



# Your Family *Visa Research Guide*

The Stress-Free Visa Research Cheat  
Sheet for Slow Travel Families

## Welcome to your Family Visa Research Guide

Thanks for downloading your Family Visa Research Guide.

I created this guide to help you overcome the pitfalls that commonly happen as a family traveller going into new places. I get it, sometimes, we rely heavily on other peoples experiences. However, this can get us caught out and things like denied boarding do happen.

This guide is here to help. I'll take you through all the things you'll need to check during the research phase of travelling to a new country. It's designed to help you navigate the complexities of visa requirements with ease and confidence.

Keep in mind, this cheat sheet isn't about specific country rules (they change constantly!), it's about giving you a simple, systematic process to confidently research any visa requirement for your long-term family adventures, avoiding common pitfalls and unnecessary stress.

By working through this guide and checklist, you'll be better equipped to navigate the pitfalls of visas (especially when travelling on one way tickets) and over time, you'll naturally know the steps to take to make those visa applications a breeze.

# Acknowledging the Visa Headache

Planning a long term, slow travel adventure with your family is exciting! But visa research can be a real headache. It's caught a few of my travel friends out over the years. Don't let visa assumptions catch you off guard.

Visa research can create a lot of uncertainty. It's confusing, constantly changing, and at times, can be one of the biggest hurdles for long-term slow travel families.

If you ever asked,

- Which countries can I travel freely to?
- How long can I stay for?
- Which countries can I stay longest for?

Then this guide is for you!

This cheat sheet will arm you with the essential questions, reliable sources, and smart strategies to approach visa research systematically, saving you time, stress, and potential headaches."

## **Crucial Disclaimer:**

**VERY IMPORTANT!** This guide provides a framework for research, not legal or immigration advice. Visa rules change frequently. Always verify information with official government sources for your specific nationality and destination. I want you to experience smooth travels without any hiccups at border control!

# The Golden Rule: Trust ONLY Official Sources!

**Why this matters:** Blogs, forums, and even well-meaning friends can offer outdated or incorrect info. Relying on any unofficial immigration or visa sources can be risky.

Don't risk losing your flight, being denied boarding and having to make last minute (often expensive) changes to your plans.

If you're getting visa info from a friend, travel influencer or a random on a travel Facebook group, you may run into problems. Many people are sharing THEIR experience, without any regard to your passport and the possibility that rules have changed.

## Official Sources Defined:

- **The Embassy or Consulate of your destination country located in your passport country:** This is your #1 go-to. For example, if you have a US passport and want to go to Vietnam, check the Vietnamese Embassy in the USA website.
- **The Official Immigration Website of the destination country:** For example, Department of Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Directorate of Migration Management. Look for pages specifically on "Visa Information" or "Entry Requirements."

## Where and how to get the best information

### In the Ideation Phase

A place I love to start exploring my options is <https://passportindex.org>.

This site give you the option to select your passport (or passports if you have more than one) and check visa eligibility and time frames. At your fingertips, you'll be able to see

- Visa status: Visa free, visa on arrival, evisa or visa required
- Days: How many days you can stay on the standard tourist visa

# In the Planning Phase

When you're set on a few options, or maybe starting to put together an itinerary you can enter your plan to <https://www.iatatravelcentre.com>.

This site will ask you for your plans, how long you're staying and you have options such as

- Return trips
- One way trips
- Multi-city trips

It will then confirm your passport nationality and let you know the rules and visa options applicable for you. It will also refer you to the government websites for visas.

## Always Double Check

It's always best to verify third party information with the Embassy or Immigration department for the country you're planning to travel to. This will cover you in case there are some recent changes that haven't yet been updated on other sites.

### How to Find Them:

Simple Google searches like:

- "[Destination Country] Embassy in [Your Passport Country]"
- "[Destination Country] Immigration Department"
- "[Destination Country] Ministry of Foreign Affairs Visa"

Or you can simply type the following prompt into your favourite GPT:

"I'm travelling on [YOUR PASSPORT NATIONALITY HERE] passport to [DESTINATION] and plan to spend [NUMBER OF DAYS] days here. Please let me know what the most recent travel visas are for this country and the government official website I can visit to check this information"

**What to Avoid:** General travel blogs (unless they link directly to an official source), Reddit threads, random Facebook groups, non-official visa service websites (for initial research).

