

TRAVEL IN THE SCHENGEN ZONE FOR NON-EU NATIONALS

The Schengen zone acts as one country in terms of borders and border controls. As long as you stay in this zone, you can generally cross borders without going through passport control checkpoints again. Similarly, by having a Schengen visa, you do not need to apply for visas to each of the Schengen member

Countries of the Schengen Zone include Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Thus when walking the Via Francigena you enter the zone at Calais.

The Vatican City, surrounded by the city of Rome, doesn't have formal border controls. However, you do have to go through a metal detector when entering the Vatican Museums or St Peter's Square, and entry to other parts of the Vatican requires arrangements in advance.

The Schengen Zone covers immigration controls, whilst the EU is effectively a customs union. Therefore, you do not need to pass through customs when travelling between a Schengen and a non-Schengen EU country (eg France to Switzerland). The converse is true for travel between EU and non-EU Schengen countries: you must pass through customs if you have goods to declare, but not immigration.

It is a legal requirement to have your "papers" on you at all times; that is, your passport and your Schengen visa, or visa waiver, if applicable. It is also wise to carry proof of insurance.

Travel in the Schengen area for UK citizens after Brexit

The Transition Period

Under the negotiated Withdrawal Agreement, free movement will continue between the EU and the UK during the transition period (ie 1 February-31 December 2020). This means that travel between the UK and the EU for EU and UK nationals will continue on broadly the same terms as now. No restrictions will be in place, and UK citizens will still be able to use their EHIC card, entitling them to health care. The transition period will allow a future immigration relationship to be negotiated by the EU and UK.

That future immigration relationship between the UK and the EU will commence after the transition period. At the time of writing the exact relationship is not known. We will update this page as soon as it becomes clear.

ETIAS

It is probable that by the end of 2021 the requirement for an ETIAS visa waiver will apply to UK citizens, and the European Travel Information and Authority System (ETIAS) will go into

effect. For updated information, check <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:4365508>.

The ETIAS is a waiver program that will allow citizens with valid passports from over 60 countries (including the United Kingdom) to apply for visa-free entry into the Schengen Area. It is important to remember that **although UK travellers will not require a visa**, they will be required to make arrangements with European authorities with sufficient time before travelling, which will mean an online application for ETIAS.

Once approved, ETIAS waiver holders from the United Kingdom will be eligible to stay within the Schengen Area, visiting as many countries as they please, **for up to 90 days within 180 days**. Note: An ETIAS is valid for multiple entries as long as 90 days of stay within the Schengen Area has not been exceeded over a period of 180 days.

Pilgrims walking the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome will enter Schengen as soon as they arrive in France. Switzerland is part of Schengen, even though not in the EU. It is entirely possible for most to walk Calais-Rome in 90 days, given reasonable fitness, and still take the occasional day off.

If, however, once these constraints apply, and you find yourself likely to outstay the 90 days, contact the nearest British embassy or consulate for advice.

<https://www.gov.uk/world/france>

<https://www.gov.uk/world/switzerland>

<https://www.gov.uk/world/italy>

The ETIAS waiver application when necessary can be completed online unlike typical visa applications, which need to be completed in person at a consulate or embassy.

Schengen visas

A Schengen visa and visa-free travel to the Schengen area (for eligible non-EEA and non-Swiss nationals) are valid for only short stays (90 days or less within any 180-day period – for all the area). Any non-EEA or Swiss national who wishes to stay for a longer period must apply for an appropriate long-stay national visa, which is valid for a particular country only.

Although it is entirely possible to complete a walk from Calais to Rome within the 90-day limit, but note that if you think you want to stop frequently along the way for rest or sight-seeing, then you should make sure you have a long-stay visa.

The nationals of the following countries do *not* need a visa for entry into the Schengen Area: Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova⁽¹⁾, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa,

San Marino, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan (Republic of China), Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Vatican City, Venezuela, additionally persons holding Hong Kong SAR or Macau SAR passports and all British nationals (including those who are not European Union citizens).

The non-EU/EFTA visa-free visitors noted above may not stay more than 90 days in a 180 day period in the Schengen Area as a whole and, in general, may not work during their stay (although some Schengen countries do allow certain nationalities to work – see below). The counting begins once you enter any country in the Schengen Area and is not reset by leaving one Schengen country for another.

However, New Zealand citizens may be able to stay for more than 90 days if they visit only particular Schengen countries. See the New Zealand Government's explanation.

