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Entry Formalities and General Information about Visas – South Africa

Applying for a South African Visa Visitors' visas are for international travellers (citizens of other countries) who have permanent residence outside South Africa and who wish to visit the country on a temporary basis for tourism or business purposes for a period of 90 days or less.

A visa simply indicates that your application has been reviewed at a South African embassy, mission or consulate and that the consular officer has determined you are eligible to enter the country for a specific purpose.

The visa will allow you to travel to a South African port of entry where an immigration official will then determine if you are allowed to enter South Africa and for how long you can stay for that particular visit. Visitors are restricted to the activity or purpose for which their visas were issued.

On entry to South Africa, a visa is considered to be a visitor's permit. The permit's period of validity is calculated from the date of entry into the country and will be set out under the heading "conditions" on the visa label. You must ensure that you apply for the correct visa/permit. Entry in the country may be refused if the purpose of visit was not correctly stated.

Requirements for visitor's visas differ from country to country (click here to see which countries are currently exempt), and the requirements are subject to change. As each application is treated as an individual case and you should make enquiries with your nearest South African mission or consulate abroad or any office of the Department of Home Affairs to see whether or not you are required to apply for a visa.

Remember that there is a fee charged for issuing a visa, and you should check the cost with the office as well as this is updated annually. The fee is payable in different currencies in different countries.

Visas are not issued at South African ports of entry, and airline officials are obliged to insist on visas before allowing passengers to board. If you arrive without a visa, immigration officials are obliged to put you onto a flight back to your home country.

Foreigners with long term status (work permits/permit residence) in the neighbouring countries who transit the Republic to return to their employment or residence are not subject to the transit visa, provided they are in possession of proof of their status.

South African visitors' visas may be granted for:

- visits to family or friends and also for tourism purposes
- business purposes
- spouse to join a spouse who is in South Africa on a work or study visas
- children to join parents who are in South Africa on work or study visas
- study purposes
- charitable or voluntary activities
- research
- conferences
- to work in the production of a movie or show (i.e. in the entertainment industry)
- or medical purposes, when a patient needs to receive life saving treatment. (max stay 3-months)
- sport events Documents required to apply for a visa
- A passport or travel document valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of your intended visit
- Your passport must have at least one unused page for entry / departure endorsements
- A completed Form BI-84 (application for a visa)



- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A yellow-fever vaccination certificate (if required)
- Statement and/or documentation confirming the purpose and duration of your visit
- Two colour passport photographs A return or onward ticket if you are travelling by air
- If you have children (minors) travelling with you or joining in South Africa, you will need to provide the following additional documents
- Unabridged birth certificate Proof of guardianship or custody or
- Consent from the guardian in the case of an unaccompanied minor
- Proof of financial means to pay for your living expenses while in South Africa in the form of:
- Bank statements Salary advances Undertakings by the host(s) in South Africa Bursary Medical cover or
- Cash available (including credit cards and travellers' cheques)

Requirements for entering South Africa

You will need the following if you wish to visit South Africa:

- A valid and acceptable passport or travel document for your intended stay
- At least one blank page in your passport for endorsements
- A valid visa, if required Sufficient funds to pay for your day-to-day expenses during your stay
- A return or onward ticket
- Yellow fever certificates if your journey starts or entails passing through the yellow fever belt of Africa or South America.

Countries exempt from South African Visas

PASSPORT HOLDERS WHO ARE EXEMPT FROM VISAS FOR SOUTH AFRICA SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

The citizen who is a holder of a national passport (diplomatic, official and ordinary) of the foreign countries / territories / international organizations listed below are not required to hold a visa when reporting to an immigration officer for an examination at a South African port of entry, subject to the terms and conditions set out in this list, including inter alia the intended period of stay in the Republic.

The holder of a national South African passport, travel document and document for travel purposes. The citizen who is a holder of a national passport (diplomatic, official or ordinary) of the following countries / territories / international organizations is not required to hold a visa in respect of purposes for which a visitor's permit may be issued or by virtue of being a person contemplated in section 31 (3)(b) [accredited in SA] for an intended stay of 90 days or less and when in transit:

- African Union Laissez Passer
- Andorra
- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Botswana
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile (only ordinary passport holders)
- Czech Republic



TYPES OF VISAS

- Visas for medical treatment
- Visas for working in the entertainment industry
- Visas for attending a conference
- Visas for compliance of Treaty conditions
- Visas for crew (maritime)
- Visas for cultural / economic / social exchange programmes
- Transit visas (foreigners en-route to the neighbouring countries)
- Visa for people requiring medical attention
- This visitor's visa is issued to people who want to visit South Africa for medical treatment of less than three months.

