

Getting OUT and Staying OUT!

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If we are ever able to travel abroad again following the extreme limitations imposed by governments around the world because of the Coronavirus, there are a number of extra factors UK travellers need to consider before setting off – particularly for long-term or permanent travellers. None of the information written below takes into consideration the COVID regulations regarding travel, therefore travellers will be need to research the rules that apply at the time they are going to travel.

Trying to escape the worst of the UK weather is very important for many long-term travellers. As the UK has now left the EU, there are far more travel (and working¹) restrictions than during the previous 47 years, so we have to adjust our lifestyles accordingly. We also have to consider that the main areas of travel throughout Europe include all of the EU and many non-EU member countries which form the Schengen Zone. Therefore, we have to comply with the travel restrictions that apply to this zone – which covers a far greater geographical area than the EU. There is also no indication that the UK will ever join the Schengen Zone agreement which requires open borders; which the UK is very much against and was one of the reasons for their leaving the EU.

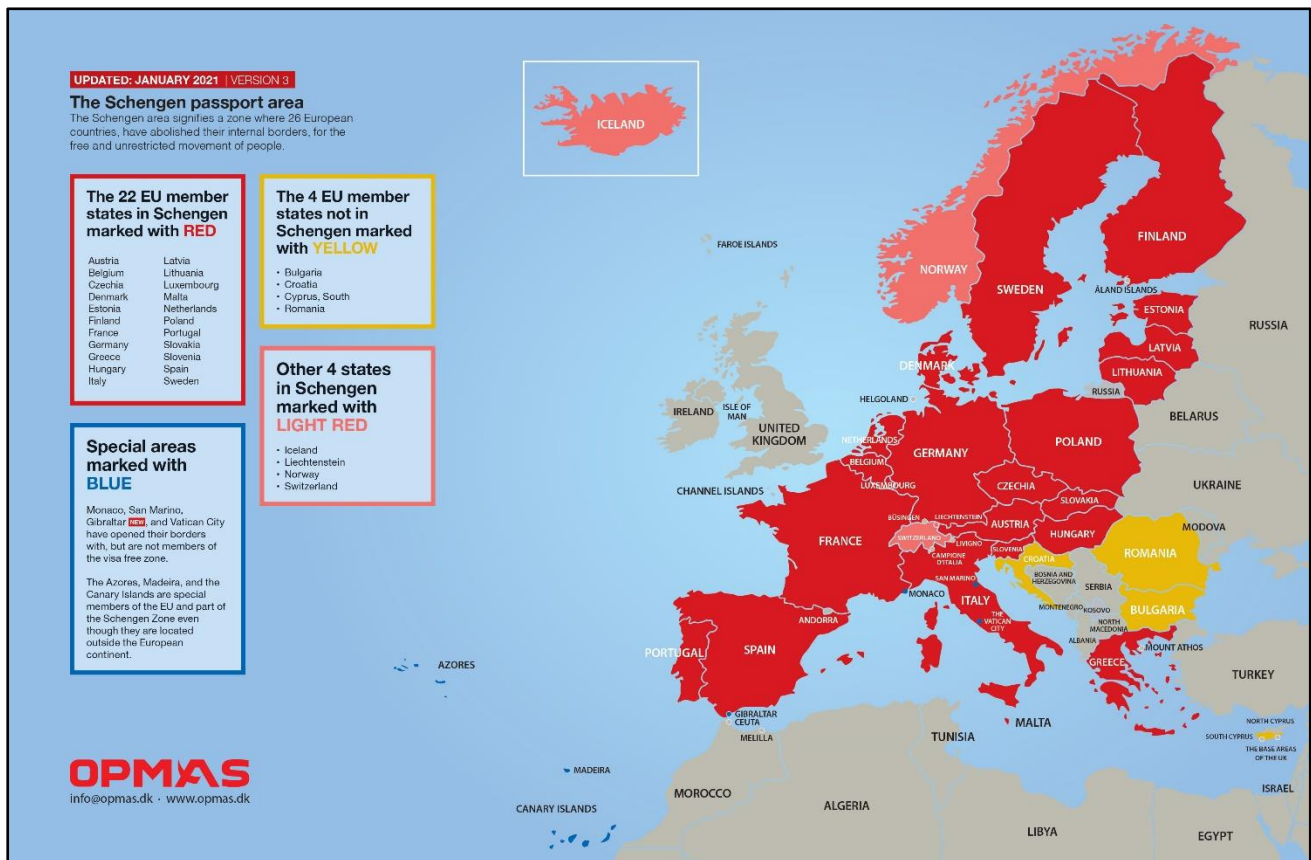
Currently, UK citizens do not need to apply for a Schengen Visa. However, although British citizens will not need a visa to visit Europe, they will need an ETIAS² visa waiver from 2022. ETIAS is the acronym for European Travel Information and Authorization System. Fortunately, an ETIAS visa waiver is easier to obtain than a visa as you can apply online with no need to visit an embassy or consulate. An approved ETIAS authorisation will be valid for 3 years or until the passport expires. British travellers won't need to apply each time they visit Europe. Like other visa-exempt third-nationals, UK passport holders can stay in the Schengen Zone for up to 90 days per rolling 180-day period. Notice that it states 'in the Schengen Zone' – not in each country within the Schengen Zone. This restriction immediately wipes out more than 6 months of the year for continuous travelling in the EU / Schengen Zone. This is very important for long-term or permanent travellers as they will need to work round this severe restriction to their freedom to travel. That said, it is actually possible, albeit very difficult, to extend your Schengen visa. If you have a strong reason on which to base your application then you have a (small) chance of getting a visa extension³. I understand that there is a case being

