

UK Visas: The facts

Since 2009, South Africans have been required to have a visa to enter the UK irrespective of whether it's for general travel, temporary residency or for work. There are multiple types of visas, but here we focus on the two most popular options, namely a visitor and transit visa.

DOES YOUR CLIENT NEED A UK VISA?

To check if your client needs a visa to travel to the UK it's advised that agents consult the official UK Government website. There is even a quick Q&A page that answers this for you <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>.

Visitor Visa

This visa was among the first introduced for those wanting to travel to the UK to visit friends, receive private medical care, partake in a conference or simply travel. This visa does not allow you to get married or to work or to stay in the UK for long periods of time. The visitor visa allows you to stay in the UK for up to 6 months, however there are exceptions where a longer stay might be allowed at an additional cost.

Transit Visa

Since December 2014, all travellers transiting through the UK en route to another country are required to apply for a transit visa. This also applies to travellers departing from the same airport without passing through the UK immigration controls or if they are departing from another airport in the same country within 48 hours.

To note: If the transit period is longer, they'll need a tourist visa.

TO APPLY FOR A TRANSIT VISA YOU MUST BE

- In transit to another country with enough funds and the intention to travel onwards
- Able to prove you can enter that country
- Able to show that the only purpose of your visit to the UK is to transit

To note: If your client is booking a Virgin Atlantic or British Airways flight to Europe or the USA, you must advise them that they will need a transit visa for the stop in London, unless they are otherwise exempt.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF TRAVEL VISAS:

Airside Transit

This refers to passengers catching an onward flight from the same airport at which they arrived without passing through UK immigration.

Landside Transit

This refers to passengers who arrive at one airport but are catching an onward flight from another UK airport, or who have to pass through UK immigration to collect and re-check baggage before their onward journey. Different rules apply to Landside Transit where en route restrictions do apply to the exemption document criteria.

You are exempt of a visitor in transit or airside transit visa if you arrive and depart from the same UK airport within 24 hours to another country outside of the Common Travel Area¹ and you are in possession of any of the following documents:

- A resident permit or visa that allows entry to Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the USA
- An EEA or Swiss Category D visa or resident permit
- An Irish biometric visa

To note: You do not require a direct airside transit visa if you already hold a valid UK visa to enter the UK. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/transit-visa>.

Where to apply and how long does it take?

The visa application form can be found [online](#), however travellers will need to visit one of the visa application centres in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth or Durban to have their biometric details captured. Keep in mind that this process does not happen overnight. Therefore it is always advised that your clients factor in at least 3-4 weeks to get a visa. For a more accurate idea of time, visit <https://www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times>.

What are the costs?

- Direct airside (24 hours within same airport) Visa costs R576*.
- Visitor in transit visa costs R1062*.
- Standard visitor visa costs R1566*.

*To note: *Prices are subject to exchange rate fluctuations and changes. To ensure you're quoting your clients correctly visit www.gov.uk/visa-fees.*

We have taken great care to ensure that the information presented here is accurate at the time of publishing, but we can't guarantee that it is accurate and up to date by the time you read this. Always confirm information provided here against the [Official UK Government website](#).

To note: We recommend agents make use of Visa Express www.visaexpress.co.za to step in beyond providing general information.

If you have any further questions, contact info@flightsiteagent.co.za or call 086 133 3392 and one of our friendly account managers will be able to assist.

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