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The Visa Guide

October 2025



Western Cape
Government
FOR YOU



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Introduction

Navigating visa and immigration requirements can be complex for individuals and businesses seeking to invest, work, or settle in a new country.

This Visa Guide has been developed to provide clear, practical information on the visa categories, requirements, and processes relevant to entering and working in South Africa and to support investors, businesses, and talent by simplifying key information to ensure a smoother and more informed relocation journey.

This initiative is the result of a partnership between **Wesgro** and **Relocation Africa**, combining public and private sector expertise to enhance access to reliable visa information for the Western Cape and greater South Africa.

Visa Types

All visa categories are regulated under the **South African Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002 (as amended)** (“the Act”) and its associated Regulations, as published in Government Gazette No. 37679 (22 May 2014), No. 42071 (29 November 2018), and No. 50675 (20 May 2024). These legislative instruments outline the various visa types available to foreign nationals seeking to sojourn in South Africa.

Applicants are requested to ensure that all documents are certified, translated into English where applicable, and dated within six (6) months of submission, particularly police clearances and medical reports. Processing times are provided as a guide and may vary depending on the complexity of each case. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) may, in accordance with the Act, request additional documentation or schedule interviews as necessary.



1. Investor's/ Business Visas



Intended for foreign investors contributing to South Africa's economic development. The Investor's Visa, outlined in **Section 15 of the Immigration Act** and referred to as the **Business Visa**, permits foreign nationals to reside in South Africa while managing business operations. The visa supports investment-led growth by facilitating sustainable business activity, employment creation, and long-term economic participation.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Purpose:** For foreign investors seeking to establish, invest in, or acquire an existing business in South Africa, thereby supporting economic activity through foreign direct investment.
- **Investment Requirement:** Minimum investment of ZAR 5 million, with sector-specific thresholds applicable in special economic zones and priority sectors.
- **Employment Obligations:** At least 60% of the permanent staff complement must be South African citizens or permanent residents.
- **Business Experience and Management Expertise:** Applicants may be required to demonstrate relevant business experience or qualifications.
- **Proof of Funds:** The lawful source and availability of investment funds must be verified by a Chartered Accountant registered with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), or a Professional Accountant registered with the South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA).
- **Documentation:** A positive recommendation from the **Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC)** via the **Business Visa Recommendation System (VRS)**, proof of investment funds, relevant business undertakings, and personal documents (e.g., police clearance certificates, medical certificates, etc.) are required.
- **Language and Education:** While not mandatory, relevant expertise, qualifications, and language proficiency may strengthen the application.
- **Pathway to Residency:** Eligible applicants may apply for permanent residency after fulfilling all investment and employment obligations. Accompanying dependents (Spouse, Life-Partner, and Children) may also qualify for permanent residency based on being dependents.
- **Validity:** The visa may be granted for a period of up to three (3) years and is renewable, subject to compliance with all conditions.

2. Work Visas

Applicable through either the **secondment or assignment of an employee from a foreign company** to a South African subsidiary, branch, or affiliated entity, or through **direct employment** with a South African company (**pre-authorisation required**).

2.1 Long-term Secondment Work Visa (6+ months to 4 years)



The Work Visa under **Section 19(5) of the Act**, referred to as the **Intra-Company Transfer (ICT) Work Visa**, permits long-term assignments or secondments from a foreign company to a local subsidiary, branch, or affiliated entity within the Republic.

Eligibility Criteria: May be issued to a foreign national employed by a foreign company abroad who will be transferred to a branch, subsidiary, or affiliated entity in South Africa. The applicant must have been employed by the foreign company for no less than six months prior to submission. The South African entity must implement a **Knowledge and Skills Transfer Plan** to ensure the transfer of skills to South African citizens or permanent residents. Applicants must possess relevant qualifications, skills, and experience in their field.

Advantages: Allows temporary residence in South Africa while performing duties at the local entity on behalf of the foreign employer. Accompanying dependents (Spouse, Life-Partner, and Children) may qualify for the relevant Dependent's Residence Visa, as outlined below.