¹ How remote working by people on the move throughout Europe is affected I have no idea and is beyond the scope of this document. Examples of people who may well be affected by no longer being allowed to work in Europe without a work permit include those working online (such as website builders and designers), computer programmers, online teachers, travel writers and photographers and many others – particularly freelance creative people, even copywriters and artists of various disciplines. Some of these work from their motorhomes or caravans with just an internet connection through their telephone or a 'dongle' connected to their laptop computer – costs of telephone calls and data transfer fees are likely to rise too now that the UK has left the EU. English language teachers and other workers in a particular country (as distinct from online workers) will now be required to obtain work permits. Work permit rules will need to be researched individually. An alternative to this is to obtain e-Residency as a business in Estonia which may be ideally suited to some mobile workers. Refer to URL: <https://medium.com/e-residency-blog/is-e-residency-for-me-158db854189d> and <https://e-resident.gov.ee/> for more information. However, your status as an e-resident does not grant permission to travel to or live in Estonia or within the EU without a visa, should one be needed. Your e-Residency digital ID card cannot be used for travel and does not display a photo for physical identification.

² Refer to URL: <https://www.etiasvisa.com/etias-news/etias-visa-how-will-it-affect-uk-citizens#:~:text=UK%20citizens%20had%20enjoyed%20freedom,is%20no%20longer%20the%20case.&text=UK%20citizens%20will%20therefore%20not,Visa%20like%20many%20other%20nationalities>.

³ Refer to URL: <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/how-to-extend-schengen-visa/>

presented to the European Court of Justice about the loss of rights for the British people who lived in the EU and had thus exercised their right to live in the EU, however, this probably won't be of much assistance for long-term travellers.



Map courtesy of URL: https://www.opmas.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Download_Schengen_map_2021.pdf
Note: The map fails to include Ireland as a member of the EU (it is).

Bearing in mind all of the above, there is a way whereby you just might be able to stay in the Schengen Zone for longer than the 90-day limit. This is by utilising the bilateral visa waiver agreement. The definition of a bilateral agreement is simply a mutually beneficial arrangement between two parties in which each side promises to fulfil their obligations. The EU has bilateral treaties with non-European countries covering areas such as trade and also, as is the case with visa waiver arrangements, travel⁴. By the end of the last working day of the 90-day stay, a visitor can request to remain in a specific EU nation for an extended period if their country of origin has a current, official reciprocal arrangement with that Member State. Most bilateral agreements allow travellers to spend an additional 3 months without a visa. However, to date, I have not established what agreements the UK has in place with other EU (or Schengen Zone) countries, let alone all the conditions regarding its use. Of course, many southern European countries will take a big hit, financially, if longer stays are not permitted - Spain in particular, which is one country trying to resolve this issue⁵. However, it is important to understand that the applicant must remain in the specific EU territory for the entire extension period. As the arrangement is made with an individual European nation and not the entire Schengen Area, it is not possible to travel from country to country after the initial 90-day period. This condition also means that visitors must leave the Schengen Area through that specific country where the extension was applied. These conditions certainly limit the value of the visa waiver to travellers.

