Russian Visa

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# Russian Visa

Travelling to Russia is an amazing experience, no wonder that more and more tourists from all over the world plan to spend their vacations in this country. There are plenty of interesting routes in Russia to follow and places to visit. However, you have to go through some formalities before arriving. The most important one is getting Russian visa, which allows you to cross the border and enter the country.

Russian visa for foreigners is a prerequisite of crossing the border and entry to Russian Federation. There are several countries Russia has special agreements with, but their number is very small and they are mostly neighbor countries. Thus, everyone who wants to visit Russia needs to obtain visa for Russia. To get visa foreigners have to apply Russian Consulate or use services of accredited organizations which can arrange the necessary formalities on behalf of their clients. Both ways of getting visa for Russia are legal and approved by Russian officials. The choice depends on the amount of time and patience that you have in stock. Before making the final decision it’s useful to know the detailed information about both ways of visa application as there are some niceties in this process.

# Types of visa to Russia

The type of visa depends on the goal of your visit, most popular are work visa and tourist visa. The time of stay and the number of entries depend on visa type. Anyway, your total visit cannot last longer than 90 days. Before planning your visit to Russia it is better to make up your mind what you are planning to do and for how long so as to choose the right visa type and apply for it.

In the table below you can find visa types, duration and number of entries possible.

| **Visa type** | **Number of entries** | **Validation period** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Business visa | Single entry, Double entry, Multivisa  | From 3 months to 1 year |
| Tourist visa | Single entry, Double entry | 30 days |
| Private visa | Single entry, Double entry | Up to 3 months |
| Student | Multivisa | Depends on learning period |
| Work | Multivisa | Depends on contract period |
| Transit | Double entry | 3 days |

### Business visa

Business visa is issued in case the aim of visit are negotiations, getting consultations, conclusions of a contract, opening of subsidiaries or agencies, setting up the business on the territory of Russian Federation, setup and installation of equipment or in case the foreigner is a pilot or flight attendant of airplanes or driver. For those who want to improve their skills in Russian educational centers such type of visa can also be issued. Business visa can be single, double or multiple entry and is given for the period from 3 months to 1 year.



### Tourist visa

This is the most popular visa type to Russia. It allows foreign tourists to travel in Russia up to 30 days. Usually this period is enough to feel the atmosphere of Russian hospitality and enjoy the sightseeing of most beautiful places. Foreigners usually include in their routes Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Golden ring towns and northern islands. Sometimes they also head to Ural and mountains for extreme adventures and natural beauty of these places. Application of tourist visa to Russia involves collecting the number of documents and applying in accredited visa center or Russian Consulate. Tourist visa is issued for maximum of 30 days. Unfortunately if this time is not enough for your stay you have to leave the country anyway and apply for new Russian visa. The prolongation of visa is possible in very rare cases, which will be described below.

### Private visa

Private visa is intended for foreigners who want to visit their relatives or friends living in Russia. It is issued on the basis of letter of invitation from the accommodating person or organization, visa application form and paid visa fee. The letter of application is a special document filled by the accommodating person or organization and registered in Federal Migration Service.

#### Russian Visa invitation letter

One of the options for tourists who want to travel on their own is to get Russian visa invitation letter. It’s an official paper you get from the Russian citizen, who takes a responsibility for you in Russia. It is composed in a certain form and includes information about the invited person, goal of visit, name of the hosting person or organization, address and travelling route. Together with the invitation letter host has to provide the list of financial documents to confirm he is capable of caring the foreign guest. The letter should be registered and approved in Office of Federal Migration Service in Russia and sent to the foreign guest. Valid is only the original document, so the host usually sends it by post or courier service.

Invitation letter for Russian visa can be issued both by private person and accredited by Federal Migration Service organization.

Foreigner can be invited by any Russian citizen who reached the age of majority and officially registered in Russian Federation. For making the invitation letter the person has to apply to local Federal Migration Service department with passport or any other document confirming the identity and also provide the following list of necessary documents:

* Copy of passport of the foreigner who is being invited.
* Statement of the request for issuance of an invitation for a private (guest) visa.
* Guarantee letter confirming the consent of an individual to provide material and medical support, accommodation for the invited foreign citizen and be liable for the forced removal (deportation) of the foreign citizen in case of violation of the Russian legislation.
* An income statement (to confirm the material guarantees).
* Paid the state fee for processing the application for issuance of an invitation.
* In the case of an invitation from a citizen of the list of migration-prone countries, the inviting party will also have to pass an interview with the Federal Migration Service officials.

Territory Federal Migration Servise departments period of issuing the letter of invitation can vary, but according to Russian legislation it cannot exceed the period of 30 days counting from acceptance of the proper documents.