Disadvantages: Status may not be changed within South Africa. The ICT Work Visa is **not renewable** and does not confer eligibility for a Permanent Residence Permit.

Visa Validity and Renewal Process: Granted for up to **48 months** (4 years) and is not renewable. If initially issued for

a shorter period (e.g., 2 years), it may be renewed within South Africa to reach the maximum duration of 4 years. Renewal applications must be submitted at least **60 days before expiry**.

2.2 Long-term Direct Hire Work Visa (up to 5 years)



The Work Visa under **Section 19(4) of the Act**, referred to as the **Critical Skills Work Visa (CSV)**, is intended for direct hires in South Africa whose occupation is listed as critical in the **Critical Skills List** published in Government Gazette No. 49402 on 3 October 2023.

Eligibility Criteria: May be issued to foreign nationals possessing skills or qualifications recognized as critical for South Africa and listed in the Government Gazette. Applicants must provide proof of qualification (Bachelor's, Master's, or Honors), evaluated by the **South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)**. In most cases, registration with the relevant Professional Body, Board, or Council is required.

Advantages: Allows temporary residence in South Africa while employed by the local entity. CSV holders qualify for a Permanent Residence Permit within the skills category. Accompanying dependents (Spouse, Life-Partner, and Children) may qualify for the relevant Dependent's Residence Visa, as outlined below.

Disadvantages: Employment is limited to the hiring entity, as the employer's name is endorsed on the Visa. Any change of employer requires prior approval from the **Department of Home Affairs (DHA)** before commencing new employment.

Visa Validity and Renewal Process: Granted for up to **60 months (5 years)** and is renewable, subject to compliance with all visa conditions. Renewal applications must be submitted at least **60 days before expiry**.

2.3 Long-term Direct Hire Work Visa (up to 5 years)



The Work Visa under **Section 19(2)** of the Act, referred to as the **General Work Visa**, allows foreign nationals with specific skills and qualifications to be employed by a South African employer where no suitable local candidate is available. The applicant will have to qualify within the points-based evaluation system to ensure merit-based eligibility.

Ideal for a direct hire in South Africa, provided that the applicant qualifies within the new **Points-Based System**. An applicant must meet all prescribed requirements and must obtain a minimum of **100 points**. May be issued to a foreign national who does not qualify for a Critical Skills Work Visa and who intends to take up employment with a South African company, business, or organisation.

Eligibility & Qualification Criteria:

1. **Qualifications:** NQF levels 9 -10 (50 points) ~ NQF levels 7 -8 (20 points)
2. **Offer of employment:** Salary Above ZAR 968,184.00 per annum (50 points) ~ Salary Above ZAR 645,456.00 per annum (20 points)
3. **Work experience:** 10+ years (30 points) ~ 5-10 years (20 points)
4. **Offer from trusted employer (TES):** 20 points

5. Language skills (proficient in at least one official language): 10 points

Advantages: Allows temporary residence in South Africa while employed by the local entity. Provides a pathway to permanent residence after a qualifying period of employment.

Disadvantages: Employment is limited to the hiring entity, as the employer's name is endorsed on the Visa. Any change of employer requires prior approval from the **Department of Home Affairs (DHA)** before commencing new employment.

Visa Validity and Renewal Process: Granted for up to **60 months (5 years)** and is renewable, subject to compliance with all visa conditions. Renewal applications must be submitted at least **60 days before expiry**.

3. Financially Independent Permit



The **Financially Independent Permit**, under **Section 27(f)** of the Act, may be granted to a foreign national who demonstrates a net worth of at least **ZAR 12 million**. This permit is a subcategory under the Permanent Residence Permit provisions of the Act.

Eligibility Criteria: The applicant must satisfy the **Director-General** that they possess the prescribed minimum net worth of **ZAR 12 million** and have remitted the prescribed fee of **ZAR 120,000.00** to the **Department of Home Affairs (DHA)** upon approval of the permit.