⁴ Refer to URL: <https://www.etiasvisa.com/etias-news/eu-bilateral-visa-waiver-agreements>

⁵ Refer to URL: [Valencia regional president: "Let Brits stay here for more than 90 days" \(thinkspain.com\)](https://www.thinkspain.com/valencia-regional-president-let-brits-stay-here-for-more-than-90-days/)

The European countries that are not part of the Schengen zone are Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Ireland, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the Vatican City. However, some of these countries are considered as being an equivalent as they don't have border controls. These include (but aren't limited to): Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican City, and should therefore be considered as being visited in the same 90-day period as the other Schengen countries.

The tables below and on the next page show suggested schedules that will help you meet this '90-day' requirement and keep you within the visa regulations - and keep you on the move in (mainly) good weather throughout a calendar year. If, for example, you set off from the UK in July, you could tour parts of Europe on your way to Croatia / Montenegro, where you would stay during August and September. Head off through Southern Europe in October to arrive in Morocco for your 90-day winter stay. In February and March, you could slowly make your way across Europe again to the UK for your Spring-time visit. Staying away from the UK almost completely is also an option. This will be considered in more detail later in this document.

This is only a rough guide which, although split into calendar months, is not exact as the 90-day maximum visit period stipulated is not exactly 3 months. Also, remember that the 180-day period keeps rolling, therefore, anytime you wish to enter the Schengen Zone, you have to count backwards over the last 180 days, and see if you have been present in the Schengen for more than 90 days throughout that period⁶. You'll see that I've specified 95/96 days in the UK. The alternative to this would be 90 days in another non-Schengen zone country which isn't included in your other travel destinations. This in turn would mean that the extra 5 or 6 days would 'move' the calendar after every 360-day period – which is why I've shown a stay of 95 or 96 days in the UK (if you're a UK citizen / resident). Bear in mind that to travel from the UK to any non-Schengen country (except Ireland) by motor vehicle you have to travel through countries within the Schengen Zone. This also applies when travelling from Croatia to Morocco. An alternative idea would be to stay in a non-Schengen Zone country which permits you to stay for a much longer period of time (footnotes 6 and 7).

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Morocco	Sch	Sch	UK ⁷	UK	UK	Sch	Serbia and / or Montenegro ⁸	Sch	Morocco	Morocco	
Number of Days:											
30	30	30	95 (96 in a leap year)		30	30	30	30	30	30	30

To help you work out your travelling days, there is a 90/180 day rule Schengen calculator at URL: <https://ninety180.com/>

⁶ Refer to URL: <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/visa-calculator/> There is also an interesting document at URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/6891/html/>

⁷ Or an alternative non-Schengen Zone country, for example, a tour through Turkey, Georgia and Armenia.

Tukey allows you to stay for 90 days in any 180-day period - refer to URL: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/turkey/entry-requirements#:~:text=Visas,in%20any%20180%2Dday%20period.>

Armenia permits you to stay for 180 days per year (a very good option) – refer to URL: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/armenia/entry-requirements#:~:text=British%20Citizen%20passport%20holders%20can,to%20180%20days%20per%20year.>

Georgia permits you to stay for 360 days - refer to URL <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-georgia#:~:text=of%20Georgia%20website-Entry%20and%20residence%20requirements,Georgia%20through%20Public%20Service%20Hall.>

⁸ Or a different alternative non-Schengen Zone and Non-EU country.

Notes:

- a) The maximum stay in Serbia and Montenegro (and most other non-Schengen zone countries) is 90 days, usually in any 180-day period. However, some countries permit you to stay longer if you apply for temporary residence.
- b) The maximum stay in Morocco is 90 days. If you wish to extend your stay, you may request an extension at the nearest Police Precinct in Morocco (<https://visaguide.world/africa/morocco-visa/>).
- c) You may need to adjust the length of your stay in the UK and other countries in order to comply with above restrictions.
- d) Refer to **Warning Notes** on page 5.

