

Visa Pathways to Spain

A reference guide to Spanish visa and residency categories for U.S. Passport Holders

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Schengen

Source: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/visa-policy/applying-schengen-visa_en

This visa authorizes the holder to enter and remain within the Schengen Area for a maximum of 90 days within any rolling 180-day period. It may be used for purposes including, but not limited to:

- Tourism
- Business activities
- Family or private visits
- Medical treatment
- Short-term studies or training placements
- Volunteer activities of less than three months' duration

The visa also permits transit through all Schengen States.This means that you can be in the entire Schengen Area (all member countries combined) for a maximum of 90 days in any rolling 180-day period.

Example: If you spend 90 days in Spain, you have used your full 90-day allowance. You cannot then go to Portugal for another 90 days and then jump back to Spain without a long-stay visa or residence permit. To "reset" your days, you must leave the Schengen Area entirely and wait until enough of your previous days fall outside the last 180-day window.

For U.S. passport holders, an application is not needed to enter the Schengen zone or stay for 90 days. Rather, it is granted upon entry.

Requirements:

- Valid passport (document must note be more than 10 years old, must be valid for at least 3 months after the planned return date and have at least two blank pages)
- Proof of return ticket
- Travel authorization for minors or court decision (when applicable)
- Travel medical insurance (at least €30,000 coverage or its equivalent in local currency, must cover the costs of repatriation for medical reasons or death, as well as for emergency treatment).
- Proof of economic conditions to sustain stay: work certificate and salary, as well as three last bank transcripts
- Proof of accommodation, itinerary and reservations (e.g. hotel reservations, family member's term of responsibility, tickets, professional invites, medical notes, etc.)

Visa Costs:

For US Citizens 90€ per adult and 45€ per child 6-12 years old.

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Processing time:

- You must submit your application to the consulate at least 15 days before your intended journey and no earlier than 6 months beforehand.
- Once submitted, it will take between 15 and 45 days (depending or whether more detailed examination of the application and/or additional documents are required)
- Under certain conditions, family members of EU or EEA citizens falling under the Free Movement Directive are eligible for a free and accelerated visa procedure.

Additional links and info:

- About the Schengen Visa
- List of countries and exceptions
- Frequently Asked Questions

Digital Nomad Visa

Source: citizenremote.com/visas/spain-digital-nomad-visa

This visa is for foreigners who want to carry out remote work or a professional activity for a company that is located outside of Spanish territory. It grants twelve months of residence and is extendable up to five years.

Requirements:

- Fully remote work
- Related college degree or 3+ years of experience in the field
- Must earn €34,320 per year
  - For 2026, the annual SMI (200% of Spanish minumum wage) is €17,094).;
    - Main applicant must have a monthly income of €2,849
    - First dependent (typically spouse/partner): €1,068€ (75% of SMI) per month;
  - Additional dependents (typically children): €356 (25% of SMI) per month.
  - Income may be demonstrated through employment contracts, payslips and/or bank statements.
- Private health insurance
  - Must come from a provider that is authorized to operate in Spain, provide coverage equivalent to Spain's public healthcare system, have no co-payments or deductibles and be valid throughout the applicant's stay in Spain.
- Clean criminal record
- Applicants must present certificates from any countries where they have resided in the past two years. All documents should be translated into Spanish by an approved body and made official for international use with an Apostille.

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Remote workers must prove:

- A stable employment contract (or ongoing freelance contracts)
- Authorization from their foreign employer to work remotely from Spain
- That the foreign company has been operating for at least one year

Visa Costs

The consular fee for each issued visa is €80. Below you can find rough estimates for additional costs pertaining to required documents and services.

Housing costs	**No minimum requirement for property price or rent**
Fee for obtaining the NIE number	€9.84
One-year health insurance with adequate coverage	€50+ per month for a single applicant €2,500+ per year for a family of four
Government fee for issuing a residence permit card	€79.26
Notary and translation services	€1,000+
Estimated total	~ €1680.00

Additional links and info:

How to apply **(step by step guide)**

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Study Visa

Source: https://expanish.com/student-visa-for-spain-non-eu/

The **visado de estudiante authorizes** non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals to live in Spain for more than 90 days for the purpose of study (both higher education and post-compulsory secondary education), research, training, internships, student exchange, or au pair placements.