The legislation of the Russian Federation allows registration of private invitations by legal entity, if for some reason a foreign citizen requires private visa, but his relatives or friends living in Russia have no time or opportunity (citizenship, permanent residence, etc.) to engage in an invitation formalities in Russia. The invitation is also issued on the letterhead of the Federal Migration Service appropriate public authority at the place of accreditation of the host company. Turnaround time is much faster than in the territorial offices of the Federal Migration Service, and is only 12 working days (17 calendar) or 7 days (11 calendar days) at an accelerated version of the invitation. The validity of the passport of the invitee must be longer than the deadline for alleged visa for at least 180 days (6 months).



### Student visa

To obtain a student visa you need an invitation from the Russian educational institution to a foreign citizen, where he passed an entrance test or by a diplomatic or consular representation of Russia. Invitation to the study has to be drawn up at the Foreign Ministry of Russia. Typically, a student visa is issued for 3 months, but if necessary it can be extended by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for a period of 1 year.

Arriving in Russia, a foreign student must sign a training contract and provide his passport for registration at the Migration Service. All documents must be filed within 72 hours from the time of the entry into the Russian Federation. Passport with the registration seal of the student will be able to in the international department of the institution.

### Work visa

Work Visa in Russia - a document issued by the consular office of the Russian Federation and allowing a stay of a foreign citizen in the Russian Federation for the purpose of labor or entrepreneurial activity.

Unlike a business visa, work visa in Russia allows not only repeatedly enter and leave, but also allows you to stay at the territory of the Russian Federation for the duration of the visa.

Also at the end of the period of validity, a work visa extension is possible without going abroad, it is just necessary to issue a new work permit.

Making a work visa may only arrange accredited company, which has a current "permit to employ foreign labor force" or other document allowing to attract workers from countries with visa regime.

Work visa is received it in two stages: the initial entry into Russia for short-term working visa (90 days), and the arrival of the extension of a work visa before the end of the work permit.

Making work visas for foreigners is possible only after the company- employer will issue a document allowing a foreign national to work in Russia, it may be a work permit, accreditation card of the mission or any other document which is the basis for the issuance of a visa to a foreign citizen working in Russia.

Thus, the term "working visa in Russia" refers to a set of documents, consisting of:

* work permit in Russia;
* multiple work visa;
* migration registration until the expiry of the work permit.

If foreign citizen wants to stay in Russia with his family, each family member (spouse, son or daughter) is issued a work visa in Russia for the same period, without a work permit. In this case, each member of the family receives a multiple-entry visa for the purpose of the trip "accompanying family member". Making work visas for members of the family of a foreign worker occurs only in the presence of the documents confirming kinship (birth certificate or marriage certificate).

### Transit visa

This type of visa is issued to foreigners on the basis of bus, train and plane tickets, hotels and bookings with a valid visa to a third country. As a rule, a transit visa is exposed for the time necessary to a foreign citizen for transportation on a bus, train or plane, as well as for border crossing along the route leading to the final destination. There are ordinary, official, diplomatic, as well as single, double and multiple transit visas. Recently issued only in exceptional cases and only with the permission of the Russian Foreign Ministry. To place an ordinary transit visa you must provide to a consulate a passport with a valid visa to the third country passport, completed application form, three photos, tickets, which contains the date of departure from Russia, and health insurance. The procedure for registration of a transit visa may take from several hours to 15 days.

If you have connecting flights in Russia and the change takes place within 24 hours without leaving the international section of the airport, you do not need a visa. If you need to move to another airport or it exceeds 24 hours, you will need a transit visa. Usually a transit visa is issued for 3 days, the price of its low. However, if the transit is carried by train or by car, for example, the validity of the visa can be longer. For example, to travel by train from Moscow to St Petersburg, you may be issued a visa on day 1, in Sochi and Novorossiysk - 3 days in Zabaykalsk - for 5 days, to Nakhodka for 8 days. When traveling by car, you will get a visa for a period, calculated as follows: the whole range of your trip will be divided into 500 km. So, if you need to travel 3,000 km, for example, you can get a visa for 6 days. Transit visa can not be issued for a period exceeding 10 days. Normally, to apply for a transit visa, it is sufficient to produce a visa to the destination country and copies of travel documents (tickets through Russia). If you need a visa with a longer validity period than calculated here, you may have to consider a tourist or business visa.

## Russian visa prolongation

Extension of visa in Russia is generally not possible, but in some exceptional cases, it can be done.

Temporary visa with a validity of 4 months shall be issued a foreign national who is authorized to enter the Russian Federation. This visa may be extended at the territorial body of the Federal Migration Service at the place of migration registration. Provided that the foreign national is on the territory of Russia is not more than 90 days per period of 180 days, a temporary visa may be extended for up to 10 days.

