

Spanish Visa Application Process Checklist

A step-by-step guide from first appointment to TIE card — Non-Lucrative Visa (NLV) focus

This checklist covers the process steps for a Non-Lucrative Visa (NLV) application — the most common path for Americans retiring or relocating to Spain without working. Most steps apply to other long-stay visa types with some variation. Requirements vary by consulate — always confirm current requirements with your consulate before submitting. For document tracking (Obtained / Apostilled / Translated), use the companion Spanish Visa Documentation Checklist available at us2es.com/resources.

Step 1 Before You Start

Before doing anything else, confirm you're applying through the right consulate and for the right visa type. These two decisions affect everything that follows. The consulate that covers your state of legal domicile handles your application — not necessarily the one closest to where you live.

- ☐ **Confirm which Spanish consulate covers your state of legal domicile** — you must apply through the consulate for the state where you are legally domiciled, not where you are temporarily staying
- ☐ **Confirm your visa type** — Non-Lucrative Visa (NLV) for retirees and passive income; Digital Nomad Visa for remote workers; other types as applicable
- ☐ **Review the current requirements on your specific consulate's website** — requirements vary by consulate and change periodically
- ☐ **Check your passport expiry date** — your passport must be valid well beyond your visa period. Renew now if needed
- ☐ **Check whether you need a second US passport** if your visa application timeline overlaps with planned international travel — your passport will be held by the consulate during processing
- ☐ **Confirm the consulate fee amount and accepted payment methods** — typically \$140–\$155 USD, often cash or money order only

→ For a full overview of visa types and the NLV process: — [Spanish Visa Process](#)

Step 2 Book Your Consulate Appointment

Appointment availability varies significantly by consulate. Some have waitlists of several months — book as early as possible. Your documents must be current and valid on the date of your appointment, not just when you gather them, so coordinate timing carefully.

- ☐ **Locate your consulate's appointment booking system** — most use an online portal
- ☐ **Book your appointment as early as possible** — waitlists at some consulates can run 3–6 months
- ☐ **Note the appointment date carefully** — all documents must be current and valid on that date
- ☐ **Confirm whether your consulate requires original documents**, certified copies or both
- ☐ **Confirm the consulate fee amount and accepted payment methods** before your appointment

Step 3 Gather Your Documents

The visa process is documentation-driven. Your application is evaluated based on whether your documents are complete, accurate and meet the stated requirements. Use the [Spanish Visa Documentation Checklist](#) to track each document through the Obtained, Apostilled and Translated stages.

- ☐ **Download and complete the current National Visa Application form** from your consulate's website — use the most current version
- ☐ **Download and complete [Form EX-01](#)** (non-lucrative residence authorization application)
- ☐ **Complete [Form 790-052](#)** (residence permit fee form)
- ☐ **Obtain 2 recent passport photos meeting Spanish consulate specifications** (biometric format, white background, 35x45mm)
- ☐ **Gather civil documents** — passport, birth certificate, marriage/divorce certificates if applicable

- ☐ **Obtain [FBI background check](#)** (or state-level — confirm with your consulate) — must be issued within 90 days of your appointment
- ☐ **Prepare financial proof documents** — bank statements, income proof meeting the 400% IPREM threshold
- ☐ **Obtain private health insurance certificate** meeting NLV requirements
- ☐ **Prepare proof of accommodation in Spain** for at least the first 3 months
- ☐ **Prepare notarized affidavit confirming professional background and commitment not to work in Spain** (confirm whether your consulate requires this)

→ For full document tracking with Obtained / Apostilled / Translated columns: [Spanish Visa Documentation Checklist](#)

Step 4 Apostilles & Translations

Several documents must carry an apostille to be legally recognized in Spain. This takes time to arrange — start early. All sworn translations must be completed by a traductor jurado accredited by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Allow 4–8 weeks minimum for apostille processing.

- ☐ **Identify which documents require an apostille** — at minimum: FBI background check, birth certificate, marriage certificate and divorce paperwork if applicable
- ☐ **Obtain apostilles from the Secretary of State in the issuing state** — or the US State Department for federal documents such as the FBI background check
- ☐ **Allow 4–8 weeks for apostille processing** — some states offer expedited services for an additional fee
- ☐ **Check whether your consulate requires Spanish translations of apostilled documents** — if so, translations must be done by a traductor jurado
- ☐ **Verify that all apostilled documents will still be within their validity window** on your appointment date
- ☐ **Bank statements and financial records do not require apostille but must be official** — stamped or signed by the bank, not standard online printouts

Step 5 Confirm Financial Proof

Demonstrating sufficient financial means is one of the most scrutinized parts of the NLV application. Requirements are based on the Spanish IPREM and vary slightly by consulate. The threshold for 2026 is approximately \$33,000+ per year for the primary applicant plus additional amounts per dependent.

