

5 Immigration Rules – Visas

The immigration rules in Colombia control and regulate the entry and permanence of foreigners in the country. This chapter presents the regulations that the Ministry of Foreign Relations has established for the citizens of the countries who do not require a visitor's visa and the main categories of visas that may be requested by a foreigner with the intention of establishing contacts, render services or conduct business, commercial, entrepreneurial or investment activities in Colombia.

5.1 Countries that do not require a Visitor's Visa

Citizens of the following countries do not require a tourist visa to visit Colombia:

Germany, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei-Darussalam, Bhutan, Canada, Korea, Costa Rica, Croatia, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United Arab Emirates, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United States of America, Estonia, Fiji, Philippines, Finland, France, Granada, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Iceland, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, Norway, New Zealand, Netherlands, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, San Marino, Saint Lucia, the Vatican, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela.

The stay in the country is allowed for a term of up to 180 calendar days within the same calendar year.

5.2 Classification of Visas

5.2.1 Business Visa

5.2.1.1 Applicants

Merchants, industrialists, executives and businessmen who wish to enter the country to do business or to carry out market research and who have an economic relationship with a national or foreign company in Colombia.

Legal representatives, directors or executives of foreign commercial, industrial or service companies, having an economic relationship with a national or foreign company in Colombia.

5.2.1.2 Duration

The visa is issued for a maximum duration of four (4) years for multiple entries, without exceeding 6 months stay for each entry.

5.2.2 Resident Investor Visa

5.2.2.1 Applicants

A foreigner who makes in his name a direct foreign investment of at least US\$ 100,000 in the Colombian territory. The foreigner may, under the protection of the visa, carry out activities related to the business management of his investment.

5.2.2.2 Duration

The visa is issued for an indefinite period of time, with multiple entries. However, the visa will expire if the foreigner remains abroad for more than two consecutive years.

5.2.3 Temporary Visas

5.2.3.1 Temporary work visa

5.2.3.1.1 Applicants

The visa is granted to foreigners who:

- a. Are retained by local companies to develop activities in their specialty such as technicians, journalists, persons belonging to artistic groups and legal representatives, among others.
- b. Plan to enter the country by virtue of academic agreements existing between institutions of higher education or inter-administrative agreements in specialized areas.
- c. Are accredited as foreign journalists by news agencies or national or international information agencies.
- d. Are appointed by government organization or entity.
- e. Are directors, technicians or administrative personnel of private or public foreign companies of commercial or industrial nature and who have been transferred from abroad to cover specific positions in their companies.
- f. Without having a work contract with a company established in Colombia, render their services in specific projects by request of companies located in Colombia.
- g. Are part of an artistic, sports or cultural group contracted by reason of its activity, when it is remunerated.
- h. Are volunteers or missionaries who are not part of the hierarchy of a Church, faith, religious denomination, federation, confederation or association of religious ministries.

5.2.3.1.2 Duration

The visa is granted for a maximum period of two (2) years with multiple entries. However, it will expire if the foreigner is absent from the country for a period longer than 180 consecutive days.

5.2.3.2 Special temporary visa

5.2.3.2.1 Applicants

It is granted to a foreigner who intends to enter the national territory for particular cases such as to:

- a. Participate in administrative or judiciary proceedings.
- b. Practice trades and/or activities of an independent nature.
- c. Carry out activities not included in the other types of visas.
- d. Enter as a person who receives income from capital investments.
- e. Undergo medical treatment, when the entry cannot be made within the terms of a Visitor's Visa or an Entry Permit.
- f. Have the condition of retiree.
- g. Cooperate or volunteer in a non-profit or non-governmental organization, or having been duly introduced by an International Organization or Diplomatic Mission, to carry out social work, assistance, verification, observation or humanitarian aid in the country.
- h. Act as partner or owner of a commercial establishment or commercial company constituted and registered in the Chamber of Commerce.

5.2.3.2.2 Duration

Except in the last two cases, in which the visa duration may be for up to two (2) years, the visa is granted for one year, with multiple entries.

5.2.4 Visitor's Visas

It is granted to citizens of countries that require a visa, according to the rules established by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and who intend to enter Colombia without the intention of residing in the country. There are three types of visas in this category:

5.2.4.1 Tourist visa

This visa is granted for rest or entertainment activities. It is issued for a period of 180 calendar days, within the same calendar year, with multiple entries.

5.2.4.2 Temporary visitor visa

This visa is issued for journalism activities and to cover special events, make contacts and commercial or business activities, participate in academic activities that do not exceed one academic semester, give interviews in personnel selection processes in public or private entities, for medical treatment, for non-paid sports scientific or cultural events, to provide training in companies, among others. It is granted as long as there is no labor contact.

This visa may be granted for up to 180 calendar days, except in the last case, in which it cannot be for more than 45 calendar days within the same calendar year.

5.2.4.3 Technical visitor's visa

This visa is granted to render urgent technical services to public or private entities, prior filing of a letter of responsibility from the entity justifying the urgency of the service required. It may be granted for up to 45 calendar days within the same calendar year.

Exception: When dealing with evident and publicly well-known events, the Ministry of Foreign Relations may issue a new visa for the duration necessary to resolve the urgency.

5.3 Foreigner's Identity Card

The foreigner who has obtained a visa for a duration higher than 3 months, must register before the Administrative Security Department – DAS within the next 15 days after his arrival in Colombia. Once the visa is registered, DAS will issue a foreigner's identity card to the foreigner.

This document serves the foreigner as identification within Colombia and allows him to sign contracts, open bank accounts and carry out different operations. The foreigner must keep it with him at all times during his stay in the country.

5.4 Visa costs

VISA CATEGORY	COST (USD\$)		
	US, Canada, Africa, Asia and Oceania	Europe and Cuba	Latin America and the Caribbean
Business	200	150	170
Resident Investor	475	375	425
Temporary Worker	205	205	205
Temporary Special	175	175	175
Visitor	50	40	45

5.5 Regulations

The regulations that govern the Colombian immigration system are Decree 4000 of 2004, Decree 4248 of 2004 and Order 0255 of 2005.