



Applying for a UK visa Frequently Asked Questions

Online application

How do I apply?

Applying for a UK visa is genuinely quick and simple, there are 3 steps:

- Check if you need a visa and which one to apply for at <http://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>.
- Apply, make payment and book your appointment at the Visa Application Centre online. **All customers applying for a visit visa can now use our new online application form. This upgraded system is faster, simpler and user friendly. Use this link <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/uk-visit-visa> to apply for a visit visa using the new online application form. You can purchase our Priority Visa services at the same time and with one payment transaction.**
- Attend your appointment at the Visa Application Centre to submit your application and biometric data. Choose one of our added value or Priority Visa services to fast-track your application or enhance your experience.

Which visa do I apply for?

What type of visa do I need to apply for?

- That depends on why you are going to the UK and what you want to do while there. A wide range of guidance is available online for all UK visa routes, visit www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa and navigate from this page for more information.

Which visit visa do I need to apply for?

- There are now only four visit visa routes to the UK. A Standard Visitor visa <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa> is the most common. On a Standard Visitor visa you can travel to the UK for tourism, to see family and friends, to shop, and to conduct (some) business activities. Viewing the guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/tourist-short-stay-visas> will show you which visit visa is appropriate for the nature of your trip and tell you what you can and cannot do in the UK on that visa.

How long can I stay in the UK on a visit visa?

- A visit visa is usually valid for 6 months and allows multiple entries to the UK. You can stay for up to 6 months. You can apply for a longer-term visit visa if you travel regularly to the UK. These visit visas are valid for 2, 5 or 10 years and allow multiple entry for up to 6 months on each trip.



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Long-term visit visas

You may consider applying for a long-term visit visa if you travel to the UK regularly.

Can I apply for a 10 year visit visa if I've never been to the UK before?

- Yes, but check online guidance carefully, you need to demonstrate that you have a genuine reason to visit the UK on a regular basis, and lack of previous travel may be a factor. The difference in fees will not be refunded if the Entry Clearance Officer issues a 6 month visit visa.

Can I apply for a 10 year visa if I am under 18?

- Yes, but please **note** that if you are under 18 when you apply, your long-term visit visa (regardless of the duration applied for) will **only be valid for up to 6 months after you turn 18**. Online guidance is clear, and fees will not be refunded.

Minors

Can I visit the UK alone if I am under 18?

- Yes, we call this a child unaccompanied visit. You will need to add in some extra information for applications from minors. Please see full guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/if-youre-under-18>.

Replacing a lost or stolen visa

How do I get a new visa if I've lost my passport or it has been stolen or damaged?

- Find guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transferring-a-visa-to-a-new-passport-ecb17/transferring-a-visa-ecb17#ecb172-replacing-a-visa-or-leave-where-this-has-been-lost-or-stolen-excluding-30-day-short-validity-travel-vignettes> if your previous visa was still valid, or apply for a new visa in your new passport.
- It would be useful to submit copies of your old passport and UK visa if you have them, but a copy of the case file report to show you have declared your passport lost or stolen should be provided with the new application.
- Your application for a replacement of your previous visa will be called a "Vignette Transfer" and this is found under "other" on the visa4UK application system.



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Documents you must submit

What documents should I provide?

How do I demonstrate my circumstances/funds/intention to leave, etc?

- That depends on the type of visa. You'll find full guidance online. Start on this page <http://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa> to get to the right information for your personal situation.

Must I purchase a flight and submit tickets with a visit visa application?

- UKVI **does not** require that flights and travel tickets be submitted with a visa application. Our online guidance provides advice on this, but we are clear that we do **not** expect you to purchase flights or confirm travel arrangements until your visa decision has been received. View full guidance at this online link <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/documents-you-must-provide>.

If someone else is paying for my trip, do I still need to provide personal financial details?

- We recognise that applicants may have a sponsor who is contributing to or paying for their trip. In all cases we must be satisfied that you can fund your stay in the UK, check how to evidence this at www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/documents-you-must-provide.