All applications for visits for medical purposes must:

1. Include a letter from a medical practitioner or medical institution, indicating the nature of the ailment, the reason/ necessity for treatment, the period of treatment and particulars of the appointment/s made in South Africa
2. Include full details of the person or institution responsible for the medical expenses and hospital fees. If your medical scheme or employer will be liable for the expenses incurred, proof of medical cover must be submitted
3. People who require medical treatment for longer than three months must apply for a temporary residency permit.
4. Emergency patients transported by emergency flights or vehicles will be allowed entry if they do not have a visa. Immigration officers will facilitate their entry by not applying clearance procedures.
5. However, The person in charge of the emergency flight (or the pilot, the driver of the vehicle or the aircraft /vehicle owner) must report the entry and presence of the patient as soon as possible to an office of the Department of Home Affairs
6. An immigration officer will visit the patient and if necessary, will issue the necessary medical permit. If the patient does not have a valid passport, she/he will be issued with a permit to legalize his or her stay for the duration of his or her hospitalization.

Visas for people in the entertainment industry

If you are from a country that is not exempt from South African visa requirements and do not intend to work for longer than six months, then:

You must submit an application for a visa with the relevant documentation as listed on the application form, pay the prescribed fee and you must also request for authorization to work on the visitor's visa at your nearest South African embassy or mission.

If approved, your visa will be endorsed to allow you to stay and work for a period of between 30 and 90 days.

Types of Temporary Residence Visas

Business Visa

Foreigners who are contemplating investing in the South African economy by establishing a business or by investing in an existing business in the country must apply for a business visa. As an applicant, you will be required to invest a prescribed financial capital contribution.

To invest in or open a business in South Africa you will need to, along with Form BI-1738, submit a certificate issued by a chartered accountant registered with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants to the effect that you have:

At least an amount in cash to be invested in the Republic as determined from time to time by the Minister, after consultation with the Minister of Trade and Industry or

At least an amount in cash and a capital contribution as determined from time to time by the Minister, is available.

An undertaking by the applicant that at least 60% of the total staff complement to be employed in the operations shall be South African Citizens or permanent residents, permanently employed in various positions.



An undertaking to register with:

- The South African Revenue Service
- Unemployment Insurance Fund
- Compensation Fund for Occupational Injuries
- Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission, where legally required and
- Relevant professional body, board or council recognized by SAQA, where applicable.
- A police clearance certificate from each country where you resided since the age of 18 years, including the Republic of South Africa A letter of recommendation from the Department of Trade and Industry regarding – the feasibility of the business and the contribution to the national interest of the Republic.
- A yellow fever vaccination certificate if you have travelled or intend travelling through a yellow fever endemic area Medical and radiology reports

The capital requirements above may be reduced or waived in respect of the following types of industries/businesses:

- Information and Communication Technology
- Clothing and textile manufacturing
- Chemicals and bio-technology
- Agro-processing Metals and minerals refinement
- Automotive manufacturing
- Tourism Crafts

Business Visa applications made for existing businesses require the following documents (in addition to all those listed above) to be submitted with the temporary residence application form:

- Financial statements for the preceding financial year
- The contribution to the national interest of the Republic

Work Visa

Work visas are issued only to foreigners where South African citizens with the relevant skills are not available for appointment. These visas are issued for a set duration which varies on the type of work visa being applied for and applications are lodged through Visa Facilitation Services Centres(VFS) across the country or nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad.

General work Visa

General work Visas are valid for the duration of the contract of employment or a period not exceeding 5 years.

To apply, you must submit the following documentation:

- A duly completed application form signed by yourself, the applicant
- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of intended visit
- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act
- Proof of financial means to cover envisaged living expenses in the Republic until the applicant receives a salary.

This should be in the form of:

- bank statements
- cash available,
- or travellers' cheques
- Medical and radiology reports
- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- A written undertaking by the employer accepting responsibility for the costs related to the deportation of the applicant and his/ her dependent family members, should it become necessary.



An application for a general work visa shall be accompanied by –

- A certificate from the Department of Labour
- Proof of qualifications evaluated by SAQA and translated by a sworn translator into one of the official languages of the Republic
- A contract of employment signed by both yourself and the employer.
- Full particulars of the employer including proof of registration with the Registrar of Companies
- An undertaking by the employer to inform the Director- General upon the employee no longer being in the employ of such employer or when employed in a different capacity or role.
- All required documentation for a spouse and/or children if they intend to accompany you

Critical skills work Visa

Critical skills work Visas are issued for a period not exceeding five years) and to apply one you must submit the following:

- A duly completed application form signed by yourself, the applicant.
- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of Payment of the prescribed fee.
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act.

