where a genuine professional or personal relationship exists. However, you cannot be paid for your activities in the UK, meaning that it is not suitable for a UK source to compensate you beyond the cost of your reasonable expenses.

This restriction on payment from a UK source is what tends to cause the most difficulty for those hoping to enter the UK as creative visitors.

Generally, payment for activities in the UK as a Creative Standard Visitor is prohibited. There are two exceptions which are helpful for creatives: paid performances at a Permit Free Festival or Permitted Paid Engagements. We discuss these entry routes in more detail under 'Paid Activities' on pages *to*.

Find out more about the limited activities you can do as a standard visitor to the UK here:

[Standard Visitor Overview](#)

What a Standard Visitor is, and what you can and can't do as a Standard Visitor

[Standard Visitor: Visit on Business](#)

What activities are permitted as part of your overseas job role, as a Standard Visitor

The activities you can undertake as a Standard Visitor on an unpaid basis are:

- To attend conferences, meetings, and interviews, and to negotiate or sign contracts. Permitted activities also include giving one-off or a short series of talks and speeches provided these are not organised as commercial and profit-based events;
- To attend trade fairs for promotional purposes only (no direct sales);

Unpaid Activities

- To carry out site visits, gather information for UK employment plans, or be briefed on requirements of a UK-based customer (provided work is done outside of the UK);
- To give performances as individuals or as part of a group, take part in competitions or auditions, and to make personal and promotional appearances.

Artists' personal or technical support staff can enter the UK as a standard visitor if they are attending the same event as the artist, entertainer, or musician in the UK, and provided they are employed to work for them overseas.

Application process

Visa National

Artists who are Visa Nationals must apply for a standard visitor visa before travelling to the UK. Those applications may be presented in any country with a UK visa-issuing centre – you can find out more about what a UK visa-issuing centre is in 'Unpaid Activities: Frequently Asked Questions' on page 6. The cost of the application starts at £127 GBP and there could be additional fees at the visa application centre, for services that offer visa applicants convenience and access to flexible appointments – you should plan a contingency to cover any increased costs.

Non-Visa National

Artists who are Non-Visa Nationals can enter the UK as standard visitors for up to 6 months. UK Government has introduced an Electronic Travel Authorisation ('ETA') for visitors to the UK who do not currently need a visa for short stays. Non-Visa nationals will require an ETA to enter the UK as a standard visitor. The ETA will cost £16, and be valid for two years, and can be used as many times as needed during that period.

Find out more about the scheme including how to apply here:

[Guidance: Apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation \(ETA\)](#)

Unpaid Activities

Both Visa Nationals and Non-Visa Nationals wishing to enter the UK as visitors should ensure you have the following documents as evidence of your planned activities in the UK:

- A welcome letter from the UK organisation or festival confirming the artist's engagement including any contract;
- Proof of booked accommodation in the UK;
- Evidence that the artist can support themselves whilst in the UK without recourse to public funds—e.g., a bank statement showing available funds; and
- Evidence of sufficient funds for a return journey (you may make a pre-paid return travel booking, but UK Visas and Immigration advises against this).

The UK Government aim to make a decision on applications within 3 weeks, but it can sometimes take longer. You might be able to fast track your visa application depending which country you live in – you can check with your visa application centre whether this is an option for you. You should ensure that you leave plenty of time to complete your application and gather the necessary supporting documents.

Find out more about application decision times here:

[Visa Decision Waiting Times: Applications outside the UK](#)

Standard visitors entering the UK via Ireland

In this scenario as a standard visitor with the necessary arrangements and paperwork in place, you will be entering the UK under Article 4 deemed leave. Deemed leave is permission to enter the UK via Ireland without your passport being stamped. This is because you won't necessarily meet a Border Force officer whilst crossing the border between the UK and Ireland. You don't need to apply for deemed leave, however you must ensure your activity in the UK falls within the restrictions for standard visitors.

Find out more about Deemed Leave Article 4 under the Common Travel Area Guidance here:

[Travelling to the UK from Ireland, Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey](#)

Unpaid Activities

Frequently Asked Questions

→ **I am a Visa National. Where can I apply for a standard visitor visa, and what documentation will I need to support my visitor visa application?**

Read the UK Governments website about how to make an application.

Standard visitor visas may be submitted "in any visa application center, British diplomatic mission or consular post overseas where entry clearance applications are accepted."

However, the applicant should "be present legally in that country or territory they're applying from".

Find out more about where to apply for a Standard Visitor Visa here:
[How to make an application](#)
[UKVI: Where to apply](#)

→ **What is the definition of support staff, and what supporting documentation do they need to gain entry at the UK border?**

There is no definition for support staff, however Home Office guidance states: "personal or technical staff who are attending the same event can accompany the artist, entertainer or musician to the UK, provided they are employed to work for them overseas."

Examples include but are not restricted to:

- choreographers
- stage managers
- make-up artists
- personal bodyguards
- press officers

Travelling with proof of the overseas employment is advised, for example a letter written by the employer confirming the terms of employment, and duration and purpose of the UK visit.