If you are a non-EU/EFTA national (even if you are visa-exempt), make sure that your passport is stamped both when you enter and leave the Schengen Area. Without an entry stamp, you may be treated as an overstayer when you try to leave the Schengen Area; without an exit stamp, you may be denied entry the next time you seek to enter the Schengen Area as you may be deemed to have overstayed on your previous visit. If you cannot obtain a passport stamp, make sure that you retain documents such as boarding passes, transport tickets and ATM slips which may help to convince border inspection staff that you have stayed in the Schengen Area legally.

Requirements for a visa

In general, if your nationality needs a Schengen visa, you usually will need to procure the following documents (specific requirements vary slightly per embassy and jurisdiction so check with the embassy where you're applying at for the specific and additional requirements):

Basic requirements

- Completed application form (the form can be downloaded from the website of the embassy concerned) and some member states may also request you to fill-out an additional form. Parents will need to sign the application form of minors whether they will accompany them or not.
- Passport with at least two blank pages, which must be valid for **at least three months** from the day you **return**
- passport-sized ID photograph (please check the website of the embassy you are applying to determine how the photo should look like)
- copies of previous Schengen visas (if previously issued)
- Application fee

Proof of socio-economic ties and finances

Employment certificate/letter and recent payslips (if employed), or enrolment certificate/letter from institution (if a student). These may be known as "letters of no contest". As much as possible, they should state the period in which you are allowed to go on a holiday or business trip. In some cases, if you are unemployed or a dependant on someone else financially, you will have to procure an affidavit of support and/or a declaration form.

Bank statements covering the last 3 months prior to the application. The specific amount required to be in the balance depends on the member state whose embassy you are applying at (typically €40-60 per day per applicant on your party plus enough to cover unpaid ticket costs, accommodations, pre-booked tours). In case you do not have a bank account, traveller's cheques might be accepted by some embassies.

If available or applicable, any other evidence that shows your strong motivation to return to your country of citizenship or legal residence at the end of your trip, e.g. property titles, tax returns, share certificates.

Proof of travel arrangements

Confirmed transport arrangements

Confirmation of accommodation arrangements. These have to establish that the country whose embassy you're applying at is your main destination. Experienced pilgrims will often make refundable bookings on a site such as Booking.com which can later be cancelled.

Travel insurance that covers at least the entire Schengen Zone for the duration of your trip and at least €30,000 in emergency treatment and medical repatriation.

Additional requirements for spouses and children of EU nationals only

copy of passport of the EU national

marriage certificate (for spouses)

birth certificate with the name of the EU national parent (for children)

other proofs of relationship as may be requested by the consulate

Do not submit original copies of the above-mentioned documents to the application centre as they may not be returned to you (except the passport of course).

The application form may have an option of whether you want a single or multiple entry visa. However, the latter is rarely granted for first-time visitors and not all countries grant it at all unless you can demonstrate that in between two Schengen states, you intend to visit a non-Schengen country.

Setting an appointment

In applying for a Schengen visa, there is **no such thing** as applying at the embassy/consulate/visa application centre **of your choice**. The embassy/consulate/application centre at which you must apply will depend on where you plan to actually go, how long you plan to spend in each of the states, and what the main purpose of your trip is.

If you only intend to visit one country, then you must go to the designated application centre for that particular country. Don't visit the visa application centre for Spain if you will only visit Austria; go to the visa application centre servicing Austria.

If you intend to visit more than one country, then you **must identify the country which is your main destination**. A main destination is defined as the destination where you will spend the longest time in if the purpose of your trip is the same for each of the countries you will visit, or where the main purpose of your trip will take place if you have more than one purpose. Your main purpose will also depend on the visa you are ultimately applying for.

Check the relevant embassy's website for more details on how to set an appointment, where you need to go, and what else you need to bring.

Get all your paperwork in order as early as possible, especially if it takes days to process or needs to be posted to you. Personal appearance is generally required and is usually by appointment only; walk-ins are only allowed in a few cases. Appointment slots run out quickly so book an appointment early. The application may be filed up to three months in advance of your scheduled trip.

On the appointment itself

In general, personal appearance at the application centre is required; that is, an agent cannot lodge the application on your behalf. Make sure you be at the application centre at least 15 minutes before your appointment and that your documents are in order.

