

Visiting the UK

Visa guidelines for WOMEX 24 attendees

This document has been created to help international attendees who are planning to visit the UK and come to WOMEX 24 in Manchester. Information about visas can be overwhelming, and the aim of this guide is to outline what you need to do, and which visa options are available to you.

Everyone listed needs to check if they require a visa (obtain entry clearance) to come to the UK.

- Artist
- Member of Crew
- Conference Speaker
- Film Presenter
- Exhibitor
- Delegate

The options available to you will depend on different factors such as, but not limited to:

- Your nationality
- Where you are coming from.
- What you are planning to do whilst in the UK.
- The amount of time you will spend in the UK.
- Whether you will be paid for what you are doing in the UK.

The main sections of the document include:

- [Am I a Visa National or a Non-Visa National](#)
Understanding 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.
- [What you need to do: I'm coming to the UK for WOMEX 24 as a visitor and not being paid by a UK company.](#)
- [What you need to do: I'm coming to the UK for WOMEX 24 and carrying out other paid work before or after the event.](#)
- [Getting in touch](#)
- [Useful links from the visas and immigration GOV.UK website](#)

Included throughout the document are links to relevant pages on the UK Government website. The Home Office and UK Government websites provide the most up to date official information about visas and coming to the UK.

The information in this document is guided by official UK Government information but the content of this guide does not constitute legal advice.

i) Am I a Visa National or a Non-Visa National?

The first step is to find out 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'.

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. Visa Nationals must always obtain some kind of visa before travelling to the UK. The type of visa will depend on what you will be doing whilst in the UK.

See the list of Visa National countries here:

[Immigration Rules: Visa National List](#)

Non-Visa National

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

Non-visa nationals won't be required to obtain a visa for tourism, business, and some temporary work activities (including paid performances/entertainment). Though it is likely you will require some form of invitation, proof, or clearance paperwork for these activities that will have to be arranged prior to travel. Non-visa nationals need a visa if they want to come to the UK for longer than 6 months.

This excludes Irish citizens, who under the Common Travel Area (CTA) do not face any restrictions and can freely work and visit the UK and the UK can do the same in Ireland.

Applicable to Visa Nationals and Non-Visa Nationals:

Once you know whether you are a Visa National or a Non-Visa National, you need to determine what you are coming to the UK to do. This will determine what type of visa you need to apply for, any visa concessions that apply and the documents you need to supply to support your eligibility.

Select the following situation that best describes the purpose of your visit to the UK.

Unpaid Activities

Coming to the UK as a WOMEX delegate, conference speaker, film presenter, exhibitor, artist, or member of crew and not being paid by a UK company. (Page 3)

Paid Activities

Coming to the UK as a WOMEX delegate, conference speaker, film presenter, exhibitor, artist, or member of crew and carrying out other paid work including performances before or after the event. (Page 4)

The Visa and Immigration pages of the UK Government website have a '[Check if I need a Visa](#)' function. This tool can help determine which visa is most appropriate depending on the activities you are doing in the UK.

- ii) What you need to do: I'm coming to the UK for WOMEX 24 as a visitor and not being paid by a UK company.

Unpaid activities

As a WOMEX delegate, showcase artist, member of crew, film presenter, conference speaker or exhibitor, you can visit the UK as a Standard Visitor for 'business, including sports and entertainment' and are permitted to undertake certain activities. These permitted activities are listed here [Standard Visitor: Permitted Activities](#).

The permitted activities applicable to WOMEX attendees on an unpaid basis are:

- 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;
- attend trade fairs, for promotional purposes only (no direct sales)
- give performances as an individual or as part of a group, take part in competitions or auditions and to make personal and promotional appearances.
- Artists' personal or technical staff or member of the production team can enter as a standard visitor if they are attending the same event as the artist, entertainer or musician and are employed to work for them outside of the UK.

Application process as a Standard Visitor:

Visa National

Foreign nationals who are Visa Nationals must apply for a standard visitor visa before travelling to the UK. You must apply online and attend an appointment at a visa application centre.

Standard Visitor visa costs £115 and is valid for up to 6 months. An application can be made up to 3 months in advance of travel. It is advised to make the application as early as possible as processing time usually takes up to 3 weeks from the applicant submitting biometrics at a Visa Application Centre (VAC).