Find out more about personal or technical staff here:
[Home Office Visit Guidance Page 36: Creative](#)

Paid activities

I am a working artist, and I need to travel to the UK for creative work, get paid, and leave

Artists wishing to travel to the UK for paid work can undertake certain professional activities with some advanced planning. There are six key routes for these artists:

1. Permitted Paid Engagement Visa (PPE) - maximum stay of 6 months, however PPE activities must be carried out within the first 30 days of arrival in the UK.
2. Permit Free Festivals (PFF) – maximum stay of 6 months
3. Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession (for Non-Visa Nationals only) – maximum stay of 3 months
4. Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa
5. Youth Mobility Worker Visa
6. Frontier Worker permit

The PPE Visa, Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession, and Permit Free Festival 'permission to enter' routes are for short-term engagements and touring. These can be easier and cheaper to obtain than the longer-term routes.

The Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa, Youth Mobility Worker Visa, and Frontier Worker permit routes allow for longer-term stays, but the Creative Worker Visa and Youth Mobility Worker Visa involve more costs. The Frontier Worker permit is free of cost but is limited to a small number of nationalities.

To find out more about these Visa routes, select the option that best describes your planned activity in the UK:

I'm planning to be in the UK for a one-off event or for short-term work

I'm planning to be in the UK for longer term work

I'm planning to relocate to the UK to live and work

Short-Term Paid Activities in the UK

I'm planning to be in the UK for a one-off event or for short-term work

These visa routes are for Visa Nationals and Non-Visa Nationals planning short term, more affordable touring in the UK. At the bottom of each entry route page, you will find a button to return to this page, so that you can easily navigate between the entry routes. We recommend you consider all the information available on the following entry routes, however you can skip to each entry route by selecting the relevant buttons below.

Visa National

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE)

Artists can enter the UK for short-term paid engagements under the Permitted Paid Engagement rules for a maximum stay of **6 months** as a standard visitor, however the PPE activity must be undertaken within the first 30 days of arrival in the UK, applicants convenience and access to flexible appointments – you should plan a contingency to cover any increased costs.

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Permit Free Festivals

Artists can enter the UK under standard visitor rules and undertake paid engagements at one or more Permit Free Festivals for a maximum stay of **6 months**.

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The Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession is not an option for Visa Nationals. However, the Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa may be suitable. Read more about this entry route under 'Longer Term Paid Activities in the UK' [here](#).

Non-Visa National

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE)

Artists can enter the UK for short-term paid engagements under the Permitted Paid Engagement rules for a maximum stay of **6 months** as a standard visitor, however the PPE activity must be undertaken within the first 30 days of arrival in the UK.

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Permit Free Festivals

Artists can enter the UK under standard visitor rules and undertake paid engagements at one or more Permit Free Festivals for a maximum stay of **6 months**.

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Temporary Work –

Creative Worker Visa Concession

Artists can enter the UK under the Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession for short-term paid work for a maximum stay of **3 months**.

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Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Information

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

An artist aged 18 or over coming to the UK for up to one month may take part in one or more Permitted Paid Engagements. This is an option reserved for established professionals.

The engagement must be arranged in advance of the artist's arrival in the UK and must be supported by a formal letter of invitation from a UK-based creative organisation, agent or broadcaster. The letter of invitation should explain the engagement, including its dates and location, and how it directly relates to the artist's expertise and experience. Any accommodation which has been arranged by the organiser should also be set out in the letter of invitation.

Artists are also advised to prepare a portfolio that refers to their work, reputation, any earnings, and existing work commitments outside of the UK, together with the nature of their UK-based engagement.

You will be allowed to enter to do a Permitted Paid Engagement in the arts and entertainment (including broadcasting) if your travel and tour plans meet the following requirements:

- a. You must be at least 18 year old;
- b. You must be visiting the UK for no more than 6 months, and will carry out the permitted paid engagement within the first 30 days of arrival in the UK ;
- c. You must have enough money to support and house yourself;
- d. You must have enough money to pay for your return or onward journey; and
- e. When you leave, you are not travelling through Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

Find out more about Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE) here:
[Visit the UK: Permitted Paid Engagement Visitor](#)

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Information

Application Process

Visa National

Artists who are Visa Nationals must now apply to visit the UK under the Standard Visitor route, as this route has absorbed the previous PPE provisions. The visa application must be submitted in the artist's country of nationality or country of lawful residence. The application fee for a six-month Standard Visit Visa is £127 GBP and additional fees might arise at the visa application centre for services that offer visa applicants convenience and access to flexible appointments.

Read the UK Governments website about how to make an application.

Standard visitor visas may be submitted "in any visa application centre, British diplomatic mission or consular post overseas where entry clearance applications are accepted."

However, the applicant should "be present legally in that country or territory they're applying from".

The UK Government aim to make a decision on applications within 3 weeks, but it can sometimes take longer. You should ensure that you leave plenty of time to complete your application and gather the necessary supporting documents. The earliest you can apply for a Standard Visit Visa is 3 months before you travel.

Non-Visa National

Artists who are Non Visa nationals can enter the UK without having to apply as a Standard Visitor, but will require an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) as explained above. If eligible, you can now enter through the eGates, but it is important that you have all proper documentation to hand (discussed below in the arrivals section) in the event that a Border Official requests to see it.

