

Which visa is required for European countries?

While travel restrictions for many countries remain in place to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the development and distribution of several Covid-19 vaccines worldwide mean that the reopening of European borders to international travellers may not be too far away. Therefore, it's an ideal time to start browsing visa requirements for Europe in anticipation of planning an upcoming trip to the continent.

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Although citizens of South Africa are currently granted access visa-free or with a visa on arrival to over 100 destinations around the globe, they need an approved visa to travel to the majority of countries and territories in Europe.

It should be noted that, in addition to a visa, [travellers from South Africa](#) need a passport with a validity of at least three months beyond the period of stay to visit all member states of the European Schengen Area and the European Economic Area (EEA), as well as a number of other countries in Europe.



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European visa-free countries for South Africans

Although admission is currently refused due to [Covid-19 travel restrictions](#), it is usually only possible to visit one country in Europe visa-free from South Africa: the Republic of Ireland.

LEGAL

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Ordinarily, citizens of South Africa are granted a visa-exempt stay in Ireland for up to 90 days for purposes of tourism, business activities or transit.

To gain visa-free entry to the republic, it is necessary to present a South African passport valid for at least six months beyond the planned period of stay upon arrival at Irish border control. The passport must contain at least two blank pages. Furthermore, airline staff may ask South Africans to present some additional documents in order to board a plane for Ireland.

These documents may include a return flight ticket, proof of accommodation in Ireland (or an invitation letter if staying with friends and family), bank statements that show that the traveller has enough funds to cover the stay and proof of valid travel medical insurance.

South African travellers visiting Ireland should note that it is not possible to cross the border into Northern Ireland without an approved UK visa, as Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. Visa checks are frequently carried out at land border checkpoints. An approved [UK visa for South Africans](#) is also required to visit any other part of the United Kingdom.

Schengen visa countries

An approved Schengen visa for South African travellers is required to visit any of the 22 European Union countries and four non-EU member states of Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Lichtenstein that make up the [Schengen area](#), which has abolished border controls within its internal borders.

To get a Schengen visa, it is necessary for South African passport-holders to make an appointment at the nearest embassy or consulate in South Africa of their first destination in the Schengen area, or of the country where they will spend the most number of days if they will visit multiple destinations within Europe.

Once an embassy appointment has been confirmed, the applicant is required to complete, download and print a Schengen visa application form to bring along to the consular interview.

It will also be necessary to bring a number of varying supporting documents depending on the purpose of the trip, whether the visit is for tourism, business, transit, [health tourism](#) or another motive.



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South African applicants need to present all of the necessary documents and pay a mandatory Schengen visa fee to consular authorities before the application can be processed and approved. As processing may take several weeks, travellers from South Africa are advised to begin the application protocol well in advance of their intended date of arrival.

An approved [Schengen visa for South African citizens](#) may be issued for a visit to one Schengen destination or multiple countries within the area, for varying periods of permitted stay and for a single entry or multiple entries, depending on the needs of the traveller.



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Other visa-required countries in Europe

To visit the majority of countries in Europe that are not part of the European Union or Schengen area, South African passport-holders are also required to apply for a visa from an embassy or consulate of their destination, regardless of the intended period of stay or purpose of their trip.

However, South Africans who are planning a short [trip to Moldova in Eastern Europe](#) are able to apply for a visa through a simple expedited online application that removes the need to visit an embassy or consulate submit supporting documentation.

Nevertheless, South African passport-holders who are planning longer stays in Moldova will be required to make an appointment at the nearest Moldovan diplomatic mission well in advance of their travel dates and complete the traditional embassy application procedure.

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