

A blurred background image showing two people working at desks. On the left, a woman is looking at a laptop screen. On the right, a man wearing glasses is also working on a laptop. There are coffee cups on the desks, and the scene is set in an office environment.

Immigration Specialists for Every Journey

Guidance Document: UK Ancestry

UK Ancestry

"I have to be very honest I have been travelling all around the world and working with many different departments. I haven't seen this precise services!!! They care about every detail, they reply really fast, they're up to date with you about all the steps. They're fast in the process in general, we are very happy to have chooses to work with them."

SA, Skilled Worker visa applicant

UK Ancestry

The UK Ancestry Visa is a special immigration route for Commonwealth citizens (and certain British nationals) with a UK-born grandparent. It grants an initial 5-year permission to live, work, and study in the UK and can lead to permanent settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain, ILR). This visa allows you to move to the UK without needing a job offer if you meet the ancestry criteria.

What Is the UK Ancestry Visa?

The UK Ancestry Visa lets eligible Commonwealth citizens live and work in the UK for up to five years. No job offer or sponsorship is required, simply prove your ancestral link and show that you intend to work. During these five years, you have full work rights, including paid or voluntary roles, full- or part-time work, and self-employment. After five years, you may apply for ILR, which eventually opens the way to British citizenship.

Who Can Apply for a UK Ancestry Visa?

To qualify, you must meet all the following requirements:

- **Citizenship:** You must be a Commonwealth citizen (e.g., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India) or a British overseas citizen, British overseas territories citizen, or British national (overseas).
- **Grandparent born in the UK:** One grandparent must have been born in the UK, the Channel Islands, or the Isle of Man (or in Ireland before March 1922). Step-grandparents or great-grandparents do not count.
- **Age:** You must be 17 or older on the date you travel to the UK.
- **Intention to work:** You must intend and be able to work in the UK. A specific job is not required, but evidence of work plans, skills, or experience is expected.
- **Financial means:** You must support yourself (and any dependants) without public funds.
- **Application from abroad:** You cannot switch to Ancestry while in the UK on another visa; you must apply from outside the UK.

If eligible, you and any dependants can apply up to three months before travelling to the UK. Within five years, you can extend the visa or apply to settle permanently (ILR).

UK Ancestry

"Have had a wonderful experience dealing with Migrate UK twice over. I got prompt and clear answers to all my queries and constant support from all levels in the organisation"

SB, UK Ancestry Visa Applicant

How to Apply for a UK Ancestry Visa

Step 1 – Check Your Eligibility:

Confirm you meet all criteria and have documented proof of your grandparent's UK birth.

Step 2 – Gather Documents:

Collect all required documents and certified translations if necessary.

Step 3 – Submit Application:

Apply online via the UK Visas and Immigration website. Pay the visa fee and Immigration Health Surcharge. Dependents apply separately. Book a visa application centre appointment for biometrics and upload scanned documents before your appointment.

Step 4 – Biometrics & Decision:

Attend your appointment to provide fingerprints, a photo, and original documents. Standard decisions usually take three weeks.

Once approved, you will receive a 5-year UK Ancestry visa. After five years, you can extend the visa or apply for ILR.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

- Insufficient ancestry evidence:** Provide official birth certificates for you, your parent, and grandparent. Replace lost documents before applying.
- Missing financial proof:** Clearly show sufficient funds to support yourself and any dependants.
- Misunderstanding work requirement:** No job offer is needed, but demonstrate realistic plans to work in the UK.
- Applying on the wrong visa:** You cannot switch to Ancestry from within the UK.
- Continuous residence oversight:** For ILR, avoid spending more than 180 days outside the UK in any 12-month period.

"I highly recommend Migrate UK! From start to finish, the entire visa application process was incredibly smooth and stress-free, all thanks to their expert guidance. Dealing with visa applications can be confusing and overwhelming, but the team at Migrate UK made it feel completely manageable. They were thorough, professional, and exceptionally responsive to all my questions, often getting back to me within the hour."

MK, Skilled Worker visa applicant

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who is eligible?

Commonwealth citizens or certain British nationals (including Zimbabweans) with a grandparent born in the UK, aged 17+, intending to work and support themselves financially.

What can I do on an Ancestry visa?

Work (any sector, paid or voluntary), study, travel freely, access the NHS, and bring eligible dependants.

How long is it valid?

Initially 5 years; can extend or apply for ILR after meeting residency requirements.

Does it lead to settlement?

Yes, ILR is possible after five continuous years.

Can I apply for British citizenship?

Yes, after ILR for at least 12 months and meeting other criteria.

Can I switch from a Visitor visa?

No. You must apply from outside the UK.

Do I need a job offer?

No, but show evidence of your intention and ability to work.

What proof of funds is needed?

No fixed amount, but sufficient savings or income to support yourself (and dependants) without public funds.

What if I lose my grandparent's birth record?

Obtain official copies from UK registries or archives; legal support may be required if unavailable.

About us

"We are a fast-growing SME in the utilities and property tech sector, and we've been delighted to work with Migrate UK to support members of our team transitioning from graduate visas into longer-term roles. From the very beginning, they have been professional, transparent, and an absolute pleasure to work with. Communication has been clear and supportive throughout, which made what could have been a complex process feel seamless."

Skilled Worker Sponsor

We are very proud of our heritage and our successes. Here are some of our headlines:

22

Years of providing immigration advice, making us one of the longest serving specialist immigration law firms in the UK

9000+

Applications processed

50+

Years of combined immigration experience in our team

5

Star rating on [Google](#) and [Trustist](#)

Read more about us online via our [website](#), [LinkedIn](#), and via [HR Ninjas](#)