Advantages: Permit holders qualify for a South African Identity Card/Book. As a permanent residence permit holder, the bearer has the same rights as a South African citizen, barring the right to vote and hold a South African passport. May pursue direct employment or self-employment and start a business. Accompanying dependents (Spouse, Life-Partner, and Children) may also qualify for permanent residency based on being dependents.

Disadvantages: The permit will lapse if the holder does not establish residence in the Republic within **one (1) year** of issuance. In the event of lapse, a new application must be submitted following standard procedures.

Permit Validity: While it is issued under the **Permanent Residence Permit** provisions (Section 27 of the Act) and does not technically expire, the permit will lapse if the holder remains absent from the Republic for more than three **(3) years**. In such cases, a new application must be submitted.

4. Dependent Resident Visas

Intended for accompanying family members of holders of a **Work Visa**, **Business Visa**, or **Retired Persons Visa**.

- **Spouses:** May apply for a **Dependent's Visa**, classified as a **Visitor's Visa** under **Section 11(1)(b)(iv) of the Act**, to accompany a holder of a Work Visa, Business Visa, or Retired Persons Visa.

- **Minor Children (not of school-going age):** May also apply under the same visa category.
- **Minor Children (school-going age):** May apply for a **Study Visa** under **Section 13 of the Act** to accompany their parents.

5. Relative & Spousal Visas

Facilitate the temporary or permanent residence of family members of **South African citizens** or **permanent residents**, whether for work or a sojourn in the Republic.

- **Relative's Visa:** Under **Section 18 of the Act**, may be issued to a foreign national who is an immediate family member of a South African citizen or permanent resident, provided that the citizen or permanent resident provides the prescribed financial assurance of **ZAR 8,500.00 per month**.
- **Spousal Visa:** Under **Section 11(6) of the Act**, may be issued to a foreign national who is the spouse of a South African citizen or permanent resident and does not qualify for any of the visas under Sections 13 to 22 of the Act.

Application Process

1. All visa applications must be submitted at the nearest **South African Foreign Mission Abroad ("Embassy")** or at a **Visa Facilitation Centre** in the applicant's country of usual residence or origin. Certain visa categories may require pre-authorisation and additional procedural steps within South Africa.

2. The estimated processing time, calculated from the date of submission to the Embassy, is **8 to 12+ weeks**. Timelines may vary depending on the specific Embassy, volume of applications, and available staffing capacity.
3. Applicants may be required to attend an interview to verify the accuracy of information provided in the application.
4. Depending on the country of application, additional documentation may be requested at the discretion of the counter official at the respective Embassy.

Expert Assistance for Immigration Compliance

Engaging qualified professionals can help ensure that visa and immigration applications meet all regulatory requirements, minimising delays and the risk of rejection.

Wesgro's services include facilitation of visa processes for prospective investors and local businesses. Foreign applicants can also consider seeking assistance directly from a member of the **Forum of Immigration Practitioners of South Africa (FIPSA)** for guidance on compliance with procedural requirements. Attorneys and recognised Immigration Specialists may also assist with documentation and ensuring that applications meet all regulatory obligations. Obtaining professional advice can help reduce the likelihood of delays or rejections by ensuring submissions align with legislative criteria.

About the Partners

Wesgro

Wesgro is the official tourism, trade and investment promotion agency for Cape Town and the Western Cape. The investment team assists Western Cape companies seeking expansion, South African companies investing in the region and foreign companies entering the market for the first time. Wesgro offers a comprehensive range of services to investors, including providing market intelligence, navigating South Africa's policy and regulatory landscape, assisting with site location identification, addressing regulatory challenges and facilitating referrals to specialist advisory services such as legal firms, recruitment agencies and property professionals.

Relocation Africa

Your Bespoke Mobility Partner at the Heart of Africa, with over 30 years of experience, Relocation Africa is a leading provider of mobility solutions across the African continent. We support organizations and individuals through every stage of the relocation journey - ensuring seamless, cost-effective transitions handled with care, efficiency, and cultural insight. Our purpose is simple: to create exceptional experiences that leave lasting, positive memories of Africa and its heart.



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For further information on setting up or expanding your business in Cape Town & the Western Cape, please contact Wesgro's Investment Team



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