



GLOBAL IMMIGRATION TRENDS – December 2025

Introduction

Immigration policies worldwide continue to evolve in response to economic priorities and security considerations, thus, timely awareness of these changes is essential for strategic planning and for navigating an increasingly regulated global mobility environment. This global immigration update highlights significant policy developments across different countries with key focus on digitalisation, stricter compliance mechanisms, border control, and increased fees. These updates will affect travelers, employers, investors and foreign nationals looking to visit, relocate or work abroad.

Africa

South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA RELEASES DRAFT REVISED WHITE PAPER ON CITIZENSHIP, IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION

In December 2025, the Department of Home Affairs (“DHA”) South Africa released a draft revised white paper proposing significant reforms to the country’s citizenship, immigration, and refugee protection framework. Public comments on the draft are open until January 31, 2026.

The proposed reforms include the introduction of merit-based criteria for naturalisation, alongside an annual application window aimed at reducing processing backlogs. Under the proposed framework, eligibility for citizenship would be assessed using a points-based system, rather than being determined solely by the length of time a foreign national has resided in South Africa.

The White Paper also proposes the creation of new visa categories, including visas for remote workers, start-ups, skilled professionals, and individuals in sports and cultural fields. In addition, it supports the implementation of an Electronic Travel Authorisation (“ETA”) system, which would enable the collection and recording of biometric data for all foreign nationals entering South Africa.

Find More:

<https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/minister-leon-schreiber-invites-public-comment-draft-revised-white-paper-citizenship>

Noth America

United States of America

UNITED STATES COMMENCES IMPLEMENTATION OF GOLD CARD VISA

The government of the United States of America (the “U.S.”) has commenced the implementation of the Gold Card Visa Program (the “Program”) which is designed to attract individuals who can contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. The Program offers expedited immigrant visas to foreign nationals who provide substantial financial gifts to the nation.

Eligible individuals are those donating One million United States Dollars (USD\$1,000,000.00) or corporations donating Two Million United States Dollars (USD\$2,000,000.00) to the Department of Commerce. Additionally, applicants must be eligible under EB-1 and EB-2 visas, be admissible to the U.S., meet all requirements for permanent status and pass extensive checks.

The donations made will serve as evidence of exceptional business ability and national benefit, qualifying applicants for priority visa categories and national-interest waivers.

Find More: <https://trumpcard.gov/>

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA EXPANDS TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS FROM NIGERIA, CUBA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

On December 16, 2025, the U.S. White House issued a proclamation significantly expanding the U.S. travel restrictions for foreign nationals from designated countries. This development builds on the June 2025 travel ban and is driven by ongoing national security and public safety considerations.

Under the new proclamation, existing restrictions have been broadened through the inclusion of additional countries and the tightening of measures applicable to others. Nationals of nineteen (19) countries namely: Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, Syria, Laos and Sierra Leone are now subject to a full suspension of entry into the U.S. In addition, individuals travelling on documents issued by the Palestinian Authority are barred from entry.

A further nineteen (19) countries, namely Burundi, Cuba, Togo, Venezuela, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, Gabon, The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Tonga, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are subject to partial entry restrictions varying by country, visa category and purpose of travel.

These restrictions apply exclusively to foreign nationals who are outside the United States and seeking entry. They do not affect individuals currently present in the country, lawful permanent residents, individuals with a valid visa issued before the effective date and certain categories of diplomatic and official travellers generally remain exempt from the proclamation.

Find More:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/12/restricting-and-limiting-the-entry-of-foreign-nationals-to-protect-the-security-of-the-United-states>

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA INTRODUCES VISA BONDS FOR NIGERIANS

Following the proclamation issued on December 16, 2025, the Department of State of U.S government on January 8, 2026, identified countries whose nationals would require visa bonds. The countries listed are Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Cote D'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, Dominica, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The U.S government has listed designated implementation dates for each of the listed countries with Nigeria’s implementation date set for January 21, 2026.

Any citizen or national travelling on a passport issued by one of the above listed countries, who is found otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa, must post a bond for Five Thousand United States Dollars (\$5,000.00), Ten Thousand United States Dollars (\$10,000.00) or Fifteen Thousand United States Dollars (\$15,000.00). The amount is determined at the time of the visa interview.

The applicant must fill and submit Form I-352 to the Department of Homeland Security and is to post a bond only after a consular officer directs them to do so. Applicants will receive a direct link to pay through Pay.gov and must not use any third-party website for posting the bond.

Additionally, as a condition of the bond, all visa holders who have posted a visa bond must enter and exit the U.S through the designated ports of entry.