As of 2025, the visa is granted for the full length of the academic program, with no annual renewal needed. It also allows students to work up to 30 hours a week without extra paperwork. Family members of the student can apply too, as long as the student holds a long-term study authorization and the family can show sufficient means and health insurance. Most universities will have International Student Support offices or similar to help navigate the visa application.

Requirements:

- Letter of admission from a formally-recognized center or program within Spain's Ministry of Education
- Valid passport, generally with at least a year of remaining validity
- Proof of sufficient financial means as defined by the IPREM (public income indicator).
  - You need to show **100%** of the monthly IPREM, which is around €600/month in 2026, multiplied by the number of months you'll stay. So, it would be roughly **€7,200** for a full academic year.
- Private health insurance valid in Spain, with full coverage, no co-pays, and no waiting periods for the entire length of stay
- Proof of accommodation in Spain (lease, student residence contract, or invitation letter)
- Criminal background check and medical certificate (only required if the stay exceeds six months)
- Must apply at the consulate in your country of origin at least two months' before the program begins
- Once in Spain (if the course lasts more than six months), you must apply for the TIE at least two months before the course starts and while you still have at least 60 days of legal stay remaining

Reasons for rejection:

- You are already a citizen of another EU country
- The course is less than 90 days or not eligible for the program
  - The program itself must be on-site, contain enough study credits, and must make sense with your previous academic studies
- Financial proof such as bank statements are more than ten days old when shown at the consular appointment, or funds appearing suddenly without a clear origin
- Generic insurance that does not meet the full coverage criteria

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Processing time:

You can start the application process 2-6 months before the start of your study program. Once you have submitted the application you should receive an answer within around 1 month, though this period may be extended if additional documentation is required.

Additional links and info:

- Step by step guide
- Transitioning to work visa
- Frequently Asked Questions

Visa for Highly Qualified Workers and Intra-Company Transfers

Source: exteriores.gob.es (Spanish Consulate, New York)

This is a Spanish national work visa for two groups:

- Highly qualified professionals hired by a Spanish company.
- Employees transferred within the same company or group as managers, specialists, or trainees.

It allows the holder and eligible family members to live and work in Spain, once a residence permit has already been approved by Spain's Large Companies and Strategic Groups Unit.

What workers are eligible?

- Highly qualified professionals or senior management.
- Graduates or post-graduates from prestigious universities or business schools.
- Intra-company transferees such as senior management, specialists, or trainees transferred within the same company or group.

What family members are eligible?

- Spouses or unmarried partners
- Children (including adult children) who are financially dependent and have no family unit of their own
- Ascendants (parents, etc.) who are in the worker's care

Key requirements — Workers:

- A valid residence permit already issued by the Large Companies and Strategic Groups Unit in Spain.
- A valid passport
  - At least 1 year validity with two blank pages and issued less than ten years ago
- Proof of residence in the consular district .
  - ID/driver's license, and for non-US citizens, proof of legal US status like Green Card or appropriate visa.

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- If using a representative: proof of the representative's identity and power of attorney, properly legalized/apostilled and, if needed, translated.
- Criminal record certificates for all countries of residence over the past two years.
  - Documents must be legalized or apostilled and officially translated into Spanish where requiredFor the US, only FBI certificates are accepted, not state or local police, and the certificate must be less than six months old.
  - A signed responsible declaration that you have no criminal record in the last five years.

Key requirements — Family members:

Family members must submit similar documents, including application form, photo, passport, criminal record, residence in district, fee, etc. plus:

- Proof of family relationship
  - This could include marriage, birth certificate, registered or unregistered partnership proof.
  - This must be legalized or apostilled and translated.
- For adult children: evidence of financial dependence and unmarried status.
- For ascendants: evidence that they are in the worker's care.
- The consulate can request extra documents or a personal interview if needed.

