

Part 8. Brexit

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Key changes

The UK's exit from the EU (which happened on 31 January 2020) affects UK travellers in the EU. These are some of the key changes:

- travellers will need their driving licence and vehicle log book
- travellers may need an international driving permit (IDP), depending on where they're going (see below)
- a GB sticker is required for UK vehicles
- travellers will need a 'green card' to prove they have the right travel insurance (see below)
- if a driving licence is about to run out, the driver will need to renew it at least a week before they travel

The AA's website has useful further [information on driving in Europe](#). See also '[Travel or do business in Europe: Brexit guidance](#)' on the GOV.UK website.

International driving permit

The UK Government says: "You may need extra documents from 1 January 2021. You might need an international driving permit (IDP) to drive in some countries."

In fact, you may need two. A 1949 IDP covers Spain, Cyprus and Malta, while a 1968 version is valid everywhere else in the EU. The IDP is available at larger post offices. Take your driving licence, a passport photo and £5.50.

Green cards

UK travellers must obtain a green card if taking their vehicle to travel around Europe. A green card proves its bearer has the necessary motor insurance. This includes motorists travelling between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Travellers may be fined or required to buy additional insurance if they do not travel with a green card. Motor insurance providers should provide their customers with a green card free of charge.

Travel insurance and the EHIC / GHIC

Businesses should explain to travellers that a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) will no longer be valid past the stated expiry date.

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is being phased out for UK holidaymakers heading to the EU in favour of a new, free, Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC).

Like an EHIC, a GHIC is not a replacement for travel insurance; it does not cover everything, such as mountain rescue or being flown back to the UK for treatment.

Travellers should also be informed that, unlike EHICs, travel insurance probably won't cover them for illnesses they already have.

Travellers should be told that it's important they tell their insurer about any health problems. If the insurer can't cover them, they should recommend a specialist insurance company that can.

Travellers should always get appropriate travel insurance with healthcare cover before they go abroad. It is particularly important they get travel insurance with the right cover if they have a pre-existing medical condition. This is because the EHIC covers pre-existing medical conditions, while many travel insurance policies do not.

National Trading Standards recently prosecuted two brothers who ran a scam, charging people £32 for what should have been a free EHIC card. Both brothers were convicted under the Fraud Act and one of them was also convicted of engaging in aggressive commercial practices by threatening people who complained (a breach of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs)).

Travellers should [apply for the free GHIC card](#) through the NHS website.

Passports

UK travellers must have at least six months left on their passport before they visit the EU and the passport must be less than 10 years old (even if it has six months or more left). If a passport is not renewed, its bearer may not be able to travel to most EU countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. There is an online tool to check whether a passport is valid for the country the traveller intends to visit.

UK travellers should still be able to take their pets abroad, but the rules could become very complex.

Travellers will need to be told that they are going to have to take their pet to the vet to get a rabies vaccination. They will then have to return a month later to get a blood test and send that blood test to an EU laboratory.

The traveller's vet will have to confirm the results and the traveller will then have to wait another three months before they can go.

Data roaming

Charges for making calls abroad have been a problem for mobile phone users since the devices were invented. These so-called roaming charges were often very expensive but an EU initiative changing

telecoms rules meant they were abolished and consumers could effectively 'roam like at home'.

Such provisions have become very important for UK holidaymakers. The UK Government has set an ambitious target of 'no less protection' for consumers as the UK leaves the EU. Nevertheless, the ambition to leave the EU digital single market and questions over regulations requiring reciprocal agreement with the remaining EU 27 Member States seem to provide significant barriers in reaching that goal. It remains unclear whether the current charging regime can be retained and some mobile operators are now charging UK customers for calls, texts and data when they are in the EU. Current Government guidance is that guaranteed free roaming ended on 1 January 2021 and travellers should check with their operators.

Visas

UK citizens will need a visa for stays in the EU of longer than 90 days in a 180-day period.

There is a new system called the [European Travel Information and Authorisation System \(ETIAS\)](#), which is due to be introduced in 2025. It is only for travellers who can currently travel to Europe without a visa; it will therefore not be available to UK citizens.

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