

French Polynesia Long Stay Visa Application Process in CIUDAD de MEXICO

Alene Rice & Bruce Balan

s/v Migration

February 2019 & January 2020

(Version 6 – updated June 2020)

This is a summary of our experience applying for a Long Stay Visa (*Carte de Long Sejour*) for French Polynesia from the French Embassy in Mexico City (Ciudad de Mexico). This information was originally compiled in February 2019, then updated when we applied again in January of 2020. All information and links were correct as of January 2020 but please double-check requirements as they may change. We did receive our 2019 visas but we did not use them as we decided to stay in Mexico another year. As of this version, we have not received our 2020 visas, but are assuming we will since we provided the same information as in 2019.

1. Download the *Formulaire de demande de visa long séjour* at <https://mx.ambafrance.org/Formulaire-de-demande-de-visa-long>. We downloaded the French and English versions but submitted only the French version after using the English version to aid translation.

Item 26 - *Date d'entrée prévue sur le territoire de la France...*:

Our understanding is that you must arrive in French Polynesia within 3 months of your application date. We waited until the day of our appointment to fill in this item and then chose the date exactly 3 months from that date. In 2019 our appointment was 11 February and we entered 11 June 2019.

However, in 2020 our appointment was 10 January and we were advised by the embassy representative to simply enter *April 2020*.

2. Download the list of documents required for a *Larga estadia (mayor a 90 días) - Autre - Visitateur* <https://mx.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/visiteur.pdf>. We translated the list into English, see below. However, make sure you check the website for changes.

Fee: The fee is 99 Euros. Have exact change in Mexican pesos. Since the exchange rate varies, have small bills and change available. When we visited on 11 Feb 2019, the fee was 2,181 pesos. In January 2020 it was slightly less.

#3 - Photos: You must have proper photos or your application will not be accepted. This is very important! The French are serious about photos conforming to their rules: white background, no smiling, no teeth showing, no hair around the face (bangs) or hair covering the ears, no glasses, no jewelry. If you want to be sure to get the correct photos, you can visit *Tabaqueria Polanco* (Calle Julio Verne 84 B, Polanco, Miguel Hidalgo, 11550 Ciudad de México - <https://goo.gl/maps/nEU33EFVDMwVEEr6>) which is only a few blocks from the Embassy. Tell them you want 2 photos for a French *VISA* (not passport). It costs 60 pesos for 2 photos; you will need *both* photos for your visa.

#5 – FM2 or FM3 (Proof of Mexico Residency): We had neither an FM2 or FM3. Via the French Honorary Consul in La Paz*, who was extremely helpful and speaks excellent English, we contacted a representative of the visa department at the Mexico City French Embassy and explained our situation by email (in French). Though you technically should be a resident of Mexico, they are willing to make an exception for sailors. Instead of an FM2 or 3, we included copies of our Tourist Visa and a letter from a marina in Mexico stating that we reside aboard our boat in their marina. Spanish will probably be fine but we included a French translation of the letter. Some marinas may provide you with this letter if you have stayed there previously, or if you just ask nicely.

#6 – I Won't Work In France Letter: Though the requirement document does not specify this letter be translated, we submitted ours in French. Copy below.

#7 – Motivation Letter: Though the requirement document does not specify this letter be translated, we submitted ours in French.

#8 – Proof of Regular Income. See #10 below.

#9 – Lease in France: We provided our boat documentation.

#10 – Economic Resources: We provided relevant pages from bank and retirement account statements for 2 months. (Remember to black out the account numbers.)

#11 – Insurance: We have the DAN Preferred Plan and separate ex-pat insurance through IMG Europe. We provided copies of our DAN cards, the relevant insurance pages from the DAN Benefits manual, and our IMG Europe declaration.

#12 – Police Clearance Letter: Get this from your hometown police department and translate into French. Make sure it is an original. A fax or photocopy is unacceptable. This may take some time to get, so start working on it early.

Note that the Requirements Document (referred to in paragraph 2 above) states that you need a photocopy of each document. We arrived at the Embassy with copies of everything, but they did not want them. This was the case in both 2019 and 2020.

3. Make a visa appointment. You need one appointment time for each visa applicant. You are supposed to use the Embassy's online tool (<https://mx.ambafrance.org/Citas-para-la-solicitud-de-visa-Rendez-vous-pour-la-demande-d-un-visa>). Appointment times are meant to open 60 days in advance. However, we could never find an open spot and the site did not seem to work correctly. Finally, we contacted the Embassy representative (again via the Honorary Consul in La Paz) and explained our situation. We were then assigned a day (not a time) for our appointment in Mexico City. If you go this route, make sure you specify how many applicants there are. We believe it is also important that you communicate with the Embassy in French or Spanish, not English. We

recommend trying to get an appointment via the website if possible. If you get an online appointment, *print out your confirmation and bring it with you; you will need it at the embassy.*

Getting an appointment is the most time-sensitive step in this process, so do it as soon as possible!

