



Applying for a UK visa in Africa Frequently Asked Questions

Online application

How do I apply?

Applying for a UK visit 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>** . Attend your appointment at the Visa Application Centre to submit your application and biometric data. Choose one of our added value services to enhance your experience.

When should I apply?

- UK Visas & Immigration's global service standard for visit and non-settlement visa applications is 15 **working** days from submission of your application and biometric data at the Visa Application Centre. We encourage all applicants to remember this when planning their travel to the UK, and to ensure they apply for a visa in good time.
- Did you know that you can apply for a visa to visit the UK up to 3 months in advance? We can post-date a visit visa for up to 3 months to accommodate your intended travel date, so why wait? Apply early to beat the queues and avoid unnecessary inconvenience.

Unplanned travel at short notice?

- We recognise that some customers will need to apply for a UK visa at short notice, and that unplanned travel is sometimes unavoidable. Please consider your intended travel date when making your visa application and plan to include a minimum of 15 working days for your visa application to be processed. **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 the Priority Visa service.



UK Visas & Immigration

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 standard visit visa is valid for 6 months and allows multiple entries to the UK during that period. You can stay for up to 6 months but not beyond the validity of the visa. You can also 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.

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 grants a 6 month visit visa instead of the 10 year visa you applied for.

Minors

Can I apply for a long-term (2, 5 or 10 year) visa if I am under 18?

- Yes, but you should 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 years.



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

- Yes, we call this an unaccompanied child 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>

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 biometric data at the Visa Application Centre.

Can I fast-track my visa application?

- UKVI and TLScontact (the Commercial Partner who runs 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 the Priority Visa service.

What are the Priority Visa services on offer?

- The vast majority of customers applying across Sub-Saharan Africa can choose to purchase a Priority Visa (PV) service. These are available to customers applying for both non-settlement and settlement visas.
- The current cost is £ 212 GBP for non-settlement PV and £573 GBP for settlement PV. This charge is in addition to the visa fee (*fees might change, for an updated list kindly visit https://uk.tlscontact.com/za/cpt/page.php?pid=added_value_services*)
- UKVI guarantees that your application will be assessed ahead of all standard applications at the relevant decision-making centre, and processed at the front of the queue.
- 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 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 of services available in your country, can be found at <https://uk.tlscontact.com/> start here and choose your country of residence, then navigate to the Added Value Services.



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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.

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 flight tickets be submitted with a visa application. 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 financially to 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. Note however, that it may take a longer to process your application, if you are not 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.

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>
- Copies of your old passport and UK visa if you have them would be useful, a copy of the Police report to show you have declared your passport lost or stolen must be provided with the new application.



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- The category to select for the replacement of your previous visa is called “Vignette Transfer” and this is found under “other” on the visa4UK application system (<https://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/home/welcome>)

Transit visas

Do I need a transit visa?

Nationals of many countries 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, anyone who would normally require a transit visa, but 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 entry 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. 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.**

Anyone who would normally require a Visitor in Transit visa (landside transit), but 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 **without a Visitor in Transit visa**, 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 <https://www.gov.uk/transit-visa> and/or <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-visa-requirements-list-for-carriers>



UK Visas & Immigration

VACs & Appointments

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.
- If you need to have an appointment date earlier than what is available, you can choose the Walk-In Without Appointment option, which means that a customer is able to access the VAC on a walk-in basis at an earlier date to their scheduled appointment or after their scheduled appointment has passed.
- The current cost is £89 GBP (*fees might change, for an updated list kindly visit https://uk.tlscontact.com/za/cpt/page.php?pid=added_value_services*)
- More information, can be found at <https://uk.tlscontact.com/> start here and choose your country of residence, then navigate to the Added Value Services.

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. If you miss this 24hr deadline, you will need to reapply again for a new appointment date or you can choose to pay for the Walk-In Without and Appointment Service.
- We use an appointment system to be fair to all, the VAC can't accommodate latecomers.

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 general 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.
- 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.
- In certain circumstances refusal may be mandatory. Full guidance on the grounds for refusal can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-9-grounds-for-refusal>



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How do I know why my visa was refused?

- Your refusal notice will explain in detail the grounds under which you were refused.

I have been refused, can I apply again?

- Yes you can reapply. You should however make sure you address all 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 in certain circumstances, and where the application has been made using deception. See full guidance for grounds of refusal here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-9-grounds-for-refusal>
- 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.

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 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 the credit card account that was used to initially pay.
- 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 or any other Added Value Services. The cost of these services is non-refundable in the vast majority of cases.



UK Visas & Immigration

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.

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-inside-outside-uk.



UK Visas & Immigration

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 IHS 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.
- 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.



UK Visas & Immigration

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 available on our website in a user friendly format. We recommend that you start here www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa
- 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 www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk