

IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UK

A guide to new visa regulations
for South African nationals



ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The visa requirements for nationals of South Africa entering the UK are due to change on 3 March 2009. This booklet will give you the main information you need to know about the new visa requirements, so that your visit to or transit in the UK is smooth and trouble-free.

You can find detailed guidance on visa requirements for South African nationals at www.vfs-uk-za.com. We recommend that you read this before making any applications.



NEW VISA REQUIREMENTS

WHAT IS A VISA?

A visa is a secure sticker that is put into your passport or travel document and that gives you permission to enter the UK for a specified period of time.

AS A SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL, HOW WILL THE CHANGES TO THE VISA REQUIREMENT AFFECT ME?

From 3 March 2009, you will require a visa to enter or transit the UK **no matter what the purpose or length of your stay**.*

Temporary Exemption

If, however, you have travelled to the UK recently and have evidence of your visit in your current passport (i.e. a UK entry stamp), you can enjoy a **temporary exemption** to the new visa requirements. This means you will not need a visa if you want to:

- transit,
- visit for less than six months, and
- do not want to work in the UK.

If the evidence of entry is in an expired passport, you will not qualify for the temporary exemption detailed above.

This exemption will only apply until the middle of 2009. After this time, all South African nationals who wish to visit or transit the UK will require a visa.

Note: If you have previously been refused entry, removed, deported or required to leave the UK you should apply for a visa in advance of travelling to the UK, irrespective of whether you have previous UK entry stamps in your current passport.

*Any South African passport holder who already has a valid visa or permission to reside in the UK will not be affected.

VISA CATEGORIES

I DO NOT HAVE A UK ENTRY STAMP IN MY CURRENT PASSPORT – WHAT TYPE OF VISA SHOULD I GET?

There are several different types of visa which will allow you to enter and remain in the UK for up to six months (except where stated below).

The visa you choose depends on your reason for visiting the UK and how long you plan to stay. You can apply for a visa under one of the following categories:

- General visitor (visiting family, friends or as a tourist)
- Child visitor
- Business visitor
- Student visitor
- Academic visitor (can remain up to 12 months)
- Sports visitor
- Entertainer visitor
- Visiting for the purpose of getting married or entering into a civil partnership
- Visiting for the purpose of seeking private medical treatment
- Visitor in transit.

The list above is not exhaustive. For detailed information on visa categories, including exactly what activities are permissible for each visa, go to **www.ukvisas.gov.uk**

BEFORE APPLYING

Note: If you have travelled to the UK recently and have evidence of your visit in your current passport, you might qualify for a temporary exemption to the new visa requirements. See page 4 for more details.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Whichever category you fall into, your visa application must be backed by evidence in the form of original documents. You should read the detailed guidance available at www.ukvisas.gov.uk before making an application.

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR A VISITOR VISA TO THE UK?

To qualify for a visitor visa you will need to show that:

- you want to visit the UK for no longer than six months;
- you intend to leave the UK at the end of your visit; and
- you have enough money to support yourself while in the UK, without working or needing access to public funds.

WHAT IF I ONLY WANT TO TRANSIT THROUGH THE UK, WITHOUT VISITING?

If you only wish to transit through the UK without visiting, or leaving the airport, you will need to apply for a **Direct Airside Transit Visa (DATV)**.

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR A DIRECT AIRSIDE TRANSIT VISA?

To apply for a DATV, you will need to show that:

- you have booked an onward ticket from the UK for travel within 24 hours of your arrival;
- you will not need to change airport in the UK;
- you have all the correct documents that you need to enter the country you are travelling to; and
- you will not need to pass through Immigration Control in the UK.

WHAT IF I TRAVEL TO THE UK REGULARLY?

If you travel to the UK regularly, for example on business, you may like to apply for a long-term visa. The long-term visa is subject to the usual visitor conditions including a maximum stay of six months at any one time. It is also valid for multiple entries over one, two, five or ten years, depending on which option you choose.

There are different requirements for other visitor visa categories.

You can find detailed information on these at www.vfs-uk-za.com

APPLYING

HOW DO I APPLY FOR MY VISA?

Your visa application must be made in person at one of our Visa Application Centres (VACs). You will find these in the following locations:

Johannesburg

Visa Facilitation Services (VFS)
1st Floor
Twin Tower East
Sandton City

Pretoria

Visa Facilitation Services (VFS)
2nd Floor
1067 Arcadia Street
SAQA House
Hatfield

Cape Town

Visa Facilitation Services (VFS)
Offices 504–506
47 Strand Street
Foreshore

Durban

Swift Centre
565 Corner of Ridge and Crescent Street
2nd Floor 3rd Office
Morningside 4001

These VACs operate during the following hours on Monday to Friday:
Visa collections: 1330–1500hrs
Visa applications: 0800–1500hrs

HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH WITH A VAC?

The VAC network is managed and run by our commercial partner, VFS Global Ltd, who also operate our telephone and email enquiry services. You can contact them by calling 082 234 4450 or by emailing info@vfs-uk-za.com

WHAT WILL I BE REQUIRED TO DO AT THE VAC?

The VAC is where you will submit your application. You will also be required to provide scans of your fingerprints and have your digital photograph taken.

HOW DO I PAY THE VISA APPLICATION FEE?

There are two options for paying your fee:

- you can obtain a banker's cheque for the full visa fee and submit this with your application to the VAC; or
- you can pay in cash in advance at any branch of Nedbank.

Full details, including current visa fees, are available on www.vfs-uk-za.com

AFTER APPLYING

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I HAVE APPLIED?

Once your application is processed, your passport and any supporting documents will be returned to the VAC for collection.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The majority of visa applications are processed in less than five working days, but this process can sometimes take from 5–15 days. This is why you should apply for your visa as early as possible in advance of your planned travel date.

HOW LONG WILL MY VISA BE VALID FOR?

Your visa will normally be valid for up to six months and you can enter the UK as many times as you want during this period. Your visa will be valid from the date you intend to travel.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

To find out more about entry clearance, specific guidance to help you apply and any other relevant information, go to www.vfs-uk-za.com

The British Government is committed to a firm but fair migration system. The visa service receives over 2.5 million applications a year from people wanting to come to the UK, and delivers first-class customer service to genuine applicants. Those who try to gain access to the UK with false documents or deception will face an automatic ban for up to 10 years. Applicants who have previously breached UK immigration laws by staying in the UK illegally or working without permission will also be banned from coming to the UK.

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