Find out more about where to apply for a Standard Visitor Visa here:

[How to make an application](#)

[UKVI: Where to apply](#)

Find out more about application decision times here:

[Visa Decision Waiting Times: Applications outside the UK](#)

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Information

Entering the UK via Ireland with a Permitted Paid Engagement Visa

If you are coming to the UK via Ireland for a permitted paid engagement, you can stay in the UK on the basis of Article 6 Deemed Leave for up to one month. Deemed leave is permission to enter the UK via Ireland without your passport being stamped. This is because you won't necessarily meet a Border Force officer whilst crossing the borders between the UK and Ireland.

You don't have to apply for deemed leave. Your deemed leave starts from the date you first enter the UK from Ireland. You can prove this date, for example, with your travel ticket or boarding pass. This deemed leave ends when you leave the UK.

The Common Travel Area is an agreement between the UK and Ireland. Find out more about it here: [Common Travel Area Guidance](#)

Find out more about Deemed Leave Article 6 here: [Common Travel Area Guidance Page 61: Deemed leave under Article 6 for Permitted Paid Engagements](#)

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ **I am a Visa National artist, and my UK touring plans meet the requirements for Permitted Paid Engagements. What do I need to do before I travel?**

Visa National artists who are invited to the UK to undertake a Permitted Paid Engagement may work in the UK for up to one month (30 days).

You can apply to visit the UK as a Standard Visitor and declare as part of this application that you intend to carry out PPE whilst in the UK. The application form will ask you the main reason for your visit in the UK, if you select 'Other' from the list of options you will be given space to declare your PPE activities.

You must provide documentary evidence including a formal invitation from the arts organisation confirming details of the PPE, and evidence that the PPE relates to your full-time profession and/or qualifications alongside your application. The visa application must state that the engagement has been arranged before you travel to the UK. When you apply for the visa, you must provide the following documentation:

- a. a current passport or other valid travel identification - your passport must have a blank page for your visa;
- b. proof that you can support yourself during your trip - for example bank statements or payslips for the last 6 months, details of the payment you will receive for your UK performances;
- c. details of where you intend to stay and your travel plans - it is not essential to pay for accommodation or travel until you get your visa;
- d. a formal invitation from the UK-based organisation or authority you'll be paid by; and
- e. proof that the paid engagement relates to your expertise, qualifications, and work in your home country or internationally.

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ I am a Non-Visa National artist, and my UK touring plans meet the requirements for Permitted Paid Engagements. What do I need to do before I travel?

Non-Visa National artists who are invited to the UK to undertake a Permitted Paid Engagement may stay in the UK for up to 6 months. However, PPE activities must be carried out within the first 30 days of arrival in the UK.

Non-visa nationals are no longer required to seek out a Border Force officer upon their arrival in the UK and instead are able to use eGates where possible. Note that signage at UK airports does still reference this need; this can be ignored. However, non-visa nationals should still have accessible to them (digitally or physically) all documentary evidence of their Permitted Paid Engagement. As above, you will require an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) prior to travel to the UK.

The documentary evidence should include a formal invitation from the arts organisation confirming details of the PPE, and evidence that the PPE relates to your full-time profession and/or qualifications. When you arrive in the UK you should have the following to hand, as a Border Official may request to see it:

- a. a current passport or other valid travel identification;
- b. proof that you can support yourself during your trip, for example bank statements or payslips for the last 6 months, details of the payment you will receive for your UK performances;
- c. details of where you intend to stay and your travel plans;
- d. a formal invitation from the UK-based organisation or authority you'll be paid by; and
- e. proof that the paid engagement relates to your expertise, qualifications and work in your home country or internationally.

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ What do I need to do when I arrive in the UK?

If you are a visa national arriving in the UK to undertake Permitted Paid Engagements, you should seek out a Border Force officer on entry as they will stamp your passport and admit you to the UK as a Standard Visitor. Please ensure you have all documents relating to your PPE available to show any Border Force Officer upon request.

If you are a non-visa national entering the UK to undertake Permitted Paid Engagements, the Home Office have confirmed that you are not required to obtain a specific stamp at the Border and are eligible to enter using an eGate where possible.

→ Does PPE cover more than one engagement, with different companies? For example a tour of venues?

The Immigration Rules Appendix V: Visitor paragraph 13.2 refers to one (or more) permitted paid engagements the visitor intends to undertake, and Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Permitted Activities Paragraph 19 notes 'A Visitor may undertake the permitted paid engagements in V 13.3, providing they are completed within 30 days of the Visitor's entry to the UK, and the requirements of V 13.1. to V 13.2. are met'.

→ Can personal or technical supporting staff, or production team also enter the UK under the PPE route?

Artists' personal or technical staff, or members of the production team, may come to the UK as a Standard Visitor in order to support the activities of an artist, entertainer or musician who is coming to the UK as a Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) visitor, provided they are attending the same event and are employed to work for the artist outside of the UK. Standard Visitor guidance would apply to support staff. You can read more information about the Standard Visitor route and undertaking unpaid activity in the UK on page 4.

Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ **Can an individual combine Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) and Permit Free Festival (PFF) travel in a single visit?**

This is possible provided that any PPE is undertaken and completed within the first 30 days of their entry to the UK.

