

## Long Stay Visa Process September 2022

This is the account of the visa process for Justin and Karson on SV Halcyon, our 1976 Valiant 40. SV Halcyon is already located in French Polynesia so we will be flying in rather than sailing in.

We currently live in Kona, Hawaii. We both only have US Passports. We applied online for the long stay visas in June of 2020. We were working in the Caribbean at the time running a Term Charter Catamaran and weren't returning to the mainland until August. Karson's family lives in the Bay Area so we picked San Francisco as the best location for us to sit for our interview. The earliest we could get an appointment was September 13, 2022. We were able to book the same time slot as it asked how many people were traveling in our party.

Our appointment was through the VFS Global office. We arrived early and were surprised to find the setup to be more like the DMV than I guess what we imagined. There was a long desk with divisions between the associates, almost like bank tellers with small country flags at each station indicating what country they would be processing the visa for. We were given a number and waited in the seating area until we were called. We arrived early just to be safe and to avoid any issues and started our appointment early (once the woman in front of us was finished. We had the 9am appointment so we were able to watch the 8 am appointments go through their interviews.

The interview was all done in English. We first gave our printed out copy of the application we filled out online and signed a few documents. We wanted our Visas to go to Hawaii so we opted to have the VFS handle the packaging and shipping (additional fee).

We then went down the list of items from the Registration Receipt sheet.

- Travel Document- Physical passport (surrendered), copy of photo page and copies of all passport pages with stamps, visas etc.
- ID photograph- We opted to have our photos taken at the VFS (a service they provide for a fee) to ensure correct dimensions.
- Letter from employer or proof of business- Karson owns a home in Hawaii and rents out a studio. In Hawaii you have to pay taxes on home rental income and have a business license. She provided a copy of the business license, tax records of home ownership and a letter stating the income received from the rental. Justin is an independent yacht contractor and also provided his business license.
- Promise not to exercise any professional activity- We filled out affidavits we printed from online stating we would not work while in French Polynesia and then had the documents notarized.
- Proof of enough resources- We printed out three months of bank statements each as well as IRA savings accounts.
- Proof of accommodation- We gave a copy of the boat USCG registration, a copy of the boats

import tax being paid (as vessel is already located in Tahiti). We gave a copy of the marina contract where the boat is currently on the hard. We also provided a rough itinerary of the areas we will be cruising and the dates in those areas.

-Travel Health Insurance- We followed the advise of previous applicants and went with IMG Global Insurance. Our package is called the Patriot International Lite with zero deductible and a 50,000 USD limit. We made sure these figures were on the document handed in. (easy to purchase online and insurance card is given in PDF form right away). Because we are flying to Tahiti, we dated our insurance to start October 15, 2022.

Once all documents were collected, we did our photos as well as biometrics (fingerprints). We paid for the visa and got our tracking number for the FedEx package and we were done. The teller was efficient and nice and we came well organized and the whole process took less than an hour.

Cost breakdown for 2 Visas in USD:

Photos (6 received):	\$26.40
FedEx Carrier:	\$77.00
VFS service fee:	\$67.80
Visa fee at Interview:	\$200.00

Health Insurance plan for 2 people for 1 year:	\$921.62
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Processing Time:

Our appointment was on September 13, 2022. We knew it would take anywhere between a month and two months to get the visa and passport returned. We received an email that the Fedex parcels were picked up for shipping on October 21, 2022. Because they are dispatched from Washington DC, they did not arrive in Hawaii until October 24th, 2022 one day shy of 6 weeks since our appointment.

There was only one minor issue with the whole process. The reference number on the appointment letter for the Visa we received from the online application was not the same number that the VFS used. Due to this we were unable to track the status of our application. This made it a little nerve wracking while waiting the 6 weeks if we had provided the correct information. I only figured out what the Reference number for the VFS was while writing this that I looked at our receipt. The receipt for the payment has a section for each application and provides the reference number. **KEEP THIS RECEIPT AND THE REFERENCE NUMBER TO TRACK YOUR STATUS :)** The reference number looks like FUSF/XXXXXX/XXXX/XX. Most likely the first letters refer to the location where the visa was went. SF=San San Francisco.