

City of Johannesburg Official Passport Guidelines

May 2023

1. Introduction

The Official Passport Guidelines regulates the use of official passports in the City of Johannesburg. The guidelines are based on the national government guidelines on the use and management of official passports. It outlines the procedures to authorize, obtain, use, manage and control official passports.

A South African passport is a valid proof of identification according to South African law. As of March 2023, citizens of South Africa enjoyed visa free access to 73 countries, of which some may require pre travel registration according to the Visa Restrictions Index.

South African passports are issued by the South African Department of Home Affairs, in terms of the South African Passport and Travel Documents Act (Act 4 of 1994) and related regulations

2. Understanding different types of South African passports

2.1 Regular passports

These passports are issued to citizens who are 16 years of age or older, and are intended for occasional travel, such as vacations and business trips. They contain 32 pages and are valid for 10 years. Regular passports are not renewable – when they expire, new passport applications must be filed.

2.2 Maxi passports

Like regular passports but contain 48 pages to cater for frequent travellers. Like regular passports, they are issued to citizens aged 16 and older, are valid for 10 years, and are non-renewable. Like the regular passport, when it expires, a new passport application will have to be filed.

2.3 Child passports

These passports are issued to citizens who are 15 years of age or younger. They are valid for 5 years and are non-renewable.

2.4 Official passports

These passports are issued to officials attached to government institutions who must travel on official business. They are valid for 5 years and are issued to officials by the Department of Home Affairs, with the application fee of R600.00, as per the tariffs issued by the Department of Home Affairs in November 2022.

The amended fees, which were published in Government Gazette No. 47256 on 06 October 2022, came into operation on 1 November 2022.

2.5 Diplomatic passports

Diplomatic passports are issued to diplomats and consuls (in the City of Johannesburg only the Executive Mayor is eligible to apply for a Diplomatic Passport) attached to government institutions who must travel on official business. They are valid for 5 years and are issued to officials by the Department of Home Affairs, with the application fee of R600.00, as per the tariffs issued by the Department of Home Affairs in November 2022.

3. Applying for an Official Passport in the City of Johannesburg

3.1 Do I qualify for an Official Passport?

Only political representatives, their direct strategic support staff, staff in political offices and officials

- travelling more than once per annum
 - who are expected to travel internationally at short notice
 - who are expected to accompany political leadership on international trips
 - members of international bodies who are required to attend regular meetings
 - staff in the International Relations Unit should apply for official passports
- should apply for Official Passports.

3.2 How do I apply for an Official Passport?

Heads of Departments/Entities or political principals (in the case of political representatives) must submit a "Request for an official passport" to City's International Relations Unit. The following information should be addressed in the "Request for an official passport":

- Full name/s of the official / political representative as per his/her identity document
- Title
- Identity number (a copy of the identity document must also be supplied to the International Relations Unit)
- Confirmation that the official is an employee of the City of Johannesburg or that the political representative is a serving political representative
- SAP number
- Position in Department/Municipal Entity or political designation
- Name of the Department/Municipal Entity in the City
- Contact number, and
- The letter must be signed by the Head of Department/Entity/Political Office.

3.3 Application Fee: Official/Diplomatic Passports

The application fee for the Official/Diplomatic Passport is R600 as gazetted by the Minister of Home Affairs in November 2022. The applicant may claim a refund from the city after successfully applying for an official passport.

The International Relations Unit will issue a letter to the Department of Home Affairs to facilitate the issuing of an Official Passport. The letter from the International Relations Unit should then be taken by the applicant to the Department of Home Affairs to apply for an Official Passport.

4. Management of Official Passports

All official passports remain the property of the South African Government and are therefore to be used for official Government business purposes only.

An official Government passport may only be used when traveling to a foreign country, for the purpose of official Government business and will only be issued to a traveler who has a specific official Government trip pending.

4.1 Official Passport Register and Safe keeping

The City of Johannesburg maintains an Official Passport register as per the requirements of the Department of Home Affairs. The information of all official passports must be captured in the register once issued.

All official passports in the City are to be kept in safe storage by the International Relations Unit. An official passport in safekeeping will only be released to the holder on presentation of a signed, approved travel report.

The official passport must be returned to the International Relations Unit within three (3) working days of returning from an international trip for safe-keeping and compliance.

4.2 Visa Requirements

Some countries require the traveller to obtain a visa in addition to having a passport. City officials must determine the need for a visa for an impending trip prior to traveling with a valid official passport.

City officials can determine the need for a visa from foreign Embassies accredited to South Africa and by consulting their contact(s) in the country they plan to visit. Visa information can also be obtained from the travel agent responsible for the travel arrangements. It is the responsibility of the trip coordinator/traveller to establish visa requirements.

4.3 Note Verbales

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) is responsible for issuing of Note Verbales. A Note Verbale is an official written form of communication by DIRCO, through the Protocol Directorate and it is addressed to the resident Embassy/High Commission of the country concerned.

A Note Verbale should be presented by a person travelling on an official/diplomatic passport when applying for a visa/visa exemption. People travelling on an official/diplomatic passport and requiring a Note Verbale must submit a request for a Note Verbale to the International Relations Unit at least five (5) workdays prior to applying for a visa/visa exemption.

A request for a Note Verbale can only be lodged by the International Relations Unit for onward transmission to DIRCO on receipt of a duly completed Contact Form from the travelling entity/official.

4.3 Contact form

All officials/political representatives travelling on an official passport must submit a contact form via the International Relations Unit to DIRCO.

The contact form contains the following information:

- Name of the visiting department or delegation
- Proposed dates for the visit
- Country/ies to be visited
- Objective/purpose of the visit
- Visit coordinator
- Names of the members of the delegation
- Flight details; and
- Accommodation where the delegate/s will be staying.

Contact forms are used in case of an emergency while an official is travelling internationally on an official/diplomatic passport. The details contained in the contact form will be utilised to initiate the relevant assistance.

4.4 Additional Pages in passport

Officials travelling are responsible to ensure that a sufficient number of blank pages are available in their Official/Diplomatic Passports before their departure.

5. Lost or stolen official passports

A lost or stolen official/diplomatic passport should be reported as soon as possible to the South African Police Services. A copy of the affidavit/case number should be submitted to the International Relations Unit for onward submission to the Department of Home Affairs to ensure the cancellation of the official/diplomatic passport. In the case of a stolen or lost official passport and where the official is applying for a new passport, the official must provide a loss of passport report (DHA-335) and confirmation of proof that reported the loss to the police (stamped Affidavit from SAPS).

6. Renewal of Official/Diplomatic Passports

Official/Diplomatic passport holders should be aware that official/diplomatic passports are only valid for a period of five (5) years. Six (6) months prior to the expiry date of an official/diplomatic passport, the official/requestor must re-apply for an official/diplomatic passport. The official/requestor should request another letter from the IR Unit to apply for renewal of an official/diplomatic passport.

7. Official/Diplomatic passport holder is no longer employed/associated with the City of Johannesburg

Should an incumbent resign or leave the service of the City of Johannesburg for whatever reason, the International Relations Unit and responsible Human Resources Office should be informed that the Official/Diplomatic Passport can be returned and be cancelled.

8. Additional Information, enquiries and assistance

Further information and guidance on Official/Diplomatic Passports are available from the International Relations Unit in Group Strategy, Policy Co-ordination and Relations.

Please contact:

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