Step by step:

1. Get the Spanish residence permit.
   - The company or sponsor in Spain obtains the residence permit from the Large Companies and Strategic Groups Unit.
2. Prep visa documentation.
   - Visa application form, recent passport photo, passport copy, residence permit, criminal record certificate, proof of residence in the consular district, and other representative documents, if applicable.
3. Email the Consulate to book an appointment.
4. Submit the application in person and pay visa fees.
5. Follow up on the application online once the consulate gives you a tracking code. They may ask for more documents or call you for an interview.
6. Collect the visa within one month of being notified of its approval.

Visa Costs:

- Permit Application Fee: €73.26
- Visa Fee: Approximately €90 (may vary by consulate)
- Residence Card (TIE) Fee: €16.08

Processing Times:

The stated decision period is ten days from the day after the application is submitted. This can be extended if the consulate asks for more documents or an interview. Processing time does not include the time to get the residence permit in Spain, to gather documents, apostilles, and translations, or the time until you can get an appointment.

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Main limitations:

- The visa validity is one year, or the same length as the residence permit if that is shorter than one year.
- It is tied to the specific residence permit, which is linked to your role, employer, and conditions approved in Spain
- Family members' visas depend on the worker's situation and correct proof of relationship and dependence.

Reasons for rejection:

- Missing or incorrect documentation, including issues with apostilles or translations
- Criminal records that conflict with the clean-record requirement, or issues with the five-year responsible declaration
- Problems with the residence permit, such as it being not granted, invalid, or inconsistent with what is claimed in the visa application
- Lack of proof of residence in the consular district or immigration status in the U.S. if required
- Doubts about family relationship or dependency for accompanying relatives
- Refusal can also follow from non-cooperation with requests for extra documents or failure to attend an interview

If refused, the decision is given in writing with reasons. You can then:

- File an appeal for reconsideration with the same consulate within one month of notification, or
- File a judicial review before the High Court of Justice of Madrid within two months of notification of refusal (or of the rejection of the reconsideration appeal)

Step by step:

1. Get the Spanish residence permit
   - The company or sponsor in Spain obtains the residence permit from the Large Companies and Strategic Groups Unit
2. Prep visa documentation
   - Visa application form, recent passport photo, passport copy, residence permit, criminal record certificate, proof of residence in the consular district, and other representative documents, if applicable
3. Email the Consulate to book an appointment
4. Submit the application in person and pay visa fees
5. Follow up on the application online once the consulate gives you a tracking code. They may ask for more documents or call you for an interview
6. Collect the visa within one month of being notified of its approval

Additional Links:

More about this visa

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Non-Lucrative Residency Visa

Source: exteriores.gob.es (Spanish Consulate, San Francisco)

Often called a "retirement visa," this is a visa that allows the holder to reside in Spain without carrying out any gainful (work or professional) activity, as long as the applicant has sufficient and guaranteed means to live on. This is not a work permit and does not allow any type of work or professional activity, including remote work.

The visa is first issued for 90 days to let the applicant enter Spain. Once they arrive, they must apply for a Foreigner Identity Card (TIE) within one month. The first authorization is for one year of non-lucrative residence. After that, they can apply to renew the permit in Spain if they still meet the requirements.

Requirements:

- You must not carry out any work or professional activity in Spain, including remote or online work. If you are of working age, you must prove you are retired, on a pension, or stopping work (employer letter or notarized affidavit if self-employed).
- You must prove you have sufficient financial means:
  - At least **400% of the Spanish** IPREM (Indicador Público de Renta de Efectos Múltiples) for you, 100% IPREM for each dependent.
  - Evidence includes detailed bank statements (last three months), pensions, and other regular income. Investment accounts and account summaries alone are generally not accepted
- At least one year of validity remaining on your passport, issued within the last ten years, with two blank pages. You must leave the original passport with the consulate or embassy and stay in the U.S. while your visa is processed.
- You must prove residence within the consulate's jurisdiction with a driver's license or state ID.
- Full-coverage, Spanish-compliant private health insurance from a company operating in Spain. It must be in Spanish, start from the time of residence, have no co-pays, no coverage limits, no exclusions for pre-existing conditions, and cover 100% of medical, hospital, and out-of-hospital expenses. Travel insurance or just an insurance card is not accepted.
- FBI background check based on fingerprints for the last five years in the U.S. and any other countries lived in for the past five years, with apostille and official translation into Spanish. Local/state checks alone are not accepted.
- Recent (less than three months) medical certificate saying you do not have diseases that could seriously affect public health under the 2005 International Health Regulations.
  - This must include the doctor's name, license number, signature, contact info, stamp or letterhead, typically using their template.
- All foreign documents (financial, civil status, criminal, medical where required) must be apostilled/legalized and officially translated into Spanish by a sworn translator.