# Essential Questions Checklist

## A Quick Overview

### Questions to Ask Yourself:

- **Citizenship:** What is each family member's citizenship?
- **Destination:** Which country (or countries) are you visiting?
- **Purpose:** What is the primary purpose of your trip (tourism, business, etc.)?
- **Duration:** How long will you be staying in each country?
- **Entry Points:** Where will you arrive and exit? (This can affect visa rules).
- **Previous Criminal Records:** Do any family members have criminal records?

### Questions to Ask Official Sources:

- **Specific Requirements:** What specific documents are required for a visa application?
- **Validity Period:** How long is the visa valid for?
- **Processing Time:** How long does it typically take to process a visa application?
- **Application Process:** What is the exact process for applying for a visa?
- **Fees:** What are the visa fees?
- **Extension Options:** Can the visa be extended? If so, how?

## Who is traveling?

- **Nationality:** Which passports do each family member hold? (Crucial – rules vary widely!). Not so much of an issue if everyone is on the same passport, but I have known people who ran into problems travelling to their 'home' country but one child was on a different passport and needed a visa. Don't let this catch you out!
- **Age of Children:** Are there different rules for minors, or specific documents needed for them, for example, birth certificates, or consent letters for single-parent travel (some regions have strict rules, while others are very relaxed)?
- **Passport Validity:** Remember, in most cases, you'll need a minimum of six months validity on your passport beyond your intended departure date.

## Where are You Going & For How Long?

- **Specific Destination Country(ies):** Each country is unique.
- **Intended Duration:** Exact dates or estimated months. Be realistic about your slow travel plans.
- **Single vs. Multiple Entry:** Do you plan to leave and re-enter the country (e.g., visa run to refresh)?
- **Transit Visas:** Don't forget layovers! Do you need a visa for your transit country, even if you're just passing through the airport?
  - This is especially important if you're flying through a country where visas are usually required, but you might have purchased separate tickets that require you to collect bags, then proceed to check in again. In this case, you'll need to clear immigration, therefore need a visa to enter the country.
  - Generally, the airline would check you have a visa during the check in process, and if you don't have a visa to enter the transit country, you would likely be denied boarding.
- **Extensions:** If you're planning to stay in a country longer term, you'll need to investigate the process for an extension. In some cases, extensions are not possible and you'll need to leave the country (or even the region) for a period of time before re-entering.

## What is Your Purpose of Stay?

- **Tourism:** Most common for slow travel families.
- **Study:** If your kids are enrolling in local schools for an extended period. Some countries also offer educational visas for extended stays.
- **Digital nomad/remote work/freelance:** Some countries offer great digital nomad visa programs. Each country's policy varies greatly, so you'll need to do more research via the official government websites to find out if this kind of visa can apply for you.
- **Volunteer:** Some volunteer programs require specific visas.
- **Remote Work:** While often overlooked for short stays, some countries are now offering digital nomad visas. Research if this applies to your income source.

# What Documents Do You Need?

- **Passport Validity:** Always check the "6-month rule" – most countries require your passport to be valid for at least 6 months beyond your intended departure date.
  - Additionally, if you're getting close to this six month validity rule, make sure you know how you can apply for a passport while you're abroad. You may need to plan to be in a country with longer stay allowances if you need to renew a passport while abroad - and not all countries provide this option.
- **Passport Photos:** Specific size, background color, recentness. Some countries will require this for evisas or visa on arrival options.
- **Proof of Onward Travel/Return Ticket:** Many countries require this, even if you plan to buy it later.
  - If you're planning to travel on one way tickets (a lot of us do), and if you're aware that an onward ticket will be a requirement for the airline to board you, you can use a service like [🌐 Onward Ticket](#) .
- **Proof of Accommodation:** This is not always required. In some cases, you'll need to know the details of your first few nights, or longer for some visas.
- **Proof of Funds:** In our five years of full-time family travel, we've never been asked for this, but keep this in mind if you're travelling on a weaker passport. Bank statements should show you can support your family without working.
- **Travel Insurance:** Often mandatory for certain visa types or countries. If you're looking for insurance suitable for longer term travel, you can try [SafetyWing](#). In our over five years of travel, this has been the simplest way for us to stay covered.
- **Family Documents:** Marriage certificate, children's birth certificates, parental consent forms.

**Criminal Record Check:** Generally a full criminal record check is for longer-term visas. Keep in mind that some countries will ask you to declare any prior criminal history and immigration can deny entry in some cases.