Can I apply for a visa in the country I'm living in if I'm not from there originally?

- You can apply for a UK **visit** visa in any country, whether you are resident there or not. Just note that it may take a little longer if you aren't resident. If you wish to do this you must ensure that you choose the country you want to **apply in** on our application systems to access the correct appointment information for the Visa Application Centres.

Transit visas

Do I need a transit visa?

South African nationals require a visa or exemption document to transit the UK whether they are transiting **airside** (without passing through border control) or **landside** (passing through border control possibly to collect luggage or change airports).

There are a number of exemption documents that can be used in place of a transit visa. For example, any South African national who holds a **valid** visa for either Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the United States of America can use that document to transit **airside** via the UK to anywhere in the world without the need to obtain a direct airside transit visa for the UK. They must have the correct documents for their final destination.

Airside transit means you will arrive into and leave the UK from the **same airport**, on the **same day, without** passing through border control. You will remain "*airside*" and move through the airport transit channels with your luggage **checked through automatically to your final destination**. If you need to enter the UK to collect your luggage and check in for your onward flight (even if your onward journey is from the same airport) or if you are departing from a different airport, this is landside transit.



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Any South African national who holds a valid visa for either Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the United States of America can use that document to transit landside in the UK provided they fulfil **all** of the criteria below:

- They are travelling to or from (or are on part of a reasonable journey to or from) that country. *So, if you are using a visa for Australia as an exemption document, you must be travelling to or from Australia to transit landside without a UK visitor in transit visa.*
- They arrive and depart the UK by air.
- They have a confirmed onward flight which leaves by 23.59hrs the following day.
- They have the right documents for their destination (e.g. a visa for that country).

Important note!

- You do not need a transit visa if you already have any other valid visa to enter the UK.
- You cannot transit the UK en route to another part of the common travel area; you will require a full UK visit visa if your final destination is the Republic of Ireland.

To learn more about transit rules, or to see the full list of exemption documents, please visit the gov.uk pages for full guidance <https://www.gov.uk/transit-visa>.

Processing times

How long will it take to get my visa?

- UKVI's global service standard for all non-settlement visa applications is **15 working days** from the date you submit your application and biometric data at the Visa Application Centre. We encourage all applicants to plan ahead, considering their intended travel date, and apply for their visa in good time.

Priority Visa services

Can I fast-track my visa application?

- UKVI and TLScontact (our Commercial Partner who run our Visa Application Centres) offer a number of added value services to suit individual needs. These services are designed to offer choice and convenience and to enhance speed of processing and customer experience.
- **If you know that you need to travel at short notice**, or want to have your application placed at the front of the queue for processing, consider purchasing a Priority Visa service.

What are the Priority Visa services on offer?

- Customers across South Africa can choose to purchase a Priority Visa (PV) service. These are available to eligible customers applying for both non-settlement and settlement visas.



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- The current cost is £184 **GBP** for non-settlement PV and £551 **GBP** for settlement PV. This charge is in addition to the visa fee and **guarantees front of queue processing**.
- We aim to process all **non-settlement** PV service applications made in South Africa in 5 working days, this is not always possible in periods of high demand.
- Priority Visa service applications are subject to the same decision making process as standard service applications. Using any of these services does not in any way imply or guarantee that an application will be successful. All applicants must meet the requirements of the relevant UK Immigration Rules.
- UK Visas & Immigration strongly recommends that you **do not** use a Priority or Super Priority visa service if you have **any** form of adverse immigration or criminal history, or have ever been arrested by law enforcement officials, including the UK police.
- More information, including detailed terms and conditions, can be found at https://uk.tlscontact.com/za/pry/page.php?pid=added_value_services.

What is a Super Priority Visa service?

- A Super Priority visa service is available in South Africa to eligible customers applying at the Johannesburg or Pretoria Visa Application Centres. This service costs £919 **GBP** in addition to the visa fee, and **guarantees a decision in 24 hours**. Customers will receive their passport back the next working day. View full details and terms and conditions at https://uk.tlscontact.com/za/pry/page.php?pid=added_value_services.
- The Super Priority Visa service is **not** available to those applying to settle in the UK.