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For family members, you must also show:

- Recent birth or marriage certificates (issued within six months), or proof of partnership, with apostille/legalization and official Spanish translation.
- For adult children or parents, strong proof of financial dependence and that they belong to the family unit.

Processing Times:

The official decision period is **up to three months** from the day after you submit your application, but it can be extended if they request extra documents or an interview. Often 6–8 weeks for UK, US and Canadian applicants.

Main limitations:

- You cannot work in Spain, including remote or online work.
- You must maintain sufficient financial means and full-coverage Spanish health insurance.
- You must reside where you declared; the permit is for residence, not frequent long absences.
- You must comply with Spanish immigration rules, including timely application for the TIE.

Common reasons someone might be denied:

- Insufficient, poorly documented financial means, or irregular income that does not clearly meet the IPREM thresholds for the whole family.
- Evidence of ongoing work or lack of credible proof that work will cease (no employer termination letter, no affidavit if self-employed).
- Inadequate health insurance.
- Criminal record certificate showing offenses that affect public order or security, or incomplete background documentation.
- Missing, expired, or improperly legalized or apostilled documents.
- Passport issues (including refusal to leave the original passport for processing).
- Lack of jurisdiction or improper immigration status in the U.S.
- Incomplete forms, inconsistent information, or failure to respond to requests for additional documentation or to attend an interview.

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Entrepreneur Visa ("Visado de Emprendedor")

Source: https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/londres/en/ServiciosConsulares/Paginas/Consular/Visado-para-emprendedor.aspx

This visa is for foreign nationals who want to start an "innovative" business in Spain with a business model of "special economic interest for Spain," under the framework of Spain's Entrepreneurs' Law (Ley 14/2013).

Unlike the Digital Nomad Visa, this route is for founding and running a new business that will operate within Spain, not working remotely for a foreign employer.

Requirements:

- A business plan demonstrating an innovative business model, technology, or methodology.
- A favorable report from Spain's Trade and Investment Office (ENISA or the relevant commercial office), confirming the business qualifies as being of "special economic interest."
- Sufficient financial means to support yourself while the business gets off the ground.
- Private health insurance.
- No criminal record.

Key features:

- Initial visa is valid for one year (if applying from outside Spain), or you can apply for a 3-year residence authorization directly if already legally in Spain.
- Renewable, and can lead to permanent residency over time.
- Allows you to live and work in Spain solely in connection with your approved business.
- Family members can generally be included in the application.

Note: exact document requirements and the "innovative business" bar are evaluated case by case and can vary by consulate. Check with the consulate or a Spanish immigration lawyer for current criteria before you apply.

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EU Blue Card

Source: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/eu-immigration-portal/eu-blue-card/eu-blue-card-spain_en

Spain's implementation of the EU-wide Blue Card scheme for highly skilled non-EU workers. It's a separate track from the Highly Qualified Workers visa above, with its own salary threshold and a distinct advantage: portability to other EU countries after a period of legal residence.

Requirements:

- A job offer or employment contract in Spain for a highly skilled position, generally for at least one year.
- A university degree (typically 3+ years) or, in some cases, extensive relevant professional experience.
- A salary meeting Spain's Blue Card minimum threshold, which is set and adjusted periodically (verify the current figure before use, since it changes with Spain's national salary index).
- Private or public health insurance coverage.
- Clean criminal record.