Not doing this might lead to a denied entry or a departure that is not properly recorded. It should be noted that ports are being added on a rolling basis. Currently the designated ports are:

- Boston Logan International Airport
- John F. Kennedy International Airport
- Washington Dulles International Airport
- Newark Liberty International Airport
- Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- Chicago O'Hare International Airport
- Los Angeles International Airport
- Toronto Pearson International Airport
- Montréal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport

The bond will be cancelled and the money returned automatically where the Department of Homeland Security records the visa holder's departure from the U.S. on or before the date to which they are authorized to stay in the U.S., or the visa holder does not travel to the U.S. before the expiration of the visa, or the visa holder applies for and is denied admission at the U.S. port of entry.

Find More:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/countries-subject-to-visa-bonds.html>

Canada

IRCC ANNOUNCES NEW EXPRESS ENTRY CATEGORY AND IMMIGRATION MEASURES FOR DOCTORS

On December 8, 2025, the Canadian Minister of Immigration announced three (3) immigration measures aimed at making it easier for international doctors to become permanent residents in Canada.

The first measure is a new entry category termed "Physicians with Canadian work experience" category. Under this category, applicants must have accumulated at least twelve (12) months of full-time continuous work experience in Canada within the last three (3) years. The work experience must be in a single eligible occupation. The eligible occupations targeted under this category are general practitioners and family physicians, specialists in surgery and specialists in clinical and laboratory medicine. Calls for invitations to apply under this new category is set to begin in early 2026.

The second measure is the setting aside of five thousand (5000) federal admission spaces for provinces and territories to nominate licensed doctors who have job offers. It should be noted that this additional space is in addition to the regular annual allocations for the Provincial Nominee Program ("PNP") thus drastically increasing the intake of the number of foreign doctors' provinces can nominate for permanent residence.

Lastly, there will be expedited work permit processing of fourteen (14) days for doctors who are nominated by a province to enable them to work while applications are being finalized.

Find more:

<https://www.cicnews.com/2025/12/immigration-minister-announcement-for-healthcare-workers-1263152.html/amp>

South America

Bolivia

BOLIVIA ELIMINATES VISA REQUIREMENT FOR TOURISTS FROM EIGHT (8) COUNTRIES

Effective December 1, 2025, the Government of Bolivia has abolished the visa requirement for tourists holding passports from the U.S., Israel, South Korea, South Africa, Bulgaria, Malta, the United Arab Emirates, and Romania.

The decision forms part of Bolivia's broader strategy to stimulate tourism, revitalise economic activity, and enhance its global engagement and competitiveness. By easing entry requirements, the policy is expected to facilitate increased inflows of tourists, investors, and international cooperation partners, while reducing administrative barriers to travel.

According to Bolivia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the visa restrictions imposed since 2008 on nationals of several countries were rooted in ideological considerations and proved economically counterproductive. The restrictions negatively impacted visitor numbers and limited revenue generation for local businesses within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The revised policy underscores the government's recognition of tourism as a key driver of foreign exchange earnings. Authorities project that the removal of visa requirements could generate up to Eighty Million United States Dollars (USD\$80,000,000.00) between 2026 and 2030.

Find More: <https://migracion.gob.bo/comunicacion/prensa>

Asia

Vietnam

VIETNAM ADDS FORTY-ONE (41) BORDER GATES TO THE LIST OF PORTS THAT ALLOW FOREIGNERS ENTRY AND EXIT VIA e-VISA

On December 2, 2025, the Vietnamese government issued Resolution No. 389/NQ-CP which added forty-one (41) border gates to the list of ports through which foreigners can enter and exit Vietnam via e-visas.

This addition brings the number of entry points from the forty-two (42) to eighty-three (83) thus giving foreigners more options and facilitating easier entry. These entry/exit points are spread across airports, seaports, and border gates. Vietnam e-visas are available for citizens from all countries and have a validity of up to ninety (90) days and are valid for single or multiple entries.

India

INDIA EXTENDS e-TOURIST VISA TO FOUR (4) MONTHS

As of December 18, 2025, the Government of India has extended the validity window for the e-Tourist visa, significantly easing prior restrictions on travel planning. Under the previous framework, applicants were required to submit e-Tourist visa applications within thirty (30) days prior to arrival in India. Under the revised policy, the validity window has been extended to four (4) months, allowing applicants to obtain the visa up to one hundred and twenty (120) days from the date of travel. This change provides greater flexibility and certainty for prospective travelers.

It is important to note that the extension applies only to e-Tourist visas approved on or after this update was effected and does not apply retroactively to those issued before December 18, 2025.