Where can I apply for SPV?

- The Super Priority Visa service is available to eligible customers who submit an application at the VACs in **Johannesburg** or **Pretoria**. Customers must book a Super Priority Visa service appointment. These appointments are available from 08.30 to 09.20 Monday to Thursday.

Why can I not apply at the VAC in Cape Town, Durban or Port Elizabeth?

- Documents will still need to be couriered to UK Visas & Immigration offices in Pretoria, and 24-hour turnaround is not logistically possible across South Africa. Customers who want to use the Super Priority Visa service can travel to apply at the Visa Application Centres in Johannesburg and Pretoria, using an SPV appointment slot, and receive their decision and documents back at the same VAC the following day.

Do I need to be resident in South Africa to be eligible to purchase this service?

- Customers applying for any **visit** visa do not need to be resident in South Africa.
- If you are applying under the Points Based System Tier 2, you must be legally resident in South Africa.
- If you are applying in the Points Based System Tier 5 Creative or Sporting routes, you must **either** be legally resident in South Africa, **or** be in South Africa at the time of application for a similar purpose to the activity you propose to undertake in the UK.



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So can a customer living in another country travel to South Africa to apply in order to make use of the Super Priority Visa service?

- Yes, customers from any country may travel to South Africa and make use of the Super Priority Visa service, but **only** if they are applying for a **visit** visa. These customers must **select South Africa** as their location on the application system when completing their online application, regardless of their country of residence. They should also ensure before travelling to South Africa that they have correctly selected a Super Priority Visa service appointment at either the Johannesburg or Pretoria VAC, and that they have paid the fee for the service (£919) to TLScontact on their website, if they have not paid using the new UK online form.

Can I pick any appointment time during the day, or can I just turn up at the VAC in Johannesburg or Pretoria?

- No. If you want to purchase this service you will need to book a Super Priority Visa service appointment at the same time as you make your online application and pay the visa fee. These appointments are only available from 08.30 to 09.20, Monday to Thursday, at the Johannesburg and Pretoria Visa Application Centres.

Why is your PV service for a visit visa expensive?

- Our global service standard for non-settlement visa applications is 15 working days, PV offers choice if you need to travel sooner.

Why is the SPV service so expensive, isn't this profiteering?

- UKVI's SPV service delivers the same turnaround at the same cost globally wherever it's available.
- We do not make a profit from this service, the fee covers the cost of processing at that speed.
- We know this isn't for all, it adds more choice for those needing to travel urgently at a fair price for the fast turnaround.

Does applying for SPV guarantee I'll get a visa?

- No, you still need to qualify for one, it means you'll get a decision the next day.
- All applications must meet the UK Immigration Rules, an SPV application will be refused where it does not.

Added Value Services

What other options do I have if I can't afford to purchase a Priority Visa service?

- Our Commercial Partner, TLScontact, offers a wide range of Added Value Services in all VACs in South Africa. Products have been tailored to meet the varying needs of our customers. Services are available to purchase ahead of your appointment to submit your application or at the VAC. These include but are not limited to;



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- **Walk In Appointments** – Apply immediately at the VAC without needing to wait for an appointment slot. You must make an appointment when applying online but can proceed directly to the VAC.
 - **Keep My Passport** – you will be given your passport back at the VAC to allow you to use while UKVI process your visa application. This allows customers to apply for other visas at the same time, or to travel. We contact you when we need your passport to issue your UK visa.
 - **Premium Lounge** facilities.
 - **Prime Time Appointments** – apply early morning, outside of office hours.
 - **Direct Courier Return** of passport to customers.
 - **Group Appointments** – large groups are handled together at the same time.
- For all information on the range of products and services available, please visit https://uk.tlscontact.com/za/pry/page.php?pid=added_value_services.

VACs & Appointments

Why can't I apply in my home city/town?

- It is not possible to operate everywhere, we offer choice and convenience with free to use VACs in 5 major cities across South Africa.