Key features:

1. Initially valid for up to four years, or the length of the employment contract plus three months, whichever is shorter.
2. After 18 months of residence in Spain under the Blue Card, holders can move to another EU member state under simplified conditions.
3. Family members can join under family reunification rules with fewer bureaucratic hurdles than some other visa categories.
4. Can lead to long-term Spanish residence status after five years.

Additional links:

- More about this visa
- Apply for a EU Blue Card in Spain

Note: salary thresholds and eligibility figures shift with annual updates to Spain's minimum wage and interprofessional salary index (SMI). Confirm the current numbers with a lawyer or the consulate before relying on a specific euro figure.

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Family Reunification ("Reagrupación Familiar")

Source: https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/londres/en/ServiciosConsulares/Paginas/Consular/Visado-de-reagrupacion-familiar-en-regimen-general.aspx

This pathway allows a foreign, non-EU national who is a legal resident to bring qualifying family members to live with them in Spain.

Who can be reunified:

- Spouse or registered/unmarried partner (proof of a stable relationship is required if unmarried.
- Children under 18, or adult children who are financially dependent and unable to support themselves due to disability.
- Parents or grandparents of the resident or their spouse, if they are dependent and there are humanitarian grounds justifying their presence in Spain.

Key requirements:

- The sponsor (person already in Spain) must hold a valid residence permit and typically have resided in Spain for at least one year, with authorization to remain another year.
- Proof of adequate housing.
  - This is a report on housing adequacy, "informe de adecuación de vivienda," issued by the relevant regional authority.
- Proof of sufficient financial means to support the family members being brought over, tied to IPREM thresholds and household size.
- Family relationship documents apostilled/legalized and translated into Spanish.
  - This could include marriage or birth certificates or partnership registration.
- Public or private health insurance for the family members joining.

Why this matters for asylum-adjacent cases: If you have a partner, spouse, or close family member already settled in Spain with legal residency, this visa can offer a more predictable path than waiting on a separate asylum claim, particularly once the sponsoring family member's status is stable.

Additional Links:
More about this visa

Arraigo Routes (Social, Laboral, Familiar, Segunda Oportunidad)

The **arraigo** ("rootedness") routes are residency pathways for people already physically present in Spain, generally without prior legal status, based on demonstrated ties to the country. They're referenced in the Asylum Guide as a post-denial option, but they're also valid standalone routes for anyone who has been living in Spain for the required period, regardless of whether they ever filed for asylum.

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Arraigo Social

Requires generally two years of continuous, demonstrable physical presence in Spain.

- This is often shown through empadronamiento records, though this alone isn't always sufficient.
- Requires a signed job offer or employment contract for at least 30 hours a week (or equivalent), for a minimum duration (commonly at least 6 months to a year, depending on current regulation).
- Requires a report on social integration ("informe de arraigo") from the regional government, or in some cases a report of "social effort" showing ties to Spain: language courses, community involvement, etc.
- No serious criminal record in Spain or the home country.

Arraigo Laboral

- Requires proof of at least two years of continuous stay in Spain.
- Requires proof of at least six months of labor activity in Spain, generally evidenced through a labor inspection finding, a final labor ruling, or another legally recognized route.
- This is often the hardest evidentiary bar of the arraigo routes, since it typically requires the labor relationship to have been formally identified or acknowledged, not just claimed by the worker.
- No serious criminal record.

Arraigo Familiar

- For people with certain family ties in Spain. These could include:
- A Spanish-national or legal-resident parent, spouse, or child
- Being the parent of a minor Spanish national
- Time-in-country requirements vary depending on the specific family tie being claimed, and in some sub-categories there is no fixed minimum stay at all
- Requires proof of the family relationship (birth/marriage certificates, etc.), apostilled/legalized and translated where the documents originate abroad

Arraigo de Segunda Oportunidad ("Second Chance")

- A newer route for people who previously held legal residence in Spain that has since lapsed.
- Generally requires having previously held authorized residence in Spain within a set period (commonly the last two years), even if that status has since expired.
- Intended to offer a path back to legal status without needing to restart the two-year continuous-presence clock from zero.

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General limitations across all arraigo routes:

- All require the applicant to be physically present in Spain at the time of application, not applying from abroad.
- Processing times vary significantly by region and case complexity.
- A criminal record, especially anything serious or unresolved, can disqualify an applicant across any of these routes.