4. Gather all items needed from the required document list. Do not staple anything together and leave the photos unattached. Note that some items may take time to receive (e.g., the police clearance letter). Also, if you want your visa returned to you via courier, read item 7 below *before* your appointment.
5. Go to your appointment.
 - a. Travel to Ciudad de Mexico: There are hundreds of daily flights. We flew from La Paz on Volaris and rented an Airbnb in Polanco which is the barrio where the French Embassy is located. It's an upscale (and safe) part of town but the Airbnb was quite reasonable. Take a couple of extra days to tour around the city; it's a great place! The Metro is excellent, safe, and only costs 5 pesos! There are several bikeshare companies with lots of bikes available. Bolt rideshare has service in the city as does Uber (but please don't use Uber because they are an awful company). Don't miss Teotihuacan, the Zocalo, Ballet Folklorico, and the Anthropology Museum. Remember that museums and Chapultepec Park are closed on Monday. However, Chapultepec Park is open to bicycles passing through on Monday so you can ride around in it.
 - b. Your Appointment: The French Visa Office has its own entry on the west side of the Embassy on *Calle Calderón de la Barca* just off of *Campos Eliseos* - <https://goo.gl/maps/FDhaDP9s8PaAjRjNA>. Since we only had a date for our appointment and not a time, we arrived just after opening at 0900. There were already 3 people waiting, so take that into account. In 2020 we arrived at 0830 and were second in line. Have your photos and passports ready for the guard. He will buzz you into the anteroom to check your photos, passports, and appointment confirmation. We were not on the printed list but he did have another hand-written list which included our names. You will have to leave your mobile phone with the guard. Once the guard lets you in, take a seat and wait for your turn. You'll eventually be called to a window. It would be best if you speak French or Spanish but the Embassy personnel may speak English.
 - c. Travel *from* Mexico City: Remember that you will need to leave your passport with your application at the French Embassy. You will NOT have your passport for your return travel. We had Temporary US Passports and used those for our ID. However, in 2020 we experimented with other IDs. We tried using our driver's licenses (CA & OH) and our GOES cards. They worked just fine. It seems that all that is needed to

travel domestically by air in Mexico is a government-issued photo ID. However, things might change. Of course, you could also take a train or a bus on your return trip.

If you are uncomfortable travelling without a passport, please see the RECEIVING A TEMPORARY PASSPORT FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY IN CIUDAD de MEXICO section at the end of this document.

6. Receive your passport and visa via courier service.
 - a. We were told the visa processing time should be about one month. The French Embassy will return your passport and visa to you via a courier service if you provide a pre-paid envelope. There is a PAKMAIL service center two blocks from the Embassy (Ariosto 10, Polanco – <https://goo.gl/maps/m6cogd7w6eLZfoKd7>). They are familiar with the process. Visit Pakmail *before* your appointment (they open at 0900) and tell them you want a prepaid envelope for a passport. Make clear it is for a visa from the French Embassy and that you will be sending it to a domicile or business -- NOT a consular office. *You will need to provide a valid address in Mexico where you can receive mail.* They offer FedEx, DHL, or Estefeta. Do not use Estefeta even though it is cheaper. FedEx is probably your best choice. Pakmail accepts *cash only* -- no credit cards! Depending on who helps you, this process could take 10 minutes or 40 minutes, so plan your time accordingly.

Don't forget to include your DHL or FedEx envelope with your application at your visa office appointment. You will need one envelope for *each visa application*.

March 2019: We were unable to check the status of our visa online at the *France Diplomatie* website (<https://pastel.diplomatie.gouv.fr/VisaNET-Consultation-Internet/html/frameset/frameset.html>); it just never worked. So, after 4 weeks, we wrote to our embassy contact. He was out of town but did reply one week later saying that our visas would be printed that week and sent directly. However, it was another 2 weeks before our passports and visas were received via Estafeta overnight delivery. The total time from our appointment to receipt of our visas was 7 weeks. But, the process was successful!

March 2020: We were able to check the status of our visa online this year. It said it was complete but it did not tell us if it had been granted or denied. Our visa was waiting for us when we arrived at the address we had used (a marina in Banderas Bay). Total time from our appointment to receipt of our visas was 5.5 weeks.

7. Sail to French Polynesia. You will still need to activate your visa upon arrival. For more information about that process, check out the definitive document created by s/v Jacaranda at www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff.

8. Raise a toast to congratulate yourself on the successful completion of the process and thank the French for *une expérience grande et formidable*.