The policy update is expected to support tourism growth by enabling travellers to plan their visits well in advance. It is particularly beneficial for international tourists who require longer lead times to arrange travel, accommodation, and related logistics.

Middle East

United Arab Emirates

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES SET TO OFFER TWO-YEAR MULTIPLE ENTRY VISIT VISAS FOR WORK ASSIGNMENTS

The United Arab Emirates (the "UAE") has updated its immigration regulations to allow the Visit Visa for Work Assignments (also known as the Mission Visa or Mission Work Permit). This Permit is to be issued as a multiple-entry visit visa valid for two (2) years.

Effective January 1, 2026, holders of the Mission Work Permit may remain in the UAE for up to sixty (60) days per entry, with a cumulative maximum stay of one hundred and eighty (180) days within any twelve-month period. Additionally, visa holders will be required to undergo a medical examination within fifteen (15) days of their first entry under the permit, a requirement that did not previously apply.

These changes are intended to provide foreign nationals greater flexibility when undertaking temporary work assignments in the UAE.





Kuwait

KUWAIT UPDATES VISA FEES

Kuwait has updated its visa fees via a Ministerial Resolution No. 2249 of 2025 (Executive Regulations of the Law on the Residence of Foreigners) which entered into force on December 23, 2025.

All those entering Kuwait must pay a general visit visa fee of Ten Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD10) which is equivalent to Thirty-Two United States Dollars, Sixty Cents (US\$32.60). Residency permit fees now cost Twenty Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD20), equivalent to Sixty-Five United States Dollars, Forty-Three Cents (US\$65.43) for government and private sector employees, foreign students and religious figures; Ten Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD10[TLA1.1]) (US\$32.60) for domestic workers sponsored by local families and foreign widows or divorcees of Kuwaiti nationals with children; Fifty Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD50) equivalent to One Hundred and Sixty-Three United States Dollars, Fifty-Nine Cents (US\$163.59) for foreign investors, partners and property owners; and Five Hundred Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD500) equivalent to One Thousand, Six Hundred and Thirty-Five United States Dollars, Eighty-Five Cents (US\$1,635.85) for foreign nationals sponsoring themselves. Family visa fees range from Ten Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD10) (US\$32.60) to Three Hundred Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD300) equivalent to Nine Hundred and Eighty-One United States Dollars, Fifty-One Cents (US\$981.51), and a minimum salary of Eight Hundred Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD800) which is equivalent to Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Seventeen United States Dollars, Thirty-Six Cents (US\$2,617.36), with certain professions exempt. Visa fees for domestic workers are Ten Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD10) (US\$32.60) for a Kuwaiti family and Fifty Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD50) (US\$163.59) for a foreign[pl2.1] family.

The resolution further provides for daily fines and potential deportation for foreign nationals who violate residency or visa regulations, underscoring the government's intent to strengthen compliance and enforcement.

Europe

United Kingdom

UNITED KINGDOM UPDATES ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Starting February 25, 2026, the United Kingdom (the "UK") will strictly enforce the Electronic Travel Authorisation ("ETA") requirement for visitors from eighty-five (85) countries who do not need a visa into the UK for short stays and do not hold UK immigration status.

While the ETA scheme was introduced in 2023, it was launched in phases for over two and a half years in order to give government, businesses, airlines and travellers time to adjust and expand their systems gradually. Soft enforcement began in April 2025 with reminders to travelers by border staff and carriers but boarding was not refused to those who required the ETA.

The strict enforcement of the scheme set to commence in February marks the end of the transitional phase and will enforce the requirement fully. Under the strict enforcement, travellers from ETA-eligible countries cannot legally travel to the UK without approved ETAs and carriers will be required to refuse boarding to the said passengers.

Application for the ETA will be done online via the official UK government website with a cost of approximately Sixteen Pounds (£16). Once approved, an ETA is linked to the applicant's passport and will be valid for two(2) years or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever comes first.

It should be noted that those who already require a visa or are exempt from immigration control will not require an ETA.

Find More: [No permission, no travel: UK set to enforce ETA scheme - GOV.UK](#)

Montenegro

MONTENEGRO LIFTS VISAS FOR TURKISH CITIZENS

On December 23, 2025, Montenegro revoked its decision to insist on visas for Turkish citizens and re-introduced its visa-free regime albeit for a shortened duration. The previous visa-free stay of up to ninety (90) days for Turkish nationals had been suspended in October 2025 following security concerns arising from an isolated violent incident.

Under the revised policy, Turkish citizens may once again enter Montenegro without a visa, but permitted stays have been reduced from ninety (90) days to thirty (30) days.

