

URUGUAYAN RESIDENCY PROCEEDINGS UPDATE – MARCH 2013

Introduction:

Figures released by the Uruguayan Immigration Office show that in 2012 over 5000 applications were filed for residence, but at the same time only 2400 applications were granted. This goes a long way to explaining why the time taken to obtain residence in Uruguay has shot up from 6 months only 2-3 years ago to around 24 months now.

Since 2008 the number of applications filed has increased from just over 2000 to over 5000 i.e. 150 %. At the same time the number of employees assigned to residency applications has increased by 0% and simultaneously those employees are examining applications in a lot more detail and objecting to even the most minor defects in documents filed. This notwithstanding several statements from the President himself to the effect that he wants to encourage people to come to Uruguay and speed up and simplify the residence process. This message has clearly not got through to the immigration office to date.

Changes in requirements in 2012:

1. Uruguay acceded to the Hague Convention on the use of an Apostille at the end of 2012 and accordingly legalization is no longer necessary for documents coming from other countries which are also members of the Convention. This can represent a significant saving in time and money for many applicants.
2. Police reports are now required for the applicants country of birth and any other country they have lived in during the previous 5 years. Without this document/s an application will not even be received. If in doubt as to whether a police report will be needed, get one to avoid any further delays.
3. For ladies over 30 you can still use Pap and Mammogram tests carried out abroad, as long as they are not more than 1 year old and a translation into Spanish is now often needed.

Changes in the filing process

1. Due to the large increase in applications being filed through the central office, rules have now been brought in that applications must be filed in the department where applicants declare they are residing. In the case of people living in Punta del Este for example this means they have to file through the Maldonado office.
2. The Immigration Office was giving applicants appointments for 3 to 4 months in the future to formally file for residence. This delay was causing inconvenience to those who needed a cédula (the Uruguayan ID card) for work purposes or to register their children in a school, obtain health insurance etc. So now the Immigration Office has a two stage filing process, as follows:

- i) You go in without any prior appointment and say you want to file for residence. As long as you have your police records (max 6 months old) and copies of passport and photos, you will be given an Application No and with this you can apply for an ID card. At this stage you change from being a tourist to being a “residente en tramite” – literally “resident applied for”.
NB. Married couples with children must have first registered their birth and marriage certificate which currently takes around one month.
- ii) You will be given an appointment to come back at a later date (currently 6 months) to file the remaining documents - proof of income, health cards, proof of domicile.

Nationals from countries requiring a visa to enter Uruguay

Almost 1 year ago the Immigration Office stopped allowing professionals such as lawyers from acting as sponsors for those applying for a visa to enter Uruguay. As a result it has become a lot more complicated for many people to get a visa. You either have to find a non professional Uruguayan to act as a sponsor or obtain it direct from a Uruguayan consulate, which can depend on a wide variety of criteria to be applied by the individual consulate.

Our experience is that this requirement is making life particularly hard for applicants from the Indian sub-continent and Middle East countries.

Conclusion:

Whilst applicants can expect a longer delay, if they have the basic documentation and the intent to reside there is no reason to suppose that they will not eventually get permanent resident status. In the meantime the change in practice means that it is now possible to at least file an application very shortly after arrival in the country and get an ID card.