Staying out of the United Kingdom

For those who want to travel for a whole year, or more, away from the UK there are a number of options, which, to a certain extent have been mentioned above. One of the main options would be to stay in the Schengen Zone for the maximum permitted number of days (90 days per rolling 180-day period) and the rest of the year in countries outside of the Schengen Zone, as mentioned in footnotes 6 and 7, above. A tour through history and stunning scenery is well worthwhile and getting off the beaten track has great appeal for many travellers. A tour in the Caucasus (and other information about this region) is described at URL: http://drivethrutours.com/Grand_Tours/mountains/caucasus/Caucasus_tours.html

At the time of writing, the land border between Turkey and Armenia is closed, although there are occasional direct flights between Yerevan and Istanbul. For those who are unfamiliar with this part of the world (most of us!) it is useful to remember that Armenia is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world, although one should stay well clear of the Nagorno-Karabakh area where there is a military conflict taking place. The FCDO⁹ advise against all travel within 5 km of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and along the M16/H26 road between the towns of Ijevan and Noyemberyan (as of 25 March 2021).

If you wish to travel into Armenia from Turkey the way to do this, if the Turkey / Armenia border is closed, would be via Georgia (and enjoy a tour there and in Azerbaijan), before entering Armenia from Georgia¹⁰.

Returning to our travel calendar, we can make simple changes to follow the law and stay out of the UK for a whole year – or longer. Again, we depart from the UK in July. If staying away for a second year, one could stay in the Turkey and Caucasus area from April to September before heading to Morocco for the winter. The permutations are, of course, up to the individual traveller to work out.

⁹ Refer to URL: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/armenia/safety-and-security#:~:text=The%20FCDO%20advise%20against%20all,towns%20of%20Ijevan%20and%20Noyemberyan.&text=Armenia%27s%20borders%20with%20Iran%20and,due%20to%20COVID%2D19%20restrictions.>

¹⁰ Refer to URL: <https://caravanistan.com/border-crossings/georgia/>

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Year 1	Morocco	Sch	Sch	Turkey and the Caucasus Area			Sch	Serbia and / or Montenegro		Sch	Morocco	Morocco
Year 2	Morocco	Sch	Sch	Turkey and the Caucasus Area						Sch	Morocco	Morocco
Number of Days:												
Year 1	30	30	30	95 (96 in a leap year)			30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 2	30	30	30	185 (186 in a leap year)						30	30	30

Note: At some stage you will need to visit the UK, with your vehicle to get an up-to-date MOT Certificate (if appropriate). Allow for this in your travelling days allowance in the UE / Schengen Zone.

Warning Notes:

Depending on where you are going, you may need to obtain an International Driving Permit before driving abroad (refer to URL: <https://www.gov.uk/driving-abroad>). If you decide to stay away from the UK and become an EU resident you need to be aware that the Brexit agreement has made a complete mess of driving licence requirements as there have been no reciprocal agreements negotiated as part of the deal. Read more about this monumental nightmare at URL: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/driving-in-the-eu-uk-licence-holders-living-in-the-eu?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=bf459f85-6f47-477d-a5fb-e4c60a9e5588&utm_content=daily

You may also find this page useful: <https://www.thelocal.it/20210428/how-do-rules-for-exchanging-uk-driving-licences-compare-for-brits-around-europe/>

Remember also that some countries have specific regulations for caravans and motorhomes - Spain, for example, states that any car/caravan or motorhome (with or without a trailer) travelling to Spain that is over 12 metres in length must have one long or two small aluminium boards attached to the back. The aluminium boards must have a yellow centre with a red outline, be reflective, and comply with ECE70 standards¹¹.

Remember also that some countries have laws for the protection of cyclists - The Netherlands requires that you give the right of way to cyclists and in Spain, there is a recently passed law that requires that when overtaking a bicycle the distance between car and bicycle is at least two metres (6' 6") and drivers must slow to at least 20 kilometres per hour below the speed limit. Speed limits have also been reduced in urban areas.

You will need to check that your car insurance covers you for all of the countries you wish to visit (there are usually some countries excluded - you may have to buy additional insurance at the border if you wish to proceed into these countries). You will also need to obtain a printed 'green card' before travelling – if towing you will need two green cards - one green card each for your car and caravan / trailer. You will also need to check how many days foreign travel you are permitted during one trip away from home. This is sometimes limited to as little as 30 days in one policy year whilst some permit you 180 days per policy year, for example. I believe only AXA will provide you with year-round foreign coverage vehicle insurance should you need this. Don't forget vehicle (and caravan) recovery too. Some countries, such as Switzerland, require you to purchase a vignette if you wish to use certain roads - like motorways. You may also need to purchase Clean Air stickers for some cities in France.

