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Moving to San Marino

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Introduction

Welcome to San Marino, a pocket-sized republic brimming with charm, nestled comfortably within the picturesque hills of Italy. This guide is your trusty sidekick as you embark on an exhilarating journey to move to this delightful microstate. But before you pack your bags and start humming "That's Amore," let's take a moment to introduce you to the world's oldest republic and perhaps its best-kept secret.

San Marino is a land of paradoxes: both ancient and modern, minute yet mighty. Measuring a mere 61 square kilometers, it is a sovereign state where history and culture are as abundant as the stunning vistas visible from its legendary peaks. Whether you're drawn here by its economic stability, its enviable high quality of life, or a spontaneous sense of adventure, you'll find San Marino offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live in a place where tradition and tranquility reign supreme.

Let's dispel a common misconception right out of the gate: this isn't your run-of-the-mill moving guide. If you're expecting a lengthy discourse on packing peanuts or universal relocation hacks, prepare for a pleasant surprise. Our spotlight shines squarely on San Marino, skipping the general mumbo jumbo and serving up relevance on a silver platter. With this comprehensive compendium of San Marinese specifics, we promise a rich seam of practical insight, peppered with a sprinkle of humor just to keep things lively!

One crucial piece of advice, which may well repeat itself throughout our pages, is the ever-changing nature of laws, regulations, and the sometimes-elusive cost of living. Alas, the winds of change blow often, and what might be true today in this guide might be updated in local decrees tomorrow. Consider this your gentle-but-firm reminder to consult official sources for the most current information – better safe than sorry, they say!

In addition to providing practical advice and necessary know-how, we also aim to entertain and enlighten. After all, moving doesn't have to be a series of logistics nightmares but rather a wonderfully enriching chapter in your life story. Here, we combine the nitty-gritty of visas, residency, and daily life with cultural insights and the quaint idiosyncrasies that make this country so deliciously unique.

So, prepare to embark on your adventure with a smile on your face and an arsenal of knowledge by your side. As we delve into the details of living in San Marino, may you find answers, inspiration, and a few good laughs along the way. Welcome to your new adventure in the Most Serene Republic!

CHAPTER ONE: Visa and Residency Requirements

So, you've decided the allure of the world's oldest republic, perched dramatically atop Mount Titano, is too strong to resist. Excellent choice! But before you start practicing your Italian greetings or deciding which of the Three Towers offers the best selfie background, let's talk about the small matter of actually being allowed to stay here long-term. Getting into San Marino is delightfully straightforward; sticking around for more than a holiday requires navigating a specific set of rules. Think of it as the velvet rope guarding entry to an exclusive, centuries-old club.

First things first, let's clear up a common point of confusion that often trips people up. San Marino, despite being enveloped entirely by Italy and having open borders with its neighbour, is not technically part of the Schengen Area, nor is it an EU member state. However, for practical purposes regarding short-term entry, it largely functions as if it were within Schengen due to its relationship with Italy. Tourists, including those from outside the typical visa-waiver countries for Schengen, generally don't need a *specific* San Marino entry visa. If you can legally enter Italy, you can wander into San Marino without flashing your passport at a Sammarinese border guard – mainly because there aren't any formal border checkpoints between the two countries. Easy peasy, right?

Hold your horses, though. That initial ease applies only to fleeting visits. If your grand plan involves more than just climbing the Guaita tower, sampling some Torta Tre Monti, and heading back to Rimini, you need official permission. The magic number here is thirty. Stays exceeding 30 consecutive days require you to regularize your presence. Forget this, and you might find your serene Sammarinese dream turning into a bureaucratic headache faster than you can say "Permesso di Soggiorno". This is where the real paperwork tango begins. And remember that little disclaimer we mentioned in the introduction? It applies doubly here. Immigration rules are like mountain weather; they can change quickly. Always, always double-check the latest requirements with the official San Marino authorities before making any concrete plans. Treat this chapter as your trusty map, but consult the local guides (i.e., official websites and offices) for the current trail conditions.

For those planning a stay longer than a month but perhaps not settling down permanently just yet, the first bureaucratic hurdle you'll encounter is the Stay Permit, or *Permesso di Soggiorno*. This is essentially San Marino's way of saying, "Okay, you can hang around for a bit longer than the average tourist, but let's keep it temporary for now." These permits are typically issued for periods ranging from three months up to a maximum of twelve months. Think of it as an extended guest pass to the republic.

The reasons for granting a *Permesso di Soggiorno* are quite varied. You might get one

if you're here for temporary work, perhaps a specific project or seasonal employment. It's also the route for students enrolled in Sammarinese educational institutions, individuals receiving medical treatment, or those involved in religious activities, international volunteering, or specific working holiday schemes. Family reunification, specifically for spouses and children joining someone already legally residing in San Marino (though often Residence permits are more relevant here long-term), or even formal cohabitation, can also be grounds for obtaining a temporary stay permit. Even if you just fell head over heels for the place during your holiday and want to extend your tourist stay significantly, this might be the avenue, though usually labeled for specific purposes.

