

UK VISITORS FIREARM AND SHOTGUN PERMITS – NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

If you wish to bring firearms to the UK as a visitor, or to possess firearms while visiting the UK other than in some restricted circumstances, you must have a Visitor's Firearm Permit or Visitor's Shotgun Permit. These documents are issued by the Police in the part of the UK you wish to visit, though your permit can be extended by the issuing Police Force to be valid in multiple locations. A Permit can be valid for up to a year, and for temporary residence of a year or less avoids the need for an import licence and subsequent export licence when returning home. You must obtain your permit in advance – it is not possible to apply for one at point of entry. If you bring firearms as part of your personal baggage, you must have the permit with you in order to clear UK Customs. If your firearms are shipped separately, you will need the permit to collect them from the importer. All the firearms and ammunition you import must appear on the permit, as must any firearms you intend to borrow or hire once in the UK. A Visitor's Shotgun Permit can be issued with permission to buy shotguns in the UK and export them. This privilege is not available for a Visitor's Firearm Permit.

Permits will only be issued for the types of firearm and ammunition that are legal in the UK. Firearms illegal for personal possession in the UK include:

- All automatic firearms (machine guns / assault rifles and similar firearms)

- All semi-automatic firearms except:

- Shotguns with a barrel at least 24" (609.6 mm) long

- Rifled guns in .22" rimfire calibre

- All pistols except:

- Muzzle loading pistols, which includes cap & ball revolvers

- "Pistols" which are over 24" long overall and have a barrel over 12" long

- Realistic imitation firearms, which includes airsoft and bb guns constructed to resemble a real firearm

- Gas cartridge revolvers

Permits are not needed for airguns with muzzle energy of less than 12 ft/lbs (rifles) or 6 ft/lbs (pistols), except in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Expanding ammunition for pistols is separately controlled, and if you need it, must be requested as a separate item on your permit. The UK prohibition on expanding ammunition for rifles was abolished in May 2017.

Some components of firearms (eg spare barrels, sound moderators) must also be listed as separate items on a permit.

A Shotgun Permit only covers sporting shotguns. The limiting condition is that the shotgun must have barrel(s) at least 24 inches / 610 mm long and a maximum capacity of three cartridges. So, for example, a semi-automatic shotgun may be held on a Shotgun Permit provided the magazine only holds two cartridges. The possible one cartridge in the chamber makes three. Shotguns not meeting this condition must be held on a Firearm Permit. Shotgun ammunition containing more than 5 projectiles may be held without restriction on production of a Shotgun Permit. Shotgun ammunition with fewer than 5 projectiles (eg slug) is controlled and must be held within quantities authorised on a Firearm Permit.

You must have a sponsor in the UK to get a permit. The NRA will sponsor applications from visitors who wish to shoot at Bisley, at Wedgenock or at the ranges where the UK F-class league events are held, and from NRA members overseas wishing to bring firearms to the UK. The NRA will also consider sponsoring other applications from non-members – please contact the NRA Firearms Department before you apply.

The NRA charges a fee for acting as sponsor. This fee includes the underlying fee charged by the Police, and the costs of standard postage. The current fees are £35 for an individual application and £155 for a group application (see below). If your application incurs other costs eg for return of permits by courier or for meeting you with the permits at the point of entry to the UK, these will be charged in addition.

There are eight different types of application.

1. An Individual Visitor's Firearm Permit application from a person resident outside the European Union is the simplest. Application can be made by post to the NRA or electronically by email to firearmsliaison@nra.org.uk attaching the completed application form which is at <http://www.nra.org.uk/common/asp/membership/firearmsliaison.asp?site=NRA>. The authorising signature for the application comes from the sponsor (the NRA) so all you have to do is provide the information and the payment. **Please allow at least six weeks for your application to be processed and returned to you – longer in the busy period from January to March.** Also allow for likely delays in your national postal system.

2. An individual Visitor's Shotgun Permit application from a person resident outside the European Union can be made as for the equivalent Firearm Permit (above).

3 & 4. An Individual Visitor's Firearm Permit or Visitor's Shotgun Permit application from a EU citizen can be made as at 1 above but must be accompanied by a European Firearms Pass on which the firearms to be covered by the Visitor's Permit are listed at Section 3. If you have more than one European Pass, please check carefully that you send all the relevant documents. It is now acceptable to submit a copy of the European Pass, and we recommend that you do so, as the original document cannot easily be replaced if lost in transit. If you are submitting a copy of a European Pass, please ensure that the copy is legible, and includes all the pages on which information has been entered, and enough space in Section 5 for the police to insert the stamp of authorisation. If you are sending a copy electronically, please ensure that it is in a readily readable format eg .jpg and that it can be printed so as to form a coherent document, on which the police will enter the authorisation, without having to manipulate the images. To use the authorised copy, you present it, with the stamp of authorisation, and the original document to validate the copy.

5-8. The same four types of application are available for groups of visitors. A group is defined as between five and twenty people all travelling to the same locations on the same dates. Thus, a group application must state the same locations and arrival dates for every member of the group. However, a group application will lead to a set of individual permits being issued, so once you have the permits, members of the group can visit as they wish within the limits of location and date authorised.

The requirement for a European Pass can give rise to difficulties. For instance, no permit of any sort is required to possess a black powder firearm in France, but a Visitor's Firearm Permit is required to get a black powder gun into the UK. If you are an EU citizen and your firearms do not appear on a European Pass for this sort of bizarre administrative reason, please include a letter explaining the circumstances with your application.

Note that a UK Visitor's Permit is NOT VALID in the Republic of Ireland, though you may need a UK permit if you are travelling through the UK to Ireland.

Further advice on Visitor's Permits can be obtained from the NRA Firearms department. Email iain.robertson@nra.org.uk or telephone +44 (0)1483 797777 ext 154. The Firearms department is open during office hours and sometimes, on an irregular schedule, at weekends.