

**'Bring food and water':
Australians face six-hour lines for Euro summer**



The head of Frankfurt Airport warns queue's like this could be expected at Germany's biggest airport. *Michael Probst*

Australians have been warned to be prepared for queues of up to six hours to enter Europe during the busy holiday season as airports on the continent warn that a new entry and exit system imposed by the EU will be a disaster unless it is suspended.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has told travellers to "take food and water if needed" to eat in line because delays stemming from the introduction of biometric controls including facial photographs and fingerprints have led to hours-long waits for passengers arriving in Europe.

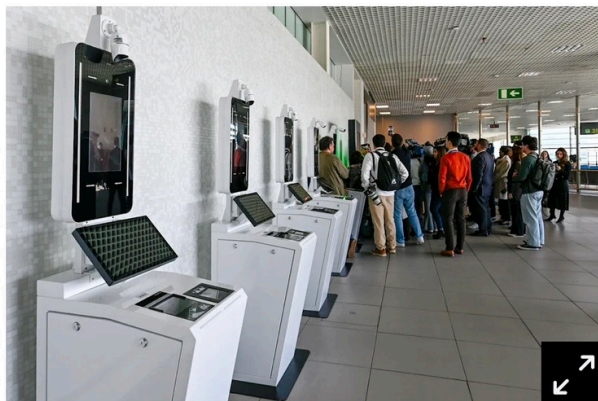


Australians will find entering Europe more complicated. AP

The EU's automated digital border management system, called the Entry/Exit System (EES), was rolled out in April across all Schengen Zone countries, the bloc of 29 nations comprising the union, a spokesperson for the EU said.

But its introduction, which has been uneven across member states, has coincided with peak travel times for the European spring and summer seasons, and confusion between airport authorities and the EU government.

New terminals at Lisbon Airport for a new system that control the European Union's borders for arrivals who are not EU citizens.



New terminals at Lisbon Airport for a new system that control the European Union's borders for arrivals who are not EU citizens. GETTY IMAGES

Dr Stefan Schulte, the president of European airports peak body Airports Council International Europe, warned last week that airports could be overwhelmed.

"Passengers are queueing for hours at peak traffic times and I just do not know how we will be able to cope in the coming weeks with the expected increase in traffic," Schulte said.

Asked by the masthead about delays, Aeroporti di Roma noted that the security procedures "are applied uniformly in all [EU] member states".

But in the case "of the first entry into the European Union, may involve longer processing times due to the additional checks required", the airport operator said in a response posted on X.

In May, DFAT's Smartraveller website advised Australians to bound for Europe that the EES was causing delays of up to four to six hours at some European airports.

Take delays into account when booking your travel," the service said, urging Australians to allow extra time between connecting flights.

"Queues to access EES self-service kiosks are long. Be prepared to stand for an extended time."

Rome's airports could be forced to temporarily suspend the EU's new Schengen Entry/Exit System (EES) biometric border checks this summer to prevent major travel disruptions.

"Take food and water if needed."

People with mobility or health concerns who are required to queue for hours should discuss them with airport support staff, Smartraveller said.

A representative for the EU said ESS "works well, with millions of travellers crossing the EU's borders every week".

"The new system makes our borders more secure and protects EU citizens," the representative said, adding that more than 1100 people had already been identified as posing a security threat to the EU. "The EES rules provide for the necessary flexibility to ensure border fluidity, in particular in view of the coming [northern] summer."

The EU added that most often long waiting times "are not related to the operations of the EES" but staff shortages for the northern European summer, infrastructure limitations and the concentration of flights in specific slots.

Australia already photographs passengers arriving in the country via its SmartGates. They are used to collect information for visa and customs purposes, as well as statistics.

Author: Chris Zappone



Chris Zappone is a senior reporter covering aviation and business. He is former digital foreign editor.

Source: The Sydney Morning Herald