## What's the Application Process Like?

- **Online vs. In-Person:** Can you apply online, or do you need to visit an embassy/consulate?
- **Biometrics:** Are fingerprints/photos required at a visa center?
- **Processing Time:** Crucial for planning! How long does it typically take from application submission to approval?

# Common Pitfalls & How to Sidestep Them

## Pitfall 1: Assuming All Passports Are Equal.

- **Solution:** Check requirements for every single passport holder in your family. Even within the same family, different nationalities mean different rules.

## Pitfall 2: Ignoring Passport Expiry Dates.

- **Solution:** Check all passports right now. If any are close to expiring within 6-9 months of your planned travel, renew them immediately.

## Pitfall 3: Underestimating Processing Times.

- **Solution:** Always factor in buffer time. If it says "10-15 business days," assume 3-4 weeks plus shipping time. Apply well in advance of your desired travel date.

## Pitfall 4: Relying on Outdated Info (Or a Friend's Experience from Years Ago).

- **Solution:** Check the date on official websites. Visa rules change frequently, especially post-pandemic. Don't assume that a person sharing their experience will translate to the same experience for you.

## Pitfall 5: Forgetting Onward Travel Proof.

- **Solution:** Even if you don't have your next flight booked, you might need a "dummy ticket" or a clear plan to show immigration (more likely the check in desk at departure country - we have never had to show proof at immigration in all our travels). [Onward Ticket](#) is a service that can help you with this.

## Pitfall 6: Misunderstanding "Visa-Free."

- **Solution:** "Visa-free" usually means for a limited tourist period (e.g., 30, 60, 90 days), not permanent stay. You still need to adhere to the allowed duration.

## Pitfall 7: Missing Just One Document (or Detail).

- **Solution:** Create a personal checklist for each visa application. Double (triple)-check that you have all the required documents and that your application is filled out correctly before submitting. Take clear, correctly sized photos!
  - **Efficiency Hack:** I use TextExpander and have all my family members' names, passport numbers, phone numbers and addresses saved. This makes it fast and efficient to correctly enter all the details. I still need to double (triple)-check the entries to ensure nothing has gone wrong. But this saves me a truckload of time.

## Pitfall 8: Not Researching Transit Visas.

- **Solution:** If you have a layover in a third country, check if you need a transit visa, even if you're not leaving the airport. I know people who have been denied boarding and had to rebook entire trips because they missed this detail. Don't let that happen to your family!



### **Pitfall 9:**

- **Not Considering Children's Requirements:** Every family member needs individual consideration. This is especially important if family members have different passport nationalities or if you're travelling without a parent to some countries.

# Your Personalized Visa Research Action Plan

- ☐ Identify all passports & expiry dates: (List them out - set a calendar reminder 8 months prior to any expiring passports)
- ☐ List target countries & estimated stay for each:
  - Country 1: \_\_\_\_ (Approx. duration: \_\_\_\_)
  - Country 2: \_\_\_\_ (Approx. duration: \_\_\_\_)
  - ...
- ☐ Find & bookmark official embassy/immigration websites for each country.
- ☐ Create a "Visa Research Log"
  - (simple table idea: Country | Visa Type | Max Stay | Key Requirements | Official Link | Notes | Status).
- ☐ Confirm required documents for each family member (make sub-list for each).
  - ☐ Check passport photo specifications for each country.
  - ☐ Note processing times and create application deadline reminders.
  - ☐ Research transit visa needs for all potential layovers and transits.
  - ☐ Set aside dedicated, focused time for this research.
  - ☐ Review this cheat sheet before starting each new country's visa research!
- ☐ Complete visa applications accurately.
  - ☐ Submit applications well in advance of your travel dates.

Once you have your visa approval:

- ☐ Set reminders for visa expiration dates (if applicable).

## You've Got This!

While visa research can feel overwhelming, with a systematic approach, you can turn this into a natural skill.

Soon, you'll know how to quickly find details of visa requirements and how to navigate the visa application process.

Remember to take visas one step at a time, don't rush, and don't be afraid to seek help from official sources.

### **Your Next Step:**

Stay Connected!

- Follow us on social media for inspiration and updates: <https://instagram.com/fulltimefamilytravel>
- If you're interested in developing your online digital nomad business with no-coding experience, join our community at [vibenomads.org](https://vibenomads.org).