

Getting a Visa for International Travel

A General Guide to How Visas Work

Preparation for international study includes proper travel documentation for your international stay. For many programs, this means you will need to apply for a visa.

WHAT IS A VISA?

- A visa is official permission from a foreign country's government to enter the country.
- Sometimes a visa is placed inside of your passport as proof of permission to enter the country, other times it is digital.
- The visa will indicate how long you can visit a particular country as determined by that country's government.
- The most common visa types are tourist, student, work, and transit visas.
- Depending on where you are traveling, a visa can be valid for a single or multiple visits.
- Some visas require an application to be filed prior to entering the country and other visas are granted upon entering the country.
- Your country of citizenship determines whether or not you need a visa to enter a particular country.
- There are fees associated with visas.

If your SIT program requires that you apply for a visa before departure, your admissions officer will contact you about the required steps. Please be on the lookout for this information and respond to it promptly as late or incorrect applications may result in you being unable to join the program.

Visa applications vary but some things you may need to do include:

- Make an in-person appointment to visit an embassy or consulate
- Complete an FBI background check
- Send your passport and application materials by mail (meaning you may be without your passport for days or weeks, depending on the country)

Though SIT will be supporting you in your application process by providing you with instructions and documents, applying for the visa will typically be entirely your responsibility.

It is important to note, as you move through your visa process, that consular officials are not customer service agents—they are officers of their government. You may encounter frustrations in working with them, but it is important to remain patient and respectful as they are typically the ones who will decide whether to issue you a visa.

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