Proof of financial means to cover envisaged living expenses in the Republic until you receive a salary. This should be in the form of:

- bank statements
- cash available,
- or travellers' cheques
- A cash deposit equivalent to the value of a return or an undertaking from the employer
- Medical and radiology reports
- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- Proof of application for a certificate of registration with the accredited professional body, council or board recognized by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).
- Proof of evaluation of the foreign qualification/s by SAQA translated by a sworn translator into one of the official languages of the Republic.
- Proof of employment within 12 months after obtaining a Critical skills work visa in the form of an employment contract specifying the occupation and capacity in which the foreigner shall be employed.

Intra-company Transfer Work Visa

Occasionally, multi-national companies may decide to transfer an existing employee from a foreign branch to a branch in South Africa. These employees must apply for intra-company transfer work visa. In such cases, no proof of steps taken to obtain the services of a South African citizen/permanent residence will be required. Intra-company transfer work Visa are issued for a period not exceeding 4 years and cannot be renewed or extended.

To apply for one you must submit:

- A duly completed application form signed by yourself, the applicant
- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of intended visit.
- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act
- Proof of financial means to cover envisaged living expenses in the Republic until you receive a salary. This should be in the form of:
 - bank statements
 - cash available,
 - or travellers' cheques
 - A cash deposit of equivalent value to a return ticket
 - An employment contract with the company abroad
- A letter from the employer/company abroad confirming that the you will be transferred to a branch/affiliate company in South Africa



- A letter from the South African company where you will work, confirming the transfer from the parent/affiliated company abroad. This letter should specify the occupation and capacity in which you will be employed and should also confirm that the maximum duration of employment will not exceed 4 years
- An undertaking by the employer:
- that you will leave South Africa once the 4-year period comes to an end confirming that your passport is valid that you will be employed in the position for which the permit is issued
- Medical and radiology reports
- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- All required documentation for a spouse and/or children if they intend to accompany you

Corporate Visas

A corporate visa allows a corporate entity (e.g. a mine group, farmer, etc) to employ a pre-determined number of skilled/semi-skilled/ unskilled workers. A corporate visa is issued for a period not exceeding three years, Applications must be made at any VFS centres or nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad.

To apply for a corporate work Visa the corporate entity will have to:

- Submit duly completed application forms signed by the applicants
- Provide a corroborated statement demonstrating the need to employ foreign workers and the number of foreigners to be employed
- A certificate by the Department of Labour
- Proof of registration of the corporation with the:
- The South African Revenue Service
- Unemployment Insurance Fund
- Compensation Fund for Occupational Injuries
- Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission, where legally required
- The applicant for a corporate visa must provide proof that at least 60% of the total staff complement that are employed are citizens and permanent residents employed permanently in various positions.
- Provide a job description and remuneration for each foreign worker
- An undertaking to ensure that:
- the foreigner workers have valid passports the foreign workers will be employed only in the specific positions for which the visa are issued the foreign workers will leave South Africa on completion of their duties
- A cash deposit or guarantee for the foreign workers may be payable by the corporate entity or by the workers in the case of skilled workers

Upon receipt of the approved number of workers, the DHA will issue the corporate visa and authorization certificates for each worker in terms of regulation 18(2)(b), then the corporate entity can start recruiting workers. Once a corporate visa has been issued to the applicant (entity), the applicant may then proceed to recruit workers, the workers will then apply for Corporate worker certificates and these certificates are issued in line with the Corporate visa for 3 years, but may not exceed the validity period of the corporate visa.

Study Visas

If you are a foreign student and wish to study in South Africa you can apply for a study visa by completing Form BI-1738. Study visas must be applied for at VFS Centre across the country near the educational institution you will be studying at or at the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad. Study visas for studies at a learning institution shall be issued other than a school shall be issued for the duration of course registered for. Study visas for learning institutions defined as a school shall be valid for the duration of the study; provided the duration shall not exceed eight years at a primary school and 6 years at a secondary school.