The visitor must declare all of their intended activity as part of the application for entry clearance or permission to enter the UK and provide evidence of a formal invitation to any events including PPE and PFF activity in the UK.

→ **Is there a limit on the number of times I can visit the UK in a year?**

There is no specific limit on the number of visits an individual may complete in the UK in any given year, so long as they do not spend more than six months in the UK per visit. However, individuals should as a general guide be careful not to spend more than half of their time in the UK; this would be considered to establish residence in the UK via visits, which is not permitted. It is part of the Standard Visit Visa application that you demonstrate your intention to leave the UK after your visit.

Permit Free Festivals (PFF): Information

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

Artists, entertainers, and musicians visiting the UK under the standard visitor rules can take part in one or more cultural events or festivals on the list of permit free festivals where payment is permitted.

Artists should ensure they have a welcome letter from the UK organisation or festival confirming activity, including any contract, and should be able to satisfy all the requirements placed on standard visitors as covered under unpaid activities, including proving they have sufficient funds to support themselves while in the UK, and return home.

See the list of Permit Free Festivals here:
[Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Permit Free Festivals List](#)

Application Process

Visa National

Artists who are Visa Nationals must apply for a Standard Visitor visa before travelling to the UK. Those applications must be presented in the artist's country of nationality or country of lawful residence. The application fee is £127 GBP and additional fees might arise at the visa application centre for services that offer visa applicants convenience and access to flexible appointments.

Read the UK Governments website about how to make an application.

Standard visitor visas may be submitted "in any visa application centre, British diplomatic mission or consular post overseas where entry clearance applications are accepted."

However, the applicant should "be present legally in that country or territory they're applying from".

The UK Government aim to make a decision on applications within 3 weeks, but it can sometimes take longer. You should ensure that you leave plenty of time to complete your application and gather the necessary supporting documents.

Non-Visa National

Artists who are Non-Visa Nationals can enter the UK under this route without having to apply for a visa from overseas, but will need to obtain an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). You can use the automatic eGates on arrival in the UK if you are eligible.

Find out more about where to apply for a Standard Visitor Visa here:
[How to make an application](#)
[UKVI: Where to apply](#)

Find out more about application decision times here:
[Visa Decision Waiting Times: Applications outside the UK](#)

Permit Free Festivals (PFF): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ Which are the Permit Free Festivals?

You have to apply to become a Permit Free Festival. You can find out more about how to apply to become a Permit Free Festival below. The UK Government updates the list of Permit Free Festivals on their website.

See the full list of Permit Free Festivals here:
[Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Permit Free Festivals List](#)

→ How can I get my festival included on this list?

The UK Government lists the application process for Permit Free Festivals on their website, including application deadlines.

Find out more about the rules and procedures around becoming a Permit Free Festival here:
[How to apply to get on the list of Permit Free Festivals](#)

→ I am a Visa National. Where can I apply for a Standard Visitor visa, and what documentation will I need to support my visitor visa application given that I plan to perform at a Permit Free Festival?

As a Visa National planning to perform at a Permit Free Festival, you will need a letter confirming your participation in the Permit Free Festival as part of your visitor visa application, as well as the standard documentation outlined in the visa application, including passport, evidence of funds, and photographs. You may also want to include your venue contract, confirming that you are booked to perform. You may apply up to three months in advance for the visitor visa. The Standard Visitor visa costs £127 GBP and will usually take 3 weeks to process.

[Find out on the UK Governments website about making an application](#)

Permit Free Festivals (PFF): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ **What do I need to do when I arrive in the UK when I am performing at a Permit Free Festival?**

If eligible, you can use the eGates on arrival in the UK. Otherwise, you will need to speak with a Border Force officer and provide a valid passport or travel document. Your passport should be valid for the whole of your stay in the UK. You may also be asked to demonstrate that you meet the eligibility requirements of the [Standard Visitor](#) route which involves providing the documents listed above.

→ **Can personal or technical supporting staff, or production team also enter the UK under the Permit Free Festivals route?**

Personal or technical staff or members of the production team may come to the UK as a Standard Visitor in order to support the activities of an artist, entertainer or musician who is coming to the UK to perform at a Permit free Festival, provided they are attending the same event and are employed to work for the artist outside of the UK. Standard visitor guidance would apply to support staff. You can read more information about the Standard Visitor route and undertaking unpaid activity in the UK on [page 4](#).

Permit Free Festivals (PFF): Frequently Asked Questions

For short-term, more affordable touring in the UK

→ **Can an individual combine Permit Free Festival (PFF) and Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) and travel in a single visit?**

This is possible provided that any PPE is undertaken and completed within the first 30 days of their entry to the UK.

The visitor must declare all of their intended activity as part of the application for entry clearance or permission to enter the UK and provide evidence of a formal invitation to any events including PPE and PFF activity in the UK.

→ **Is there a limit on the number of times I can visit the UK in a year?**

There is no specific limit on the number of visits an individual may complete in the UK in any given year, but you must not spend more than six months in the UK per visit. However, individuals should as a general guide be careful not to spend more than half of their time in the UK; this would be considered to establish residence in the UK via visits, which is not permitted.

Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession: Information

For Non-Visa Nationals for short-term more affordable touring in the UK

This route is for non-Visa nationals only.

Artists who are non-Visa Nationals can enter the UK under this route without having to apply for a visa from overseas, provided the following criteria are met:

- The artist is a non-Visa National;
- The total length of all the periods of engagement, together with any gap between those engagements, is 3 months or less.
- The artist, often in cooperation with their UK presenter, has identified a UK organisation that is registered with a Home Office sponsor licence that will "sponsor" the visa
- The UK sponsor organisation assigns to the individual artist a Certificate of Sponsorship, which sets out what the artist will do and any payment arrangement. The Certificate explains how the artist qualifies for a visa in line with the specific criteria listed on the UK Government website. The Certificate of Sponsorship is activated at the border; and
- The maximum length of stay is 3 months or less from the date that your visa is assigned to you.

Artists will require an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) — see standard visitor section for details on ETA.

Once in the UK, the artist must undertake the work that is set out in the Certificate of Sponsorship.

Find out more about the Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession here: [Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession](#)

See the list of organisations registered with a Home Office sponsor licence here: [Register of Licensed Sponsors](#)

Read the specific criteria for a Certificate of Sponsorship here: [Immigration Rules Creative Worker Codes of Practice](#)

Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa Concession: Information

For Non-Visa Nationals for short-term more affordable touring in the UK

'**Consecutive engagements**' is where multiple sponsors support an artist over several different engagements in the UK. If you are being sponsored for consecutive engagements, each sponsor must hold a valid sponsor licence, and must assign its own Certificate of Sponsorship to you.

'**Multiple engagements**' is where the same sponsor supports the artist throughout, but there are several distinct engagements during the period of sponsorship.

For **both** 'consecutive engagements' and 'multiple engagements', there should be no more than 14 days between each engagement in the UK. However, if you leave the UK and come back, your time away will not count towards the 14 days. The dates on which you leave and return to the UK do not count towards the 14 days.

- Artists are also allowed to undertake supplementary work up to 20 hours per week if the job is either a in the same sector and at the same level as your main job, or on the Skilled Worker immigration salary list.

See the skilled workr immigration salary list here:
[Skilled Worker visa: immigration salary list – GOV.UK](#)

Entering the UK via Ireland with a Creative Worker Visa Concession

If you are coming to the UK through Ireland under the Creative Worker Visa Concession you must apply for remote clearance at least 72 hours before you arrive in the UK.

Find out more about the Common Travel Area here:
[Common Travel Area Guidance](#)

Information on travelling to the UK via Ireland (Common Travel Area Guidance), and how to apply for remote clearance for a Creative Worker Visa Concession is available on the UK Government website.

Find out how to apply for remote clearance here:
[Creative Worker Visa Concession: Immigration Clearance Form](#)

Longer Term Paid Activities in the UK

I'm planning to be in the UK for longer term work

The following entry routes may be suitable for artists who are planning to be in the UK for longer term paid activities. At the bottom of each entry route page, you will find a button to return to this page, so that you can easily navigate between the entry routes. We recommend you consider all the information available on the following entry routes, however you can skip to each entry route by selecting the relevant buttons below.

Creative Worker Visa

Artists can stay in the UK for paid engagements **up to 12 months**, with a possible extension **up to 24 months**.

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Youth Mobility Worker Visa

Artists that meet the age and nationality requirements can stay in the UK for paid engagements **up to 2 or 3 years** depending on their nationality

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Frontier Worker permit

Artists that meet nationality requirements and other conditions can stay in the UK for paid engagements **up to 5 years (or 2 years if the artist applied for 'retained' status)**. This permit is free of cost.

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Find out more about 'retained status' here:

[Frontier Worker Permit: Who can apply](#)

Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa: Information

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

This visa route is ideal for dancers, musicians, actors, workers in film and television, fashion models, and other performers who are contracted for engagements in the UK that will last more than one month. The Temporary Work - Creative Worker Visa allows the artist to live and work in the UK for up to 12 months initially (extension to 24 months possible), as well as being able to leave the UK and come back during the sponsored period.

There are three steps to obtaining a Temporary Worker – Creative Worker Visa:

1. The artist, often in cooperation with their UK presenter, must identify a UK organisation that is registered with a Home Office sponsor licence that will "sponsor" the visa.
2. The UK sponsor organisation issues the individual artist with a Certificate of Sponsorship, which sets out what the artist will do and any payment arrangement. This Certificate of Sponsorship explains how the artist qualifies for a visa, in line with the specific criteria listed on the UK Government website.
3. The artist applies for a visa, referencing the information outlined in this Certificate of Sponsorship. This application must be submitted in the artist's country of nationality or country of lawful residence. As part of the application, the artist must prove they have held personal funds of at least £1,270 GBP for a period of 28 days, unless their A-rated sponsor has certified their maintenance and this is confirmed on the Certificate of Sponsorship.