We will end with a short story about our first experience with this process in 2008. At that time we left *Migration* in Tahiti and flew back to Los Angeles where we stayed for over 3 months waiting for our visas. After our return to Tahiti, while having dinner with some French friends on their boat, we related the story of our travails and the mounds of paperwork it entailed (everything was submitted in triplicate then). Guy, our French host, said “*Oui, there is much bureaucracy in France.*” We responded that there was also bureaucracy in the United States. “*Oh, non, non, non,*” Guy replied, “*Les Etats Unis are only 200 years old. We French have had over 500 years to perfect the bureaucracy!*”

*Cedric Gavrel de La Chapelle, Honorary Consul, Agence Consulaire La Paz
lapaz.chfrance@gmail.com consulat.lapaz@gmail.com 52 612 128 4151

Translation of SOLICITUD DE LARGA ESTANCIA VISITANTE TIEMPO SABATICO

1 The present list of documents in which you must “palomear”(untranslatable) the presence of each document and each photocopy that you will submit

2 A long stay visa application form filling out all the lines;

3 2 recent photographs (passport type: 3.5 x 4.5 cm in color with light background)

Particularity the length of the face should cover from the top of the skull (including the hair) up to the jaw: 3 cm - Width: from ear to ear 2.3 cm.

- Paste one of them in the application, in the space provided for that purpose (Required);

(Note from Migration: We recommend you do not attach the photo to the application)

4 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Passport whose validity must exceed more than 3 months date of the end of the stay in France + photocopy of the pages containing the personal information ;

5 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Migratory Form FM2 or FM3 valid if the applicant is foreigner resident in Mexico;

6 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Letter of commitment from the applicant to not do any professional activity during your stay in France;

7 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Letter of motivation of the applicant explaining the reasons for go in France for a year;

8 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Proof of the socio-professional situation of the applicant (Curriculum Vitae with documents);

9 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: A lease in France;

10 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Economic resources during the stay in France:

The applicant must submit his own financial resources: a minimum of 13,176 Euros for the year;

Proof of the economic resources of the applicant (Pension, assets or everything type of income);

11 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Proof of insurance in which it is indicated that the expenses medical and repatriation costs are covered up to an amount of Euros 30000 Euros or 50000 USD (Valid one year).

12 ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY: Evidence of no criminal record translated into French.

I WILL NOT WORK IN FRANCE

Letter in French

<date here>

Re: Lettre d'engagement que ne faire aucune activité professionnelle pendant ma séjour en France

Cher Monsieur ou Madame,

Moi-meme, *<your name>*, je promis de ne pas engager d'entreprises françaises pendant ma visite en Polynésie française.

Je visite uniquement à des fins touristiques et pour profiter de la beauté des îles.

Signé

<your signature>

RECEIVING A TEMPORARY PASSPORT FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY IN CIUDAD de MEXICO

Thanks to Shellie & Randy of s/v Moondance for providing this information.

Due to having to surrender your original Passport to the French Embassy when applying for a Long Stay Visa, we wanted to have a temporary one with us to ensure we could travel back to the states in the event of an emergency. This qualifies you for an "Emergency Passport" request. To apply for one, bring the following items:

- Completed DS11 Form (Will also be called the DS-82, that's OK and is the one you will need to have completed to give them along with your current passport) found at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/forms.html>
- Passport Photo This can be obtained nearby at:
Rio Volga No. 1Primer Piso Col. Cuauhtemoc Ciudad De Mexico, C.P.
06500 Their hours are 6 am to 6 pm.
Phone: 5533-6014. www.usvisa.mx
- Letter Attached (Specific to your names) stating LSV Process
- \$110

Embassy location:

US Embassy
Paseo De La Reforma 305
Colonia Cuauhtemoc
06500 Mexico, CDMX

When you arrive let the staff at the front window on the sidewalk know you are there for an "Emergency Passport". (Due to this status, an appointment is not necessary.) They will ask you for your passport picture, Temporary Passport Letter and DS-82. Once approved by their supervisor they will let you in. No cell phones or bags are allowed beyond security but will be held in safe keeping for you to retrieve when you leave.

The staff shared that mid-day is the best time to arrive. Scheduled appointments are set in the morning and cleared out near noon.

They will issue you a Temporary Passport before leaving the Embassy. It is valid for one year and only recommended for travel back to the United States as travel internationally typically requires the passport being traveled with to be validated beyond a year.

SAMPLE LETTER for EMERGENCY PASSPORT

<date>

<your name>

<your address>

US Embassy Mexico City
Paseo De La Reforma 305
Colonia Cuauhtemoc
06500 Mexico, CDMX

Dear Embassy Staff:

I, <name>, currently have a Passport. I am applying for a Long Stay Visa for French Polynesia. The French Embassy requires keeping my currently issued Passport while my application is in process. I will be traveling by plane while they still have my passport. Due to this I am applying for an Emergency Passport to complete my travel.

Sincerely~