The following documents must be submitted with the BI-1738 application form:

- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of intended visit
- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act



- Proof of financial means to cover envisaged living expenses during the sojourn in the Republic and to also pay for the tuition fees. This should be in the form of:
 - bank statements
 - cash available,
 - or travellers' cheques
- Proof of medical cover
- A cash deposit equivalent to the value of a return ticket.
- In the case of African students, an undertaking from the relevant government to take full responsibility of the student and to pay all costs, should it become necessary to deport the student
- Medical and radiology reports
- An unabridged birth certificate in the case of minors.
- In the case of a minor, the particulars of the person in the Republic of South Africa who will act as the learner's guardian and a letter from such person confirming guardianship
- Consent from both parents for your stay in South Africa, or from the parent who has sole custody, along with proof of sole custody
- An official letter from the educational institution, where you intend to study, confirming provisional acceptance and the duration of the course.
- Proof of medical cover renewed annually for the period of study with a medical scheme registered in terms of the Medical Schemes Act.
- If you are 18 years and older, a police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years is required. This should be submitted with the application or within three months of submission

The holder of a study visa may conduct part-time work for a period not exceeding 20 hours per week.

The overriding consideration in processing applications for study permits are that:

- No foreigner may displace a South African citizen/resident at a local educational institution
- The student must have proof of sufficient funds to pay for day- to-day living expenses, accommodation as well as tuition fees during his/her stay in South Africa
- The student must have adequate medical cover with a registered South African medical scheme and proof thereof

Exchange Visas

Exchange Visas may be issued to foreigners who are not older than 25 years of age and wish to participate in cultural, economic or social exchange programmes administered by an organ of the State or a public higher educational institution in conjunction with an organ of a foreign state. Applications must be made at any regional office of the Department of Home Affairs or nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad.

The validity period of an exchange permit depends on the length of the programme for which it is issued and usually does not exceed 12 months. Exchange permits cannot be renewed or extended.

Should you successfully apply for an exchange permit, you will not qualify for a temporary residence permit until you have lived outside the Republic of South Africa for at least 12 months.

If you require an exchange visas in order to take part in a programme administered or organized by a learning institution in South Africa in conjunction with a learning institution/organ of a foreign state (Section 22(a) of the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002)),

The following documents are required:

- A duly completed application Form BI-1738
- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of intended visit
- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act
- Proof of financial means to cover your living expenses during your stay in the Republic in the form of:
 - bank statements
 - cash available,
 - or travellers' cheques
- Undertaking(s) by the host(s) in the Republic of South Africa



- Proof of medical cover
- A cash deposit equivalent to the value of a return ticket or an undertaking by the relevant institution to cover costs for deportation, if necessary
- Medical and radiology reports
- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- A letter from the Department of Education or a public higher educational institution in the South Africa, confirming that it is responsible for organizing/administering the programme, outlining the activities and duration thereof, as well as confirming that it will take full responsibility for the student whilst he/she is in the country
- A letter from an organ of the foreign state, confirming the particulars of the student, including confirmation of the student's registration with a tertiary educational institution abroad, as well as the date on which study will commence
- A report from a South African organ of state or learning institution prescribed in regulation 19(3)

If you require an exchange visa in order to take part in a programme administered or organized by an organ of the state (Section 22(a) of the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002)), you must submit the following:

- A duly completed application Form BI-1738
- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of intended visit
- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act
- Proof of financial means to cover your living expenses during your stay in the Republic in the form of:
 - bank statements
 - cash available,
 - or travellers' cheques
- Undertaking(s) by the host(s) in the Republic of South Africa
- Proof of medical cover Medical and radiology reports
- A cash deposit equivalent to the value of a return ticket or an undertaking by the relevant institution to cover costs for deportation, if necessary, along with proof of a return ticket
- A letter from the organ of state confirming the status/existence of the exchange programme.
- A letter from the educational institution abroad confirming your enrolment or a letter from the foreign state organ confirming your participation in the programme and their awareness of the exchange programme.
- Annual reports from the sponsoring body, outlining progress of the programme. In the absence of a sponsoring body, the educational institution or organ of state must submit the reports.
- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years

To apply for an exchange visa issued according to Section 22(b) of the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002) you must submit the following documentation at the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate in your country of origin:

- A duly completed application Form BI-1738
- A passport valid for no less than 30 days after the expiry of intended visit
- Payment of the prescribed fee
- A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act
- Proof of financial means to cover your living expenses during your stay in the Republic in the form of:
 - bank statements
 - cash available,
 - or travellers' cheques
- Undertaking(s) by the host(s) in the Republic of South Africa
- Proof of medical cover
- Medical and radiology reports
- A cash deposit equivalent to the value of a return ticket or an undertaking by the relevant institution to cover costs for deportation, if necessary, along with proof of a return ticket



- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- A statement from the prospective employer confirming that:
 - the position for which the exchange permit will be issued exists
 - that your remuneration complies with labour requirements
 - the employer will provide for your welfare and needs whilst in its employ
 - the employer will inform the Department if you do not comply with the terms and conditions of your permit or leave the Republic
- you will leave the country when your permit expires.
- You will not qualify for a permanent residence permit within 2 years after the expiry of your exchange permit.

