



# **SHORT STAY SCHENGEN VISA FOR INDIAN PASSPORT HOLDERS**

If you plan to visit any of the western or central European countries for a holiday, you will most probably require, what is called as a Schengen Visa. However a very few discuss Indian perspective. So I thought of sharing my experience when applying for Schengen visa from India.

## **Which Embassy to apply the visa to?**

First thing to consider in the visa application process is which country embassy/consulate to apply your visa to. If you are visiting just one country, then the answer is simple. However, if you are visiting multiple countries then you should apply for the visa to the country where you will be staying the maximum time. If your duration of the stay is equal in one or more countries, then you should apply to the country where you will enter the Schengen zone. The Schengen visa form and document checklist is more or less the same for each country. However every country may insist on certain more documents, so it is best to download the form and checklist for the country you are applying the visa to.

## **How early should you apply?**

Plan for your visa early. You can apply for a Schengen visa upto 90 days before your intended date of travel and there is a good reason why they keep the window open for so long. The Schengen visa processing for many countries can easily take 3-4 weeks. For Eg: the processing time for Austrian visitor visa is 15 working days (or 3 weeks minimum). There is no premium processing and visas are not issued on emergency basis if the purpose of travel is tourism/vacation. Note: German and French consulates/embassies are known to issue Schengen visas in 48-96 hours. However it is still advisable to apply as early as possible (preferably at least 8 weeks before the travel date)

## **Do you need services of a travel agent for Visa application?**

It depends! If you are a DIY person who can read and follow instructions, can draft cover letters and book your tickets, hotel reservations etc, then you don't need a visa agent. If all of this sounds too cumbersome and complicated, then go for a visa agent. Hiring a visa agent has no impact on the visa decision. Make sure to work with a trusted visa agent and verify all

documents and forms that visa agent is submitting on your behalf. We filed the visa application ourselves without consulting any visa agent.

## **Do you need to purchase Air tickets and make Hotel reservations?**

You do need an Airline itinerary. i.e. a PNR with or without a ticket number. You can easily get this from various online websites or local travel agents for a small fees. Other option is to book a fully refundable ticket that you can cancel once you get your visa and replace it with a cheaper non-refundable ticket. We went with later option and booked fully refundable Y fare economy tickets with Air India. I did call up the airline before booking and they confirmed I can cancel the ticket few hours before the departure for 100% refund. No cancellation or transaction charges. Only downside is your money is blocked for few weeks.

For Hotel reservations, you can use booking.com or Hotels.com and reserve a fully refundable hotel booking as well. You don't have to pay the hotel fee, just use your credit card to block the rooms. If you plan to later stay in a hostel or with a friend, you can cancel the hotel booking once you get your visa. If you intend to stay in hotels, you can still cancel refundable booking and go for the cheaper non-refundable option in the same or different hotel.

You should not book non-refundable tickets or hotels at the time of visa application. You risk losing all your money if visa is not granted.

## **Document list for Schengen Visa**

1. Visa Application form (duly filled of course).
2. Two Photographs as per specification.
3. Your original [passport](#) and all the old passports.
4. Overseas medical insurance of at least €30,000. Most insurance companies of India are on approved list.
5. Travel itinerary. i.e. Airline and hotel reservations.
6. Your financial documents such as ITR, Payslips (if you are employed) or Business registration documents (for self employed). A director/Partner of a Company/Firm is considered self employed even if you draw a salary.
7. Letter from Employer about the leave period (in case you are employed).
8. Last 3 months bank statements. These need to be signed and stamped by the bank.
9. Cover letter that explains the purpose of your visit, travel details and what you intend to do during your stay (itinerary).