Find out more about the Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa here:

[Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa](#)

See the list of organisations registered with a Home Office sponsor license here:

[Register of licensed sponsors](#)

Read the specific criteria for a Certificate of Sponsorship here:

[Immigration Rules Appendix Creative Worker Codes of Practice](#)

Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa: Information

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

Once in the UK, the artist must undertake the work that is set out in the Certificate of Sponsorship.

Once the application is submitted, the UK government typically makes a decision within three weeks, but this can sometimes take longer. You might be able to fast track your visa application for an additional fee – you can check whether this is an option for you with your visa application centre. The application fee is £319 GBP and the Immigration Health Surcharge will apply if the visa you are applying for exceeds a period of 6 months. Additional fees might arise at the visa application centre for services that offer visa applicants convenience and access to flexible appointments.

The artist's family members can apply for dependent visas at the same time as the artist, or after the artist's visa has been issued. The application process and fees are mostly the same as those paid by the artist.

'**Consecutive engagements**' is where multiple sponsors support an artist over several different engagements in the UK. If you are being sponsored for consecutive engagements, each sponsor must hold a Home Office sponsor licence, and must assign its own Certificate of Sponsorship to you.

'**Multiple engagements**' is where the same sponsor supports the artist throughout, but there are several distinct engagements during the period of sponsorship.

For **both** 'consecutive engagements' and 'multiple engagements', there should be no more than 14 days between each engagement in the UK. However, if you leave the UK and come back, your time away will not count towards the 14 days. The dates on which you leave and return to the UK do not count towards the 14 days.

Artists are also allowed to undertake supplementary work up to 20 hours per week if the job is either on the immigration salary list or is in the same sector and at the same level as your main job. This work can be with a UK organisation that has no sponsor licence, and it must not interfere with the main engagement.

Find out more about application decision times here:

[Visa Decision Waiting Times](#)

Find out more about the Immigration Health Surcharge here:

[Pay for UK healthcare as part of your immigration application](#)

See the skilled worker shortage occupation list here:

[Skilled Worker visa: immigration salary list – GOV.UK](#)

Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa: Frequently Asked Questions

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

→ What can I do on a Creative Worker Visa?

With the Temporary Worker - Creative Worker Visa you may:

- a. Stay for up to 12 months (possible extension available);
- b. Work for your sponsor in the job described in your Certificate of Sponsorship;
- c. Do a second job in the same sector and at the same level as your main job (exceptions do apply) or is on the Skilled Worker immigration salary list for up to 20 hours per week
- d. Travel abroad and return to the UK; and
- e. Bring family members with you.

→ What steps must artists take to apply for a Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa?

To apply for a Temporary Work - Creative Worker Visa, the artist must get a Certificate of Sponsorship, and then must apply for the visa online (unless you are from North Korea).

Getting a certificate of sponsorship

In order to receive a Temporary Work – Creative Worker Visa, artists must be assigned a certificate of sponsorship from a creative worker Licenced Sponsor organisation.

The Certificate of Sponsorship must confirm that the artist qualifies for one of the classifications listed on:

- Immigration Rules Appendix Creative Worker
- Codes of Practice Immigration Rules Appendix Skilled Occupations and/or
- Immigration Rules Appendix Immigration Salary List
- These lists include categories for musicians and other artists.

These lists include categories for musicians and other artists.

See the list of organisations registered with a Home Office sponsor license here: [Register of licensed sponsors](#)

See the skilled worker shortage occupation list here: [Immigration Rules – Immigration Rules Appendix Immigration Salary List – Guidance – GOV.UK](#)

Temporary Work - Creative Worker Visa: Frequently Asked Questions

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

To be eligible for a Creative Worker Visa, artists must show that they:

- Will make a unique contribution to the UK labour market, for example by being internationally renowned or required for the continuity of a project;
- Meet the requirements of a relevant code of practice;
- Will be paid the minimum salary as set by [Equity](#), [PACT](#) or [BECTU](#) (except for models, musicians or circuses); and
- Have £1,270 GBP in a bank account for 28 days before applying (unless your employer sponsor is a fully approved A-rated sponsor and certifies maintenance for you);

Applying for the Creative Worker Visa

The earliest you can apply is 3 months before the work date listed on the Certificate of Sponsorship. It should take about 3 weeks for the visa to be processed once your application is received.

Youth Mobility Scheme Visa: Information

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

The Youth Mobility Scheme Visa allows the artist to live and work in the UK for up to 24 months, as well as to leave the UK and come back during the 24-month period. If you are from Australia, Canada, or New Zealand, you can extend your visa for up to one year from within the UK.

Find out more about the Youth Mobility Scheme Visa here:

[Youth Mobility Scheme Visa](#)

This visa route may be ideal for artists who meet the following criteria:

- Have at least £2,530 in savings.
- You can apply for the visa if you're aged 18 to 35 and from:
 - Australia
 - Canada
 - New Zealand
 - South Korea
- You can apply for the visa if you're aged 18 to 30 and from:
 - Andorra
 - Iceland
 - India
 - Japan
 - Monaco
 - San Marino
 - Uruguay
 - Hong Kong, if you have an SAR passport
 - Taiwan
- You can also apply if you're aged 18 to 30 and you're a:
 - British overseas citizen
 - British overseas territories citizen
 - British national (overseas)

You must be selected in the Youth Mobility Scheme ballot before you can apply for your visa if you're from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or India. There is a separate scheme for Indian nationals called the India Young Professionals Scheme.