- ☐ **Confirm the current financial threshold with your consulate** — typically 400% of the annual IPREM for the primary applicant plus 100% per additional dependent
- ☐ **Gather bank statements for the past 6–12 months showing sufficient funds** — must be official stamped or signed copies
- ☐ **Gather proof of passive income sources** — Social Security award letters, pension statements, investment account statements, rental income documentation

- ☐ **Ensure all financial documents are in English or translated into Spanish** by a traductor jurado if required
- ☐ **Consider a letter from your bank or financial advisor summarizing your financial position** — some consulates find this helpful

Step 6 Confirm Health Insurance

Private health insurance is a mandatory requirement for the NLV and one of the most scrutinized items in the application. The policy must provide full coverage in Spain with no copayments and no deductibles, from an insurer authorized to operate in Spain. Do not cancel your US health insurance until your Spanish coverage is confirmed and active.

- ☐ **Purchase a Spanish private health insurance policy meeting NLV requirements** — full Spain coverage, no copayments, no deductibles, no coverage gaps
- ☐ **Confirm the policy covers the full period of your visa** (typically one year minimum)
- ☐ **Obtain a certificate of coverage from your insurer in the format required by your consulate**
- ☐ **Verify the policy is from an insurer authorized to operate in Spain**
- ☐ **Do not cancel any existing US health insurance until your Spanish coverage is confirmed and active** — the two should overlap during the transition period

Step 7 Final Document Review

Before your appointment, do a complete review of your full document package. Small inconsistencies, missing items or incorrect formatting can lead to delays or additional requests. Make complete copies of everything before submitting — you will not get originals back immediately.

- ☐ **Verify every document is present and accounted for**
- ☐ **Check that no document has expired or will expire before your appointment date**
- ☐ **Confirm apostilles are attached to the correct documents and are themselves valid**

- ☐ **Organize documents in the order your consulate specifies** — many consulates provide a checklist
- ☐ **Make complete copies of your entire document package before submitting**
- ☐ **Prepare the consulate fee in the correct format** (cash, money order or as specified)
- ☐ **Confirm your appointment time, location and any specific instructions from the consulate**

Step 8 At Your Consulate Appointment

Arrive early — consulates are strict about appointment times. Bring your complete document package plus a full set of copies. Be prepared to answer questions about your plans, financial situation and accommodation in Spain. Your passport will be held for the duration of processing.

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- ☐ **Bring your complete document package plus a full copy set**
- ☐ **Bring the consulate fee in the correct format**
- ☐ **Be prepared to answer questions** about your plans, financial situation and accommodation in Spain
- ☐ **Submit your passport** — it will be held for the duration of processing
- ☐ **Get a receipt or confirmation of submission**

Step 9 After Your Appointment

Processing typically takes 4–8 weeks. By Spanish law a decision must be made within 90 days. Do not book one-way travel to Spain until your visa is approved. Monitor your consulate's communication channel and respond promptly to any requests for additional documents.

- ☐ **Note the expected processing timeline** — typically 4–8 weeks, by law no more than 90 days
- ☐ **Do not book one-way travel to Spain** until your visa is approved
- ☐ **Monitor your consulate's communication channel** — some notify by email, others require you to check status online
- ☐ **If additional documents are requested, respond promptly** — delays in responding extend your processing time
- ☐ **Once approved, confirm pickup procedures** — most consulates require in-person pickup, some allow courier

Step 10 Pick Up Your Visa & Travel to Spain

Once approved, pick up your passport with visa sticker from the consulate. Check the visa sticker carefully for errors before leaving. You must enter Spain within 365 days of the visa issue date. Bring your complete document package with you when you travel.

- ☐ **Pick up your passport with visa sticker from the consulate** — confirm pickup procedures in advance
- ☐ **Check the visa sticker carefully for errors** — name, passport number, dates — before leaving the consulate
- ☐ **Note your visa validity period** — you must enter Spain within 365 days of the visa issue date
- ☐ **Book travel to Spain**
- ☐ **Bring your complete document package with you when you travel** — you may need documents for entry or for your TIE appointment

Step 11 Apply for Your TIE Card

The visa gets you into Spain. The TIE (Tarjeta de Identidad de Extranjero) is your official residency card and is required for long-term legal stay. You must apply within 30 days of arriving in Spain. TIE appointments can be scarce — book as soon as possible after arrival.

- ☐ **Book a TIE appointment (cita previa) at your local Extranjería office** or National Police station as soon as possible after arriving — appointments can be scarce
- ☐ **Complete [Form EX-17](#)** (for NLV holders)
- ☐ **Gather required documents:** passport, visa, completed EX-17, passport photos, proof of address in Spain, proof of health insurance, proof of financial means
- ☐ **Pay the TIE fee via [Modelo 790 Código 012](#)** before your appointment
- ☐ **Attend your TIE appointment** and submit fingerprints
- ☐ **Note the expected processing time** — typically 4–8 weeks
- ☐ **Collect your TIE card when notified** — this is your official residency document going forward

→ For the full TIE process and what to expect:— [Spanish TIE Card](#)