BREXIT UPDATE - 08.03.19

Since our last update in early February, the proposed Valentine’s Day vote came and went and we are now looking forward to the series of votes planned for the week commencing 11th March, hoping for further clarity.

There remains a very small uncertainty around travelling to and from the EU from the 29th March although the government is confident there will be no disruption caused by a ‘no-deal’ scenario’. According to ‘Buying Business Travel’ (7th March):

‘Transport secretary Chris Grayling has confirmed that the UK will reciprocate the European Union’s arrangements for air travel in the event of a no-deal Brexit…

...In a statement, Grayling commented: “Air travel is vital for both the UK and the EU in connecting people and businesses, facilitating tourism and trade. The UK and EU have a mutual interest in maintaining well-functioning aviation markets.”

The European Commission has proposed a regulation to ensure air connectivity in the event of a no-deal Brexit. A final draft of the proposal has been provisionally agreed by the EU and is expected to be confirmed shortly, according to Grayling.

This announcement provides welcome assurance that, whatever the outcome on 29th, travellers can continue to book business trips with confidence.’

A further update will be issued to confirm the situation before the end of March. In the meantime, the guidance below remains valid:

What can travellers do now?

Although there is still a great deal of uncertainty there are several recommended actions travellers should take before they travel, whatever the situation is on the 29th March:

Check the expiry date on your passport.

It is expected that after March 29th, UK citizens will be required to have at least 6 months validity on their passport when travelling to the EU. The UK Government has published a website tool to check the validity of your passport under these rules.

You should check your passport now if you are planning to travel after 29th March, if you need support with your passport renewal, please contact our Visa and Passports team (Email: visa@keytravel.com Phone: 0207 843 9678)

Check your organisation’s health insurance cover before you travel.

Being part of the European Union comes with the benefit of being able to access medical care in all member countries when travelling abroad. However, the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) that enables this may not be valid in all EU countries in the case of a no-deal Brexit. We strongly recommend buying or checking your...
organisation’s travel health insurance before travelling.

Advice from the Department of Health and Social Care states “UK nationals should follow current advice from the government which recommends travellers take out separate travel insurance to cover any healthcare requirements needed in any country within the EU or outside. This is particularly advisable for travellers with a pre-existing or long-term health condition.”

Advice issued at the end of January suggested that travellers who intend to use EHIC cards should check the existing arrangement with the specific country they are visiting after March 29 “as the card may not be valid”. (source: Travel Weekly).

Prepare for longer border control queues at airports within the EU

The European Commission has confirmed that British travellers will no longer be able to use the EU or EEA passport lanes in a no-deal scenario. This could cause delays given the volume of UK/EU passengers and the additional passport checks that need to be carried out, particularly at small airports where there is poorer infrastructure.

We therefore recommend that travellers consider the possibility of increased delays when arranging their onward transport or meetings.

If you’re planning on driving in the EU, you may need to apply for an International Driving Permit and an insurance ‘green card’

If you have a full UK driving licence, you don’t currently need an additional licence to drive in the EU. This is likely to change in a no-deal scenario. UK travellers looking to drive in the EU on or after 29 March 2019 may need to apply for the relevant International Driving Permit. Please refer to the UK Government guidance.

These cost £5.50 and are available directly from the Post Office. The Government has extended the network of Post Offices where you can apply for an International Driving Permit, find your nearest branch here.

Check carefully which permit is required for each country you intend to drive within, as you may need more than one permit to comply with the law.

UK citizens driving their vehicle within the EU may also be required to obtain and carry a physical Green Card in order for your UK car insurance to be applicable in the EU. These cards would be issued by insurers and you may be charged a small fee to cover administration costs. Speak with your insurer for more information on obtaining a Green Card for any trip on or after 29 March 2019.

At Key Travel we are setting up contingency plans to ensure that our reservations teams, account managers and airline liaison specialists are all available during the immediate run up to the 29th March and in the following days, in case any of the transition measures fail and delays or cancellations occur.

We will share further updates as the situation develops and we will endeavour to offer support to our clients and minimise the impact of Brexit on their travel programmes.