The decision follows enhanced cooperation with Turkish authorities, alongside the implementation of strengthened security and migration control measures by Montenegrin authorities. The Government has indicated, however, that the visa restrictions may be reintroduced should future security assessments warrant such action.

In announcing the change, the Government stated that the decision aligns Montenegro's visa policy more closely with that of the European Union, consistent with the country's ongoing EU accession objectives.

Find More:

<https://www.gov.me/en/article/montenegro-continues-to-align-its-visa-policy-with-the-eu>

Poland

POLAND UPDATES WORK PERMIT RULES

Effective December 1, 2025, Poland has new regulations for work permits. First among these updates is higher fees for work permit applications and declaration of entrusting work to foreigners. The fees have been increased from One Hundred Polish Zloty (PLN 100) equivalent to about Twenty-Eight United States Dollars (US\$28) to Four Hundred Polish Zloty (PLN 400[TLA3.1]) equivalent to about One Hundred and Ten United States Dollars (US\$110) for declarations. For work permits, the fees have been increased to Two Hundred Polish Zloty (PLN200) equivalent to Fifty-Five United States Dollars (US\$55) for work permits for up to three (3) months, Four Hundred Polish Zloty (PLN 400) equivalent to One Hundred and Ten United States Dollars (US\$110) for over three (3) months and Eight Hundred Polish Zloty (PLN800) equivalent to Two Hundred and Twenty One United States Dollars (US\$221) for delegations.

The exemption list has also been updated to include aid programmes, foreign language teachers, defence delegations, accredited journalists, artistic work, lectures, athletes (all subject to a 30-day annual limit), internships, researchers, medical professions, and graduates of Polish schools or universities, as well as PhD holders.

Additionally, documentation requirements have also been streamlined, with a unified list for declarations and permits that includes passport copies, proof of fee payment, qualifications, and sworn translations.

Find More:

<https://migrant.poznan.uw.gov.pl/en/legal-alert-1-december-2025-new-regulations-employment-foreigners>

Denmark

DENMARK INTRODUCES NEW RULES ON EXEMPTION FROM WORK PERMITS

On December 19, 2025, Denmark introduced new rules which allow certain foreign nationals to work in the country for short periods without a residence and work permit. The rules cover work linked to international, closed, indoor events such as congresses, trade fairs, conferences, or corporate gatherings with at least 400 registered participants. These events must be closed to the public and targeted at a professional or trade audience.

Under the exemption, each individual work stay may last up to ten (10) working days, which may take place before, during, or after the event.

The exemption will apply specifically to event and conference staff who are permanent members of an international event team and employed by a foreign organiser or foreign subcontractor. The employing company must also be established outside Denmark.

It should be noted that staff normally provided by the event venue, such as security personnel, cleaners, waiters, and drivers, are not included in the exemption.

Find More:

<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/News-Front-Page/2025/12/Fritagelsesregler-tjenesteydere>





Oceania

New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND CHANGES POLICE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENT FOR ACCREDITED EMPLOYER WORK VISA APPLICATIONS

Effective December 8, 2025, all Accredited Employer Work Visa ("AEWA") applications are required to include a valid police certificate. The immigration office will no longer accept receipts as proof that a certificate has been requested.

Applications will be assessed solely on the basis of the complete documentation submitted at the time of application, and Immigration New Zealand will no longer place applications on hold while awaiting police certificates.

Applicants who have been in New Zealand for less than twenty-four (24) months, or who are applying from overseas following a stay of less than twenty-four (24) months, will be granted five (5) working days to provide a police certificate if one is missing at the time of assessment.

By contrast, applicants who have resided in New Zealand for more than twenty-four (24) months and are unable to provide a police certificate will receive a Potentially Prejudicial Information (PPI) letter, giving them an opportunity to respond before a final decision is made.

Find More:

<https://www.immigrationtrust.co.nz/inz-hub/nz-police-certificate-rule-changes-for-aewv-what-you-must-know-before-december-2025>

Conclusion

These recent immigration changes underscore an evolving global landscape in which states are refining entry requirements, expanding or restricting visa access, and introducing new pathways aligned with national interests. It is important to closely monitor these developments to ensure compliance at all times.

This alert is for general information only. It is not offered as advice on any particular matter, whether legal, procedural or otherwise.

Foreign currency values are subject to fluctuations, and it is advisable to verify current rates for updated fees.

For additional information, please contact Bloomfield LP Email- immigration@bloomfield-law.com or your usual contact at Bloomfield LP.

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