



## Visas

A visa is an official stamp in your passport authorizing you to travel, work, or study in that country for a specified length of time. Each country issues its own visas through its embassy and consulates located throughout the United States.

It is important to remember:

- There is no single answer about the process for applying for a visa. It may vary from embassy to embassy, so it is best to contact each embassy directly.
- Visa processing can take as little as a few days for some countries to months for others. It is important to plan time in for visa processing, so start the process as early as possible.
- Students also should ask the embassy or consulate if they should apply for a visa in the jurisdiction where they go to school or through their permanent residence.
- You may be denied entry into, or be deported from, a country for which you have not obtained a required visa.
- It is your responsibility to determine the visa requirements for all countries you plan to visit while abroad.

### Visa Requirements

It's best to assume that you'll need a visa, although there are exceptions to this. For example, U.S. citizens are permitted to travel as tourists to most European countries (with some exceptions such as Russia) without a visa for less than 90 days. But they may need visas for studying or working (unpaid internships included). Most European countries will require a visa for stays lasting longer than 90 days.

For information about entry requirements for US citizens and links to embassies and consulates visit the [U.S. Department of State's Country Specific Travel Information](#) [1].

If you are not a U.S. citizen, see the [International Students](#) section below.

### Visas for Internships, Research, or other forms of Working Abroad

In many cases you will need to obtain a special type of visa in order to legally work in another country. This can also be true for unpaid work abroad. See [Work Permit Visas](#) [2] for more information about this. The **United Kingdom** is an example of a country that requires students doing internships (paid or unpaid) to obtain a special internship visa prior to arrival. Unless your host organization or company is able to provide you with a Certificate of Sponsorship (most cannot), your only option is to obtain the visa

through the sole organization authorized to provide this visa, [BUNAC](#) [3].

## Getting a Visa

Visas must be obtained before you arrive in the country. Again, some visas can take weeks to process (depending on the type of visa, your citizenship, which country you are traveling to, etc.). Others can be processed fairly quickly, within a matter of days or even immediately at the consulate.

If you plan to visit several countries which require visas, it may be easier to apply for only one or two visas before leaving the U.S. and get the others at embassies or consulates abroad as you travel. You may need extra passport photos for this. An embassy or consulate in the U.S. can give you the details.

Although we recommend that students apply for a visa through a consulate or embassy, you may choose to utilize a visa processing company if you need a visa quickly and are willing to pay extra fees. Here are some visa processing companies that have not been vetted by the International Center, but have been used by members of the U-M community in the past.

- [Travisa](#) [4]: a visa processing company that expedite visas for an extra fee; also has a database that is helpful for citizens of any country determining visa needs.
- [Perry International](#) [5]: can also expedite visas for an extra fee and has a database with visa information; their location in Chicago may be an advantage since some consulates located there require Michigan residents to apply through Chicago.
- [Travel Document Systems \(TDS\)](#) [6]: Can expedite visas for an extra fee; does not have a Chicago office.
- For visas to **China**, we recommend using [USChinaVisa](#) [7], which has a Michigan office.
- For visas to **Russia**, we recommend the following:
  - [A Briggs](#) [8] (formerly Executive Visa)
  - [Russia House](#) [9]
  - [Let's Russia](#) [10]

## Tourist Cards (Latin American Countries)

Tourist cards authorize entry into a country and are issued instead of visas for some Latin American countries. They can be obtained through an embassy or consulate, or sometimes through an airline or travel agency.

## International Students at U-M

As mentioned above, it is best to assume that you will need a visa to visit another country, even for tourism purposes. You can apply for foreign visas in the United States through the consulate or embassy of your destination country.

Be sure to speak with an international student and scholar advisor at the U-M International Center ([icenter@umich.edu](mailto:icenter@umich.edu) [11]) regarding your travel plans and obtain the necessary signatures before departure, even for a trip to Canada.

**Schengen Visa:** For European travel, the Schengen visa covers a number of countries. See the [Schengen Visa Information](#) [12] website for more information about which countries are currently part of the Schengen visa agreement. The website will also list which countries' citizens will need Schengen visas.

Where you apply for the Schengen visa will depend on where you plan to travel:

- If you'll be traveling to only one Schengen country, you would apply at that country's embassy or consulate in the US.
- If you wish to travel to several Schengen countries, you'll apply at the embassy or consulate of the country where you are going to spend the majority of your trip.
- If you wish to travel to several Schengen countries, with no main destination (the duration of your stay is strictly equal in each country), you'll apply at the embassy or consulate of the country that's your first point of entry.

## Additional Online Resources

- Check the [State Department's Foreign Embassy page](#) [13] for links to foreign embassies in the U.S.
- [NAFSA Visas for Education Abroad](#) [14]

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**Source URL:** <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/abroad/swt/travel/visas>

### Links

- [1] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>
- [2] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/abroad/swt/work/work-permit-visas>
- [3] <https://www.bunac.org/usa/intern-abroad/professional/britain>
- [4] <https://www.travisa.com/>
- [5] <http://perryvisa.com/webPages/visa.php>
- [6] <https://www.traveldocs.com/>
- [7] <http://uschinavisa.com/>
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- [13] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/consularnotification/ConsularNotificationandAccess.html>
- [14] [http://www.nafsa.org/Professional\\_Resources/Browse\\_by\\_Interest/Education\\_Abroad/Visas\\_For\\_Education\\_Abroad/](http://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/Browse_by_Interest/Education_Abroad/Visas_For_Education_Abroad/)