Please visit [gov.uk website](#) to check you meet the eligibility requirements and to find the link to apply online for a Standard Visitor visa.

Non-Visa National

Foreign nationals who are Non-Visa Nationals can enter the UK as a standard visitor for up to 6 months without any visa-related fees and without having to apply overseas.

You must still meet the Standard Visitor eligibility requirements whether you require a visa or not. You may be asked questions at the UK border about your eligibility and the activities you plan to do whilst in the UK.

Foreign nationals from Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, or the United Arab Emirates will need to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) which is £10 and valid for 2 years.

Criteria to prove Standard Visitor eligibility:

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

- Invitation Letter from WOMEX confirming attendance as an artist, delegate, speaker, or member of support crew.
- WOMEX registration confirmation, programs and other documents proving your participation at WOMEX.
- Proof of onward travel, i.e. return plane ticket, showing you intend to leave the UK at the end of your visit.
- Proof of booked accommodation in the UK.
- Evidence that the person can support themselves (or have funding from someone else to support you) whilst in the UK e.g. bank statements showing available funds.

iii) What you need to do: I'm coming to the UK for WOMEX 24 and carrying out other paid work in the UK before or after the event.

Paid Activities

As a WOMEX delegate, showcase artist, member of crew, film presenter, conference speaker or exhibitor and being paid for any other work by a UK company including performances before or after the event then it may be appropriate to enter the UK via the following two routes: Standard Visitor and doing certain Permitted Paid Engagements/Events or Creative Worker visa (Temporary Worker) – see details below.

- Standard Visitor and visit for certain paid engagements or events (a 'permitted paid engagement')

You can visit the UK and undertake one or a short series of permitted paid engagements relating to your full-time profession. You can come to the UK for up to 6 months, but you must do the paid engagement in the first month. These engagements must be arranged prior to arrival in the UK.

You must be aged 18 or over, have formal invitation from a UK based organisation, and be able to prove that the engagement relates to your main work practice in your home country (expertise/occupation overseas).

The permitted activities you are allowed to do as a Standard Visitor is set out in [Appendix Visitor: Permitted Activities](#).

Criteria required to enter to do a Permitted Paid Engagement:

- You must be at least 18 years old.
- Have a formal letter of invitation from a UK-based creative, agent or broadcaster outlining the dates and how the event or engagement directly relates to your expertise, qualifications, and main job in your home country.
- Evidence of professional status in home country – publicity materials, awards, recent performances, media coverage etc.
- Must do the engagement in the first month of visiting the UK.
- Evidence that you can support yourself (or have funding from someone else to support you) whilst in the UK.
- Proof of onward travel, showing you intend to leave the UK at the end of the visit.
- When you leave, you are not travelling through Ireland, Isle of Man, or the Channel Islands.

Application Process do a Permitted Paid Engagement as a Standard Visitor.

Visa National

Foreign nationals who are Visa Nationals must apply for a standard visitor visa before travelling to the UK. You must apply online and declare what type of permitted paid engagement or event you wish to carry out and attend an appointment at a visa application centre.

Standard Visitor visa costs £115 and is valid for up to 6 months. An application can be made up to 3 months in advance of travel. It is advised to make the application as early as possible as processing time usually takes up to 3 weeks from the applicant submitting biometrics at a Visa Application Centre (VAC).

Please visit [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk) to check you meet the eligibility requirements and to find the link to apply online for a Standard Visitor visa.

Non-Visa National

Foreign nationals who are Non-Visa Nationals can enter the UK under this route without having to apply for a visa from overseas, and without having to pay any visa-related fees on entry.

You must see a Border Force official on entry and get a stamp in your passport, and do not use an ePassport gate. You must meet the eligibility requirements and be prepared to prove the paid engagement relates to your expertise and present your invitation letter at the UK border.

Foreign nationals from Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, or the United Arab Emirates will need to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) which is £10 and valid for 2 years.

- Creative Worker visa – Temporary Work

This route is for creative professionals (e.g. dancers, musicians, workers in film and TV) who can stay in the UK for paid engagements up to 12 months, with a possible extension up to 24 months through formal sponsorship.