I can't get an appointment when I want one at the VAC. I need to apply sooner than the first available appointment.

- Our standards mean that an appointment must be available within 5 working days when you try to make it, this should always be the case.
- Remember our service standard is to complete your application in 15 working days from when you submit at the VAC. We encourage customers to apply in good time to travel.
- If you need to apply immediately, you might want to consider purchasing a **Walk In Appointment**, which are now offered by our Commercial Partner, TLScontact at all VACs in South Africa. Please see link above for full details of services offered at the VAC.
- TLScontact offers a wide range of added value services across South Africa, including **Prime Time Appointments**, which provide convenience for those who have limited time during the day to visit the VAC.

I was refused entry to the VAC for being late, why?

- You can change your appointment until 24hrs beforehand, and the VAC allows for a 15 minute delay. You may need to reapply if you are later, or you may be asked to purchase a **Walk In Appointment** if you are extremely late and cannot reschedule.
- We use an appointment system to be fair to all, the VAC can't accommodate latecomers, please plan ahead to be on time for your appointment.



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The staff at the VAC are refusing to give me advice, why?

- All UK visa applications are assessed by UK Visas & Immigration staff. Our Commercial Partner, TLScontact, provide frontend application services. TLScontact has no role in the decision-making process, nor are they Immigration Consultants, they are **NOT** able to provide visa advice to customers, **so please don't ask them to**. They can provide you with facts and information only.

Refusals

Why are visas refused?

- Each application for a UK visa is assessed on its individual merits and visas are refused where the applicant has not met the UK Immigration Rules.
- 98% of South African nationals who apply for a UK visa are successful.
- We must be satisfied that you have a genuine reason to go to the UK; that you can fund your stay; and that you intend to leave afterwards.

How do I know why my visa was refused?

- Your refusal notice will explain in detail, but if you are still unclear www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk tells you how to contact us to make enquiries.

Why do genuine applicants get refused? How do you assess applications?

- All UK visa applications are assessed in a fair, objective process and must meet the UK Immigration Rules.
- UK Immigration Rules can be found in full at www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules.

I have been refused, can I apply again?

- Yes you can reapply. You should address the reasons for refusal in any new application.

Will poor immigration history affect my visa application?

- Each application is considered on its own merits, your immigration record will be considered and you should always answer questions on the application form honestly.

Will a criminal record affect my visa application?

- Each application is considered on its own merits, these details will be considered and you should always answer questions on the application form honestly.

When does an entry ban apply to a refusal?

- An entry ban of up to 10 years will be imposed where the application has been made using deception.
- Always answer the questions on the application form honestly, **do not** make false declarations or use false documents when applying. You are ultimately responsible for the information provided to UKVI on the visa application form. Beware of relying on inaccurate advice from unscrupulous visa agents and consultants.



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Refunds

How do I get a refund for my visa application fee?

- The visa fee covers the decision-making process and is not a guarantee that a visa will be issued.
- If you have made an online application and payment of the visa fee, but have **not** submitted your application and biometrics at the Visa Application Centre, you can request a refund of your visa fee by accessing your online application and following the guidance.
- A refund can only be processed in this manner if you have **not** yet submitted your biometric data.
- Please note that the refund can take up to 28 working days to process and reflect back in your credit card account.
- If applying for a long-term visit visa (2, 5 or 10 years) please read online guidance carefully. The difference in fees will not be refunded if we only issue you with a 6 month visa.
- Please read terms and conditions carefully when purchasing Priority Visa and Added Value Services. The cost of these services is non-refundable in the vast majority of cases.

My application was refused how do I get a refund?

- Visa fees won't be refunded if the application is refused, this fee does not guarantee a visa but covers the decision-making process.
- If you apply in a category requiring an additional Immigration Health Surcharge payment, the IHS fee only will be refunded if the visa application is refused.

I received my decision too late to travel?