A key feature of the *Permesso di Soggiorno* is its renewability. If your initial reason for staying persists – maybe your work contract gets extended, or your studies continue – you can generally apply to renew the permit. However, don't think of it as a backdoor to permanent residency; it remains fundamentally a temporary authorization. The body responsible for handling these permits is the Foreigners Office (*Ufficio Stranieri*) of the San Marino Gendarmerie. These are the folks you'll need to charm with your correctly filled-out forms and supporting documents. Prepare for some form-filling fun!

Within the temporary stay category, there's also something often referred to as an "ordinary permit". This typically allows a stay of up to 90 days and is notably renewable every 90 days. Interestingly, depending on the specific circumstances under which it's granted, this permit might even allow you to undertake some form of work. It's crucial to understand the exact conditions attached to any permit you receive, as permissions can vary. Don't assume you can start working just because you have a piece of paper saying you can stay; verify the specifics attached to your particular permit category.

Now, if your intentions toward San Marino are more serious – think long-term commitment rather than a temporary fling – you'll need to set your sights higher, aiming for a Residence Permit, or *Residenza*. This is the golden ticket for those looking to make San Marino their home base. Obtaining *Residenza* is a more involved process than getting a temporary stay permit, signifying a deeper integration into the republic. It's the difference between being a guest and becoming part of the extended Sammarinese family (albeit one that still needs the right papers).

The process for obtaining *Residenza* involves a higher level of scrutiny. While the Gendarmerie handles temporary permits, applications for residency, especially the more complex types like Elective or Tax-Advantaged Residency, often need the approval of the Congress of State – San Marino's executive body. This tells you it's a significant step, considered at the governmental level. You'll need a more comprehensive dossier of documents, typically including proof of identity (passport, naturally), proof of financial means sufficient to support yourself (and any dependents), confirmation of accommodation within San Marino, evidence of adequate

health insurance (a recurring theme, you'll notice), and usually a certificate confirming you don't have a troublesome criminal record back home or internationally.

Don't expect this to happen overnight. Patience is a virtue, particularly when dealing with bureaucracy anywhere, and San Marino is no exception. The official processing time for residency applications is generally estimated at around two to three months, but it's wise to factor in potential delays. Start the process well in advance of when you actually need the residency to be active. Key points of contact for inquiries usually include the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Gendarmerie's Foreign Office – keep their email addresses handy (info@esteri.sm and stranieri.gendarmeria@pa.sm respectively, but verify these too!).

Let's delve into the different flavours of *Residenza*, because one size certainly does not fit all. The most common type, perhaps, is **Registered Residence (Residenza Effettiva)**. This is generally granted based on ties to the republic or specific contributions. The classic route is through family reunification – if you're the spouse or dependent child of a San Marino citizen, this is likely your path. It can also be granted if you're establishing a specific type of business deemed beneficial to the Sammarinese economy, or if you hold a significant management position within a Sammarinese company or public institution. "Registered" implies being fully on the books, integrated into the social security system (where applicable), and essentially living as a standard resident.

Then we have the path favoured by those with deeper pockets: **Elective Residence (Residenza Elettiva)**. This is designed for foreign nationals who wish to establish residency without necessarily working in San Marino, primarily through making a substantial investment. Think of it as buying your way into serenity, though it's a bit more nuanced than that. You have two main options here. The first involves purchasing real estate within San Marino with a value of at least €500,000. That's half a million Euros for a slice of Sammarinese paradise. The second option requires making a ten-year, non-interest-bearing deposit of at least €600,000 into Sammarinese state bonds or a specially designated fund managed by San Marino authorities. Essentially, you're giving the state a hefty, interest-free loan for a decade.

Elective residency comes with strings attached, naturally. You absolutely *must* have comprehensive private health insurance that covers all potential risks within the territory. You cannot take up employment in the public sector, nor can you claim any state benefits or social assistance. You're expected to be financially self-sufficient beyond the initial investment. There are also fees involved: a non-refundable application fee of around €1,000 just to be considered, and if you choose the bond investment route, a further tax of €10,000 is levied once the residency is granted. Fancy bringing the family? You can extend the residency to your spouse, dependent children under 25, and children with disabilities, but it'll cost you an extra €20,000 per person. After successfully maintaining elective residency for ten years, you typically

gain the right to convert it into the more standard Registered Residence. It's a significant financial commitment, a clear signal that San Marino reserves this route for those who can contribute significantly without needing local employment.

Another intriguing option, particularly for those generating income outside the republic, is the **Atypical Residence with Facilitated Tax Regime**. This targets individuals who have never previously been tax residents in San Marino and derive their income primarily from foreign sources. Like the Elective route, it mandates private health insurance and bars you from public sector jobs or receiving state contributions. The major draw here is the tax treatment: you pay a substitute tax of just 7% on all your foreign-sourced income. There's a floor to this, however – the minimum annual tax payment is €10,000, and it's capped at a maximum of €100,000 per year, regardless of how high your foreign income might be. This residency status is granted for a maximum duration of 15 years. Similar to Elective Residency, after maintaining this status for 10 years, you can usually apply to convert it to Registered Residence. It's a clear attempt to attract internationally mobile high-net-worth individuals seeking a tax-efficient base.