Find out more about the ballot system here:

[Youth Mobility Scheme Visa Ballot System](#)

[India Young Professionals Scheme visa: ballot system – GOV.UK](#)

Youth Mobility Scheme Visa: Information

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

Application Process

Once the application is submitted, the UK government typically makes a decision within three weeks, but this can sometimes take longer.

You might be able to fast track your visa application for an additional fee – you can check whether this is an option for you with your visa application centre. The application fee is £319 GBP, and the Immigration Health Surcharge will apply. Additional fees might arise at the visa application centre for services that offer visa applicants convenience and access to flexible appointments.

The artist's family members cannot apply for dependent visas at the same time as the artist, or after the artist's visa has been issued. You cannot apply for this visa if you have any children aged under 18 who are either living with you or are financially dependent upon you.

Find out more about application decision times here:

[Visa Decision Waiting Times: Applications outside the UK](#)

Find out more about the Immigration Health Surcharge here:

[Pay for UK healthcare as part of your immigration application](#)

Frontier Worker permits: Information

For longer-term paid engagements in the UK

The Frontier Worker Permit allows the artist to work in the UK for up to 5 years (or 2 years if the artist applied for 'retained worker' status). There's no fee to apply for the permit, and no requirement to pay the immigration health surcharge. The artist may have to pay to submit their biometric information (photograph or fingerprints).

This permit route may be ideal for artists who meet the following criteria:

- Nationality is EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein;
- Primarily a resident outside the UK;
- Worked in the UK by 31 December 2020; and
- Performed genuine and effective work in the UK in the 12 months before applying for the permit (some exceptions apply)

The artist's family members are not covered by the Frontier Worker permit.

Find out more about the Frontier Worker Permit here: [Frontier Worker Permit](#)

Find out more about the 'retained worker' status here: [Frontier Worker Permit: Who can apply](#)

Living in the UK

You need to travel to the UK to live and work.

Information

The Permit Free Festival (PFF), Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) and Creative Worker Visas are typically the most suitable for most overseas artists wishing to tour or undertake employment in the UK without living in the UK for an extended period. However, there are other options that may be worth considering, especially if the artist is highly skilled or plans to be engaged in the UK for a longer period.

Global Talent Visa

This route is for established leaders in the arts, dance, literature, music, theatre, or visual arts, including film and television (which includes animation, post-production and visual effects). Those showing exceptional promise, at an early stage in their career, may additionally be endorsed in the above disciplines except film and television.

This is a 2-stage process:

1. Applicants must collate documents and then apply for endorsement on the UK Government website.
2. The endorsing body (Arts Council England) will assess applications for endorsement. ACE delegates assessment in film and television to PACT. Once an endorsement is issued, the artist must submit a visa application that refers to the endorsement. If granted, the visa will be for a period up to 5 years.

The artist's family members are entitled to apply for dependant visas for the same duration. The combined fee for both the visa and the endorsement is £766 GBP and the Immigration Health Surcharge will apply to all applications (including family members). Additional costs might arise for services offered by the visa application centre.

Settlement in the Global Talent route can be achieved after 3 years (exceptional talent) or 5 years (exceptional promise).

Find out more about the Global Talent Visa here:
[Work in the UK as a leader in arts and culture](#)

See the list of documents required here:
[Global Talent Visa: Documents you must provide](#)

Find out more about the first stage of endorsement and apply here:
[Global talent endorsement – Stage 1](#)

Read the endorsing body Arts Council England guidance here:
[The Global Talent Visa](#)

Find out more about the Immigration Health Surcharge here:
[Pay for UK healthcare as part of your immigration application](#)

Living in the UK

You need to travel to the UK to live and work

Skilled Worker Visa

This route is for individuals wishing to be employed by a UK employer that has a sponsor licence. The role being offered by the UK employer-sponsor must be skilled, and the individual must be paid a minimum salary. The UK sponsor must issue the individual with a Certificate of Sponsorship, which sets out information about the skilled role and the salary being offered.

As part of the visa application, the individual must:

- refer to the Certificate of Sponsorship;
- demonstrate they have held personal funds of at least £1,270 GBP for a period of 28 days, unless maintenance is certified by the sponsor; and
- meets the English language requirement.

If granted, the visa will be for a period up to 5 years. Settlement can be achieved after 5 years' residence. Family members are entitled to apply for dependant visas of the same duration. The visa fees vary significantly depending on the length of the visa and the nature of the skilled work and you must pay the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Other categories

The UK Immigration Rules also incorporate several categories to accommodate a person's individual and/or family circumstances.

Find out more about the Skilled Worker Visa here:
[Skilled Worker Visa](#)

See the list of organisations registered with a Home Office sponsor license here:
[Register of Licensed Sponsors](#)

See the list of eligible occupations and corresponding salary levels here:
[Immigration rules: Appendix Skilled Occupations](#)

Find out more about Skilled Worker Visa application fees here:
[Skilled Worker Visa: How much it costs](#)

Find out more about the Immigration Health Surcharge here:
[Pay for UK healthcare as part of your immigration application](#)

Find out general information about other visas and entry routes here:
[UK Visas and Immigration](#)

Definitions and Acronyms

→ Endorsement

For artists applying for the Global Talent Visa.

