

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

SUMMARY

A **passport** is issued to you by your home country as proof of citizenship. Visas are stamped into your passport to allow you entry into other countries. Although there are exceptions, you are usually required to display your passport when entering or leaving a country. Once you arrive at your destination, carry a photocopy of your passport and keep the original in a safe place.

A **visa** is an endorsement or stamp entered into your passport by a foreign government. It allows you to enter that country for a specific reason and period of time. Start applying for visas as soon as your passport is available so that all your documentation is completed well before your departure date. To receive a visa you need to send your passport to an embassy or consulate of the country you want to visit. Most countries have embassies and consulates worldwide, and travel agents can usually tell you where the nearest ones are located. Keep in mind that your passport may be tied up for days or weeks until the paperwork is done, so plan accordingly. In addition, some countries require proof of yellow fever vaccination **before** they will issue you a visa. The amount of time spent mailing your passport to the various agencies involved can really add up if you are visiting several countries. Plan ahead if possible. If you only have a few weeks to prepare, a commercial visa service can often speed up the process.

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