The staff at the window will inspect your documents, ask routine questions about your trip, collect the application fee, and normally take biometric fingerprints and digital photographs. If your documents are insufficient or out of order, or you are requested to submit more, then you will usually need to make a new appointment. Your application will not be processed until this is satisfied.

Processing time depends on a variety of factors. They include the applicant's nationality (some nationalities are subject to consultation with other member states), purpose of visit, time of the year, outstanding documentation, referral of application to different government departments, and staffing levels at the embassy. Before the appointment is over, the application centre will advise you on when and how you can claim your passport (either by returning personally or by post).

After applying

If you receive a Schengen visa, make sure you check to see the information is correct. In particular, check that the visa says something to the effect of "valid for the Schengen States" (usually written in the language used by the embassy that issued the visa; for example, **États Schengen**). The validity dates must match your original travel dates and not expire earlier. Contact the application centre immediately if you notice any discrepancies (even if you applied for a multiple-entry visa, the consul may still grant a single entry visa).

If your application is unsuccessful, you'll normally be given a notice explaining the reasons for such a decision. The process and grounds for appeal vary between each embassy/consulate but you are strongly advised to refer to the notice and address the issues outlined before returning to the embassy. Unless the refusal notice states that you are ineligible to apply for a certain amount of time, you can lodge a new application at any time (with a corresponding fee), but make sure you address the issues that caused your previous application to fail.

Keep copies of the documents you used in your application and those that will establish your purpose of visit, and be sure to bring them with you as border officers may ask to see them upon your arrival.

If you have been issued a Schengen visa but later you have been notified that the main purpose for your visit no longer exists (e.g. the conference you are scheduled to attend has been cancelled) yet you still want to pursue your trip to the other countries, then you may need to inform the embassy that issued you the visa about the change in circumstance and apply for a new visa with the pertinent embassy.

Interpreting length of stay and number of entries

We are often asked what happens if you overstay your 90 days. Many travellers have said that they were not subject to a fine, but you can never rely on that, and we always advise you to stay within the law. Pay particular attention to the validity dates and length of stay: make sure to leave before they expire (whichever comes earlier/first).

If by any chance you fall ill or are injured and have to exceed the 90 days, contact your consulate or embassy immediately for advice.

The maximum 90 days in 180 is counted in a moving window of 180 days. If you stayed the 90 days at the end of your previous 180 days, you are not allowed to re-enter before 90 days have elapsed. If your previous stay was shorter you are allowed to re-enter immediately, but have to leave before the recent days of your last stay and the days of your current stay add up to 90 (in the past 180 days).

Entering the Schengen Area

Unlike in most other countries, incoming passengers are normally not required to fill-in any additional paperwork to present to passport control officials.

When travelling through a Schengen airport, flights are separated into Schengen and non-Schengen flights, similar to domestic and international flights elsewhere. This means if your flight originates from a non-Schengen country but are connecting via a Schengen airport to another Schengen country (or vice-versa), you must clear passport control at the first (or last) airport you travel through within the Schengen area. When a connection is inevitable, consider the connection times and the potential for queues when booking your flights.

If you are a non-EU/EFTA national (even if you are visa-exempt) make sure that your passport is **clearly stamped both when you enter and leave the Schengen Area with all the pertinent dates visible**. Without an entry stamp, you may be treated as an overstayer when you try to leave the Schengen Area; without an exit stamp, you may be refused entry the next time you seek to enter the Schengen Area as you may be deemed to have overstayed on your previous visit too. For those who need another visa in the future, the application may be refused or the processing of your application may experience further prolonged processing. If you cannot obtain a passport stamp or the ink is not too visible, make sure that you retain documents such as boarding passes, stamps of passports from other countries, transport tickets, financial documents, attendance records at work/school, which may help to convince border inspection staff that you have stayed in the Schengen Area legally.

Getting around the Schengen zone

Once you are allowed into the Schengen zone, you can generally travel to any member state without having to go through formal passport control procedures again. Certain uncommon types of visas are exceptions, restricting you to the member state that issued the visa.

When using a plane to travel between two airports within the Schengen area, it will be as if you are taking a domestic flight. Some countries like France, Italy and the Netherlands require non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals to declare their presence to relevant local authorities even if they arrived from another Schengen member state. This may be taken care of by the accommodation you are staying at upon check-in, but otherwise you will have to visit the relevant authorities yourselves. Consult the Wikivoyage pages of the individual countries as well as the websites of their respective immigration authorities for more information.