This is an endorsement provided in the form of an e-mail by a sector-specific 'designated competent body' (usually Arts Council England) who will review the artist's evidence and affirm that the artist is an 'exceptional talent' or has 'exceptional promise' before endorsing them.

→ Certificate of Sponsorship

For artists applying in any sponsored work route.

The certificate provided by the UK employer containing information about the employment offered to the artist.

→ CTA: Common Travel Area

The Common Travel Area is an agreement between the UK, Ireland and the islands of Jersey, Guernsey, and Isle of Man. Under the CTA, British and Irish citizens can move freely between these areas and reside in either country. They also have associated rights and privileges, including the right to work, study and vote in certain elections, as well as to access social welfare benefits and health services.

Find out more about the Common Travel Area here: [Common Travel Area Guidance: rights of UK and Irish citizens](#)

→ Creative Worker Concession

Route whereby artists who are non-visa nationals can enter the UK without having to apply for a visa from overseas. They must meet the other eligibility requirements of a Creative Worker Visa, including the Certificate of Sponsorship requirement, and their period of UK sponsorship must not exceed more than 3 months.

Definitions and Acronyms

→ Creative Worker Visa

Work visa that may be issued to an artist who has been offered work in the UK as a creative worker, such as an actor, dancer, musician, or film crew member, and meets certain other criteria.

→ EU: European Union

The European Union is an economic and political union of 27 countries. It operates an internal (or single) market which allows free movement of goods, capital, services and people between member states.

See the list of EU and EEA countries here:
[Countries in the EU and EEA](#)

→ EEA: The European Economic Area

The European Economic Area includes EU countries as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. These countries are part of the EU single market.

Switzerland is neither an EU or EEA member country, but is part of the single market. This means that Swiss nationals have the same rights to live and work in the UK as other EEA nationals.

→ ETA: Electronic Travel Authorisation

Electronic Travel Authorisations have been introduced worldwide for visitors to the UK who do not currently need a visa for short stays, or who do not already have a UK immigration status.

An ETA is a digital permission to travel – it is not a visa and does not permit entry into the UK – it authorises a person to travel to the UK.

Find out more about the scheme including how to apply here:
[Guidance: Apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation \(ETA\)](#)

Definitions and Acronyms

→ Frontier Worker

A frontier worker is a European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) or Swiss citizen who is employed or self-employed in the UK but living elsewhere.

→ GBP

British pound sterling, the official currency of the United Kingdom.

→ Global Talent Visa

Work visa that may be issued to an artist who is an 'exceptional talent' or has 'exceptional promise.'

→ Licensed Sponsor

An organisation registered with a Home Office sponsor licence, which may assign a Certificate of Sponsorship to prospective or existing employees.

See the list of Home Office sponsor license organisations here:

[Register of licensed sponsors](#)

→ Non-Visa Nationals

Foreign nationals who are not on the Visa National List and do not need a visa to visit the UK as a Standard Visitor. From April 2025, most non-visa nationals will require an ETA before arriving in the UK.

See the list of Visa National nationalities here (you are a Non-Visa National if you are **not** on this list):

[Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Visa National List](#)

Definitions and Acronyms

→ Permit Free Festival

Festivals listed on the Permit Free Festival list, where foreign nationals visiting the UK may perform and receive payment for their appearance at this festival.

See the list of Permit Free Festivals here: [Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Permit Free Festival List](#)

→ Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE)

UK tour or event where a foreign national artists may come to the UK for a maximum stay of 6 months, however the paid work specific to their area of expertise must be undertaken in the first 30 days.

Find out more about applying to be on the Permit Free Festival list here: [How to apply to get on the list of permit free festivals](#)

→ Skilled Worker Visa

Longer-term work visa that may be issued to an artist who has been offered a skilled job in the UK, is employed by a licensed sponsor, and meets certain other criteria.

→ UK Immigration Rules

Key pieces of UK's immigration law that govern how foreign nationals may visit and work in the UK.

Find out more about the UK Immigration Rules here: [Immigration Rules](#)

Definitions and Acronyms

→ UKVI: UK Visas and Immigration

UK Visas and Immigration is a division of the Home Office, and is responsible for the UK's visa system.

Find out more about the UKVI here:

[UK Visas and Immigration: About Us](#)

→ Visa Nationals

Foreign nationals who are on the Visa National List and need a visa to visit the UK.

See the list of Visa National nationalities here:

[Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Visa National List](#)

→ Youth Mobility Worker Visa

Work visa for workers aged 18-35 from a limited number of countries who wish to live and work in the UK for up to 2-3 years depending on their nationality.

Arts Infopoint UK

Arts Infopoint UK is an initiative developing and sharing free resources to guide you through some of the administrative challenges of working across borders; and support international artists coming to and leaving the UK for creative work and purposes.

This guide does not constitute legal advice. If you do need legal advice, you should get in touch with a suitably qualified lawyer.

The Arts Infopoint UK partners:



Contributions to this guide from:



Newfields>>