Do remember that if you have a vehicle that is 3 years old or more, you'll need to keep up to date with your annual MOT certificate. If you envisage being away for a lengthy period you might find it worthwhile getting

¹¹ Refer to URL: https://www.caravanclub.co.uk/media/12967007/spanish_regulations_for_vehicle_combination_over_12_metres.pdf

a new MOT Certificate immediately before you leave the UK. If staying away longer than your MOT Certificate is valid for, you will need to (temporarily) return to the UK, with your vehicle, through an EU / Schengen Zone country – and exit in much the same way. Allow for this in your 90-day allowance.

You should also check your home insurance as this too will have a limit as to how many days you can leave your home empty during a trip away. For example, many companies specify that you can leave your home unoccupied for only 60 days consecutively and that your home is only occupied by family members.

If taking your dog overseas, you'll need to make sure you have the correct documentation for them too. Be aware that the requirements have changed since the UK left the EU.

Last, but not least, make sure you have appropriate health, medical and accident insurance for all persons travelling with you - including after-care and repatriation cover.

Before travelling abroad, you **MUST** do your research on the requirements which you must have for yourself and other people (and animals) travelling with you and for your vehicle(s). This site has not been set-up for providing you with this information.

The Ultimate in 'Getting OUT and Staying OUT!'

For really serious travellers, the way to go might be to abandon the UK altogether and take residency (or citizenship) in a European country. This is what we did when we lived in The Netherlands and it isn't usually too difficult to arrange.

An example of this is Kat and her family who I have recently been in contact with and from whom I received the following reply to my e-mail: "*We decided to base ourselves in Europe after BREXIT, so we are now French residents, allowing us to travel in Europe without restrictions. Not that anyone is travelling anywhere at the moment!*"

You can read more about Kat and her family's travels at <https://www.wandering-bird.com/>

If you do decide to take this option, remember that your vehicle may need to be re-registered and therefore comply with any checks / tests required in your new 'home' country.

You will also need to deal with your finances and taxes according to the laws of the country. This can be fairly complicated depending on your circumstances. For example, I had to employ two accountants to sort out my financial affairs; one in the UK and another in The Netherlands, whilst we were living there.

Before deciding on this option, you will need to carry out a thorough programme of research and employ the specialist help you need, including a lawyer familiar with the residency requirements in your new home.

Obtaining residency in France may well be one of the easiest options for many. According to the web site (first link below): *You will be resident in France if you live in France for at least six months of the year. This rule does not require that you live in a permanent home you have in France, but that you are merely on French soil for six months of the year. However, the six-month rule is not absolute and there are circumstances, particularly in the case of business owners or professionals who may travel regularly, where even though they may have a home in France they may not be considered to be resident if they are frequently abroad. In such cases, the French authorities and courts have been willing to review the circumstances for a longer period than a year in order to establish whether there is tax residency. Conversely, even though you spent less than six months in France, you could also be resident if you spent more time in France than in any other country.* This shouldn't be too onerous for most travellers. However, you'd do well to read the driving licence requirements first (*above*).

There is a lot more information about this at URLs:

<https://www.french-property.com/guides/france/finance-taxation/taxation/liability-income-tax/residency-status>

and: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-france>

British citizens and their family members who wish to move to France from 1 January 2021 will be subject to national legislative provisions and will be required to obtain a long-stay visa before going to a prefecture to file their application for a residence permit (refer to URL: <https://brexit.gouv.fr/sites/brexit/accueil/vous-etes-britannique-en/droit-au-sejour-en.html>).

For more information about long-stay visas in France refer to URL:

https://france-visas.gouv.fr/en_US/web/france-visas/long-stay-visa

and: https://www.completefrance.com/home/how-to-apply-for-a-long-stay-visa-in-france-1-6962749?utm_medium=Email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=DM38686

Visa requirements and maximum lengths of stay do change from time to time so must be checked immediately before visiting any country. All information written here is merely for stimulating ideas for potential travelling adventures. It is not intended as a substitute for professional or legal advice. Should you decide to act upon any information provided in this document, you do so at your own risk.