

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Heathrow introduces duty-free refund appointment service

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Heathrow is Britain's busiest airport. Image credit: Heathrow Airport

By STAFF REPORTS

Heathrow International Airport's Terminal 5 is making it easier for travelers to claim their tax refund through a partnership with Travelex.

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Together the pair have launched the VAT Refund by Appointment service for the convenience of travelers leaving the United Kingdom through Terminal 5. As duty-free shopping surges in popularity and consumers spend more time in airports, terminals must enhance related services to further entice shoppers to spend ([see story](#)).

VIP VAT

The VAT Refund by Appointment service will allow travelers to book ahead for private assistance.

Refund appointments will be fast and efficient at a time convenient to the traveler, rather than standing at a crowded kiosk where the risk to miss a flight may be higher.

In the U.K., the VAT tax is charged on a number of goods and services. The Retail Export Scheme allows non-European Union travelers leaving the EU to claim a VAT refund on goods purchased in the U.K.

The tax refund is paid out in either pounds sterling or the traveler's choice currency. To receive, the traveler must provide the tax-free goods purchased, original store receipts, a VAT refund form in addition to their passport and boarding pass showing a departure from the EU.

Terminal 5's VAT Refund by Appointment will be on a one-on-one basis at a screened desk within VAT. Consumers will not need to wait, as all appointments are arranged in advance.



The VAT Refund by Appointment service will give travelers more time for what's important. Image credit: Heathrow Airport

Travelers will be met personally by a greeter at the door, and if needed, will be assisted in filling out the necessary forms. Subject to availability, hosts at VAT will speak English, Arabic and Chinese.

A personal reminder by phone will be placed 24 hours before an appointment when possible.

"We are pleased to partner with Travelex to bring passengers this enhanced facility, the first of its kind in the U.K.," said Chris Annetts, retail and service proposition director at Heathrow, in a statement. "This private service will provide our customers with greater choice and personalized support with their VAT returns, giving them more time to enjoy their journey."

The VAT Refund by Appointment costs 120 pounds, or about \$155 at current exchange rates. Travelers will be charged at the time their appointment.

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