It is important to note that non-visa nationals are exempt from requiring a visa if working in the UK for less than 3 months and can come in under a Creative Worker visa concession and only require a Certificate of Sponsorship to be issued before travel.

Criteria required to enter as a Creative Worker and do temporary work:

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

- show that they make a unique contribution to the UK labour market, for example by being internationally renowned or are required for continuity.
- obtain a certificate of sponsorship reference number.
- meet the requirements of [creative workers code of practice](#) or the job is on the [shortage occupations list](#).
- be paid a minimum salary as set by [Equity](#), [PACT](#) or [BECTU](#) (except for models, musicians, or circuses).
- Have 1,270GBP in a bank account for 90 days before applying (unless your employer sponsor is a fully approved A-rated sponsor and certifies maintenance for you).

Application Process to do a Creative Worker visa (Temporary work):

Visa National

Foreign nationals who are Visa Nationals must apply for a Creative Worker visa (Temporary Work) before travelling to the UK. You need to identify a UK organisation to 'sponsor' the visa and issue a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). English Folk Expo is an A-rated sponsor and licenced to sponsor Temporary Worker immigration routes. Get in touch to discuss via visas@englishfolkexpo.com. The certificate number will need to be referenced in the application. The visa application is done online and will have to attend an appointment at a visa application centre.

The visa application fee for each person is £298 plus the certificate costs and is valid for up to 12 months (or the time on the accompanying certificate of sponsorship + 28 days). The applicant can enter the UK up to 14 days before the start date on the certificate of sponsorship.

An application can be made up to 3 months in advance of when you are due to start work in the UK. It is advised to make the application as early as possible as processing time usually takes up to 3 weeks from the applicant submitting biometrics at a Visa Application Centre (VAC).

Please visit [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk) to check you meet the eligibility requirements and to find the link to apply online for the Creative Worker visa (Temporary Work).

Non-Visa National

Foreign nationals who are non-visa nationals and intend to work in the UK for 3 months or less, can use the Creative Worker visa concession instead of applying for the visa.

A UK registered sponsor will have to issue you a Certificate of Sponsorship prior to travel. English Folk Expo is an A-rated sponsor and licenced to sponsor Temporary Worker immigration routes. Get in touch to discuss via visas@englishfolkexpo.com.

You must still meet the Creative Worker visa (Temporary Work) [eligibility requirements](#). You must see an UK Border officer when you arrive and not use the automatic ePassport gates. You will need to get a stamp in your passport.

Foreign nationals from Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, or the United Arab Emirates will need to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) which is £10 and valid for 2 years.

iv) Getting in touch

It is important for WOMEX 24 attendees to be clear if they need to apply for a visa before coming to the UK. This will depend on your nationality, the activities you plan to do, whether you'll be paid, and the duration of your stay. These factors will determine your entry route to

the UK as either a standard visitor, permitted paid engagement or for short-term paid work as a creative worker.

The majority of WOMEX 24 attendees will be able to enter the UK as a standard visitor. The alternative entry routes should be considered if you have had difficulty entering the UK previously or are due to do other activities in the UK and be paid.

Our UK partner has a good understanding of UK entry requirements and would like everyone applying for visas to get in touch even if help is not necessary. The team will be providing the UK border force with as much information as they receive to make delegate's entry into the UK is as smooth as possible.

If you have any questions about your situation, or about the information covered in this guide, please get in touch, and direct your enquiries to Rachel Down at visas@englishfolkexpo.com.

v) Useful links from the visas and immigration GOV.UK website

- [Check if you need a visa.](#)
- [Immigration Rules: Visa national list of countries](#)
List of nationalities requiring visas no matter the purpose of coming to the UK.
- [How to apply for a visa to come to the UK](#)
Information about the types of visas and the application process.
- [Visit the UK as a Standard Visitor](#)
General information including eligibility requirements and online application.
- [Visit the UK for a Permitted Paid Engagement](#)
General information including eligibility requirements and online application.
- [Temporary work visas – Creative Worker visa \(Temporary Work\)](#)
General information including eligibility requirements and online application.
- [Travelling to the UK](#)
Information about what to expect at the border.