Note: these categories were reformed relatively recently in Spanish immigration law, and the specific time thresholds and evidentiary requirements are among the details most likely to have changed. Confirm current figures with CEAR, ACCEM, or an immigration lawyer before relying on them.

Seasonal / Temporary Work Visa ("Visado de Trabajo de Temporada")

For fixed-term work tied to seasonal industries, most commonly agriculture (harvest seasons) and tourism (peak season hospitality work). This is a lower-barrier option compared to the highly qualified worker or intra-company transfer routes, since it doesn't require advanced qualifications.

Qualifications:

- A specific job offer from a Spanish employer for seasonal work, tied to a defined contract period.
- The employer generally must be part of Spain's annual quota system ("contingente") for seasonal foreign workers, or otherwise authorized to hire under this scheme.
- Valid passport and clean criminal record.
- Basic health requirements (no serious communicable disease that would pose a public health risk).

Key features:

- Visa/permit is tied strictly to the length of the seasonal contract, which is generally a matter of months, not year-round.
- Does not usually lead directly to long-term residency on its own, though time spent may sometimes count toward continuous presence requirements for other routes.
- Verify this with current regulation, since practice varies.
- Typically requires the worker to return to their home country at the end of the season unless another status is obtained.

Note: This route depends heavily on annual government quotas and bilateral agreements Spain has with specific countries for seasonal labor. Check current availability and country-specific eligibility for the year you plan to apply.

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Religious Worker Visa

A niche pathway for people entering Spain to perform religious work, sponsored by a religious organization registered and operating in Spain.

Qualifications:

- A sponsoring religious organization in Spain recognized under Spain's Ley Orgánica de Libertad Religiosa or registered as a religious entity.
- A role tied specifically to religious functions. This could include:
  - Clergy
  - Missionary work
  - Religious teaching
- Proof of the applicant's qualification or standing within the religious organization (ordination, religious training, or equivalent).
- Standard requirements: valid passport, clean criminal record, health insurance.

Why this might matter here: Occasionally relevant for people fleeing religious persecution (including LGBTQ+ people persecuted within or by a religious community) who have a genuine, separate religious affiliation and sponsoring organization willing to bring them to Spain in this capacity. This is distinct from, and not a substitute for, an asylum claim based on persecution.

Note: This is a narrow, less-documented category. If it applies to your situation, have a lawyer confirm current requirements directly with the relevant consulate before you rely on it.

Job Seeking Visa

Source: https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/empresas/informacion-para-empresas/profesiones-de-dificil-cobertura/profesiones-mas-demandadas.html

A temporary residence permit, regulated by the Immigration Regulations, which allows a foreign citizen to remain in Spain for a maximum period of **12 months** for the purpose of looking for work or undertaking a professional project. Spanish regulations establish specific eligibility criteria, limiting its granting to two main groups: **descendants of Spaniards by birth** and professionals from **specific professions defined by the State Public Employment Service** (SEPE).

Requirements:

- You are the child or grandchild of a Spanish citizen or your occupation is listed in the Catalogue of Occupations in Short Supply
- Valid passport with sufficient remaining validity
- Proof of sufficient financial means to support yourself during the job-search period

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- Health insurance
- Clean criminal record
- In some cases, a demonstrated professional profile or qualifications relevant to the Spanish labor market (exact bar varies)

Key features:

- Generally valid for a short fixed period (commonly around 90 days to a few months) specifically to search for employment or set up a business.
- This visa itself does not authorize work. Once a job offer or business plan is secured, the holder must then transition to the appropriate work or entrepreneur visa from within Spain.
- Intended as a bridge visa, not a long-term residence solution on its own.

Processing times:

Once submitted, the process is reviewed within **30 to 45 calendar days**.

Note: this is a relatively recent addition to Spain's immigration framework. Double-check the current duration and financial-means thresholds with the consulate or a lawyer before you apply.

Additional links:
More about this visa

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for more information visit lgbtqfar.org
or email us at info@lgbtqfar.org

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