- Our global service standard for non-settlement visa applications is 15 **working** days, we encourage customers to apply in good time to travel. We will not refund fees if you have applied late and no longer need to use the visa or have cancelled travel plans. Remember that most visit visas are valid for 6 months (multiple entry) and will allow you to enter the UK in the future for the duration of the visa issued.

I don't want my visa now, can I get a refund?

- We won't refund where you have already provided biometrics and submitted your application, the visa fee is for processing the decision.



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Appeals & Complaints

How do I appeal against my refusal?

- Clear and detailed guidance on how to appeal a refusal decision, where applicable, can be found on all refusal notices.
- The right of appeal is not available in all cases, your refusal letter will provide you with the correct information. You can't appeal refusal of a visit visa, but can apply again.
- Where there is no right of appeal available, a new application can be made which should address the points made in your refusal notice.
- Reapplying addressing the reasons for refusal actually provides a far quicker decision making process. Read more here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/right-of-appeal-for-family-visit-visas-abolished> to find out why.

My appeal has been allowed, when will I be contacted by UKVI, what happens next?

- We must receive instruction from the Presenting Officer's Unit in the UK, this can take several weeks to arrive, but we then contact you directly.

I am not happy with the UK visa service, how do I complain?

- Details of all routes to complain about UK Government services can be found on www.gov.uk.
- To contact UKVI directly by email or phone see www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk.

Fees & Online Payments

Why do I have to pay an Immigration Health Surcharge?

- You will be required to pay an Immigration Health Surcharge only if you are applying to remain in the UK for longer than 6 months. This is **not** required for those applying for a visit or short-term visa.
- Payment of the IHS ensures those staying in the UK for more than six months contribute to the cost of their National Health Service healthcare and treatment.
- It is far cheaper than the cost of private medical insurance cover for the same period.
- The IHS payment will be refunded if the visa application is refused.
- The HIS payment will not be refunded if you do not use NHS healthcare or treatment while in the UK.

Why are UK visas so expensive compared to other countries?

- We believe we offer an accessible visa service globally, one that is highly competitive and value for money with first-class service.
- A UK visit visa offers multiple entry over a 6 month period.
- UK visa fees are set globally and we believe we offer a competitive service that is attractive to customers.



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- When setting fees we consider how our fees compare to those charged by other countries for similar products.
- Surveys show us that customers are more concerned about quality, convenience and speed of service.

Why are long-term visit visas so expensive when the application process is the same?

- Those who travel regularly to the UK avoid the cost and time of having to reapply in person every 6 months when choosing a longer-term visit visa.
- A long-term visit visa also allows customers to hedge against future fee increases and exchange rate fluctuations.
- For those required to travel frequently to the UK, having a long-term visit visa means unplanned or urgent trips, at short or no notice, are possible.

Why do I need to use a credit card to pay for my visa?

- We are consistent with the global trend to online transactions, it helps cut costs in the visa operation, which helps keep visa fees down.
- Online payments offers a streamlined process which is safer for customers, reducing the risk associated with cash handling.
- We have made improvements to the online application system. All customers applying for a visit visa using the new online form, can now make the visa fee payment and purchase a Priority Visa service online in one payment transaction.

Contacting UKVI

Why can we not speak to someone directly, online guidance is so hard to find and understand?

- We cannot provide immigration advice, a full range of guidance for all visa categories is on our website in a user friendly format. We recommend that you start here www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa.
- A wide range of guidance is available online for all UK visa routes. Visit www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa for more information.
- You can contact UKVI's International Enquiry Service by email or phone for information and assistance. Details of how to do this from outside the UK can be found at <http://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk>.

General

Why do South Africans still need a visa to visit the UK? Will those who have a new biometric passport still need a UK visa?

- UK visa requirements are set by the UK government based on a number of factors, and are reviewed regularly.
- There are currently no plans to remove the visa requirement for South Africans travelling to the UK.



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Is it true that Commonwealth citizens no longer need a visa to visit the UK?

- These online reports are not correct, there is no change to the UK Immigration Rules affecting Commonwealth citizens. Our official website <https://www.gov.uk/> is always up-to-date and accurate, visit www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa for correct information.