San Marino hasn't forgotten about retirees either, offering an **Atypical Residence for Pensioners**. This is aimed specifically at individuals receiving pensions from private sector employment (not state pensions) who are citizens of an EU country, Switzerland, or other specifically authorised countries. To qualify, you need to demonstrate a minimum annual gross pension income of at least €50,000, *or* prove you possess movable assets (like savings and investments, not property) worth at least €300,000. There's a slightly different threshold for former officials of international bodies, requiring an annual income of €100,000. The key benefit? Your pension income is taxed at a very favourable flat rate of 6%. If you meet the higher income threshold (€100k+), the rate drops even further to 3%. As with other atypical routes, private health insurance covering all risks is mandatory. San Marino doesn't want retirees becoming a burden on the state healthcare system without having contributed throughout their working lives. To manage influx, there's an annual cap on these permits – currently set at a maximum of 100 grants per year, adding a touch of exclusivity.

For the entrepreneurial spirits among you, there's the **Residence for Economic Reasons**, tailor-made for foreign citizens looking to start or take over a business in San Marino. This isn't just about having a great business idea; it comes with concrete requirements. You'll typically need to hold at least 51% of the company shares. Critically, your new venture must create local employment: you're usually required to hire between one and three employees who are already resident in San Marino, with the exact number depending on the business sector. There's also a financial commitment: you need to make a secured bank deposit starting at €75,000. This requirement increases to €150,000 within the first two years of operation. However, this deposit can potentially be substituted by purchasing property of equivalent value

(which would then have a lien placed on it) or by providing a suitable bank or insurance guarantee. On top of this, there's an annual contribution of €350 per capita (for yourself and any dependents) towards healthcare and welfare services. This residency also demands a significant physical commitment: you must prove you are physically present in San Marino for at least 270 days per year. After ten years of successfully running your business and maintaining residency, this pathway can lead to permanent residency. Like the pensioner route, there's an annual limit, currently capped at 50 such permits per year, ensuring a controlled intake of new entrepreneurs.

Now, let's address the elephant in the room, or rather, the tiny, ancient republican elephant: **Citizenship (Naturalisation)**. If your ultimate dream is to hold a Sammarinese passport, brace yourself. Acquiring citizenship in San Marino is, quite frankly, exceptionally difficult and a very lengthy process. It's renowned as one of the hardest citizenships to obtain in the world. The standard requirement is a staggering **thirty years** of continuous, uninterrupted registered residence in the Republic. Yes, you read that right – three decades. Settle in, learn the language, become part of the community, and maybe, just maybe, after thirty years, you can apply.

There is a slight fast track if you marry a San Marino citizen. In this case, the residency requirement is halved, but it's still a significant fifteen years of continuous registered residence post-marriage. Even then, it's not automatic. Crucially, San Marino generally does not permit dual citizenship. To become a citizen through naturalisation, you will almost certainly be required to formally renounce any previous citizenships you hold. This is a major life decision and not one to be taken lightly. Furthermore, you'll need squeaky-clean criminal records, both within San Marino and internationally. Any significant convictions are likely to disqualify you immediately. The final decision rests with the Grand and General Council, San Marino's parliament, which must approve the naturalisation application by a two-thirds majority vote. It's a high bar, designed to preserve the unique identity and character of this ancient republic. Citizenship is typically reserved for those born to Sammarinese parents (*jus sanguinis*) or, in specific documented cases, those born within the territory under particular circumstances, though descent is the primary principle.

So, how do you actually kickstart one of these residency application processes? As mentioned, the specific documents needed will vary depending on the type of residency you're applying for. However, the core requirements usually revolve around proving who you are (valid passport), showing you can support yourself financially (bank statements, proof of income/investment), demonstrating you have somewhere to live (rental agreement or property deed), certifying you have appropriate health cover (private insurance certificate for certain categories), and providing evidence of good character (criminal record checks).

Gathering these documents can sometimes feel like a scavenger hunt, especially if

they need to be officially translated into Italian and potentially apostilled or legalized, depending on your country of origin. Start early, be meticulous, and don't hesitate to seek clarification from the relevant Sammarinese authorities – the Department of Foreign Affairs or the Gendarmerie's Foreign Office are your primary ports of call. Using a local relocation specialist or legal advisor familiar with San Marino's specific procedures can also be incredibly helpful, albeit an additional expense. They can guide you through the labyrinthine requirements and potentially smooth out bumps along the way. Expect bureaucracy, prepare for patience, and perhaps practice some deep breathing exercises.

Remember, the path you choose – temporary stay, registered residence, elective luxury, tax-advantaged base, pensioner paradise, or entrepreneurial endeavour – will shape your life in San Marino. Each has its own set of requirements, benefits, and limitations. Choose wisely based on your circumstances, resources, and long-term goals. And one last time, because it bears repeating: rules change, fees fluctuate, requirements evolve. The information here provides a solid overview based on current understanding, but the official websites and direct communication with San Marino's governmental departments are your definitive sources. Good luck navigating the gateway to the Most Serene Republic!

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