Retired Persons' Visa

Retired persons' permits may be issued to persons who wish to retire in South Africa, provided that such persons comply with the financial requirements provided for in the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002) and its Regulations. Applications must be made at any regional office of the Department of Home Affairs or nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad.

To apply for a retired persons' visa you must submit the following documents with the Temporary Residency Permit Form BI-1738:

- A passport with at least 1 free page for a visa.
- The passport must be valid for 30 days after expiry of the intended visit
- 2 recent passport size colour photographs
- A photocopy of a valid residential permit, if applicable
- Permit fees (cash or bank transfer);
- A vaccination certificate (if you have travelled through or intend travelling to the yellow fever belt)
- Proof of medical cover
- Medical and radiology reports
- The minimum payment to a foreigner shall be per month, the amount determined from time to time by the Minister, this amount is currently set at R37 000,00.
- A minimum prescribed net worth currently set at R37 000,00.
- A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- The spouse and dependent children accompanying the holder of a retired person visa may be issued with an appropriate visa.

Relatives' Visa

As an immediate family member of a South African citizen or permanent resident you may be issued a relative's visa once the prescribed financial assurance as contemplated in the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002) have been complied with. Relative's visas are issued for a maximum period of two years at a time. Applications must be made at any regional office of the Department of Home Affairs or nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad. For a spouse and/or a dependent child of a South African citizen or permanent resident the permit is issued free of charge, whilst there is a fee for other relatives wishing to join their family members in South Africa.

To apply for a relative's visa you must submit: A duly completed BI-1738 application form

- ❖ A passport with at least 1 free page for a visa.
- ❖ The passport must be valid for 30 days after end of the intended visit
- ❖ A vaccination certificate, if required by the Act.
- ❖ Payment of the prescribed fee (not applicable for the spouse or dependent children of a South African citizen/permanent resident)
- ❖ A cash deposit equivalent value to a return or onward ticket (not required for the spouse or dependent children of South African citizen/permanent resident).



- ❖ A statement and/or documentation confirming the purpose and duration of your visit and proof that you are an immediate family member of a South African citizen/permanent resident (a full birth certificate for children, a marriage certificate in the case of a spouse and proof of kinship for others)
- ❖ A police clearance certificate from each country in which you resided for 12 months or longer since the age of 18 years
- ❖ Medical and radiology reports for yourself and all family members accompanying you (pregnant women and children younger than 12 years need not submit these reports)
- ❖ Proof of South African citizenship or permanent residence of the relative in South Africa in the form of an identity document or passport
- ❖ Proof availability of a minimum amount of R8500 per month per person for living expenses (this does not apply for a spouse or dependent minor child of a South African citizen/ permanent resident)
- ❖ The holder of a relatives visa may not conduct work.

Medical Treatment Visa

Medical Treatment visas may be issued for a maximum period of six months at a time.

To apply for a medical treatment visa, you must provide the following documentation:

A duly completed BI-1738 application form

- A passport with at least 1 free page for a visa.
- The passport must be valid for 30 days after end of the intended visit
- Payment of the prescribed fee.
- Proof of financial means to cover your day to day expenses as well as those of persons accompanying you (the medical permit holder), if any, in the form of:
 - bank statements
 - cash available,
 - or travellers' cheques
- A letter from your medical practitioner or a medical institution, indicating the reasons/ necessity for treatment, the period of treatment and particulars of the treatment plans in the Republic of South Africa
- Details of the person or institution responsible for your medical expenses and hospital fees
- Should your medical scheme or employer not be liable for expenses incurred, proof of financial means or medical cover must be submitted
- Proof of sufficient financial means or provision for the costs indirectly related to the treatment.
- Particulars of persons accompanying you
- A copy of a return or onward air ticket.
- Kindly note that the Department may request a cash deposit equivalent to the value of an air ticket to the country of your origin or residence
- A vaccination certificate, if required by law.

Please note that a medical permit holder may not work or apply for work while in the country

The above information is from the Ministry of Home Affairs – South Africa.

For further information and/or changes, please visit the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of South Africa or your nearest embassy.

<http://www.dha.gov.za/>