Existing visa can also be extended if there is a need of treatment of a foreign citizen or death of a close relative of a foreign citizen in Russia. This rule also applies to cases of emergency. Temporary visa in this case is extended for a period equal to the time required for taking the described measures and after that reckons for exit from Russia.

Located on the territory of the Russian foreign citizen on a yearly multiple employment or educational visa can continuously reside in the Russian Federation for the duration of their action.

To extend the period within the territory of Russia, a foreign national must provide an application for extension to the bodies of the migration service. In addition to the statements, these authorities are also required to submit a petition, drawn up by the inviting party, two photos (3 cm. X 4 cm.), the detachable part of the blank notification and receipt of payment of state fees. Depending on the type of the visa fee for the extension of the visa is currently 300 to 400 rubles, while on the basis of existing international treaties, some categories of foreign nationals do not pay this fee. In particular, it concerns the collection of the citizens of the European Union. Applications for extension of visa shall be considered within 20 days.

## Documents for Russian Visa

According to official information from Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the list of documents is the following:

1. Current international passport, issued in the name of visa applier. It should have at least 2 blank pages and be valid for 6 months after desired visa is expired. In case of visas for loner periods – work or student, the period of validation must be 1,5 year from the visa opening date.
2. Completed russian visa application form signed by the Applicant only. You can fill forms on your computer.
3. One photo 35 x 45 mm, color or black and white, without your head covered (there is an exception if photo in your passport was also done in headdress)
4. Money Order or Certified Bank Check made out to the Russian Consulate for visa processing.
5. For long time visas the certificate of absence of HIV is required.

This is the list of main documents, required for visa to Russia. Additional documents may be required depending on type of visa applied for. For tourist visa you also have to provide the invitation from a host person or organization. Please note that tickets and hotel booking confirmation are seen as insufficient in this case.

## Russian Visa application

Russian tourist visa application is not too difficult, but involves several obligatory steps.

1. Choose type of visa you are applying for.
2. Find the individual host or russian tourist visa application centre which will make an invitation for you.
3. Get an original of invitation letter and fill Russian tourist visa application form.
4. Collect a set of documents, pay for visa processing and apply for visa in Russian consulate.
5. Get the answer.

Standard procedure for opening a Russian visa is to collect the necessary documentation and transfer it to the Russian foreign office or Visa Application Centre. Visa application is considered for 7-10 days, in some cases, the procedure takes several weeks. If a trip to Russia is urgent, for a fee, you can use the service of an urgent issue entrance permits. After a short wait you can visit the consulate or the center for the second time and take your passport.

When crossing the Russian border every foreign citizen (except for Belarusian citizens) is issued a migration card. Most border crossings cards are filled in automatically after scanning the foreigner’s passport. Independently travellers need to fill in a migration card when entering the Russian by train.The migration card is the basis for registration at the place of residence of a foreign citizen. The registration shall be made within 7 working days from the date of entry of the traveller into the territory of the Russian Federation. At the same time responsible for the foreigner registration is a receiving party (person or entity).

It’s also important to remember that tickets and booking confirmation from the hotel are not sufficient to apply for Russian tourist visa. According to rules there always should be a person or organization who invites foreigner and takes a responsibility for his stay in Russia. Usually the easiest way is to use the services of Russian visa application centre or individual host who provide assistance in Russian visa application. It’s not very expensive, but much easier and more comfortable. Besides, it’s a guaranteed way to get Russian visa.

**Who issues Russian visas**

Almost all over the world visas to enter the country are issued in the consulate of the country of entry, located on the territory of other countries. However, in recent years to improve the quality of service for citizens who wish to obtain visa permits to visit other countries consulates and embassies open the so-called visa centers that specialize exclusively in the provision of administrative services to visa appliers.

The function of such visa centers include:

* receiving documents from visitors;
* processing and transmission of documents to the competent consular structure for decision-making to issue a visa or refuse;
* issuing permits and visa documents for visitors.

In addition, along with government agencies, which consider the documents and provide related administrative services, at embassies and consulates often operate private companies that specialize in processing visa documents.Such private companies are not included in the structure of the consulate or embassy. They are based on private companies. Of course, these services are available for a fee, and customers-visa applicants should always be interested in advance in price of such services. Thus, a foreigner, a citizen of the State, not covered by the special visa regime with the Russian Federation, to get the visa permission to visit Russia needs to contact one of the instances:

* Consulate at the Russian Embassy in the country of nationality (you can also contact the Consulate of the Russian Embassy in the country where the foreigner has a residence permit);
* Visa Center, which is co-founder, including the Embassy of the Russian Federation (this information can be found at the visa application center); rules determining territoriality consulate for treatment are the same: the applicant's country of citizenship or country that issued to the applicant a residence permit;
* private institution offering commercial services to support citizens in obtaining visas to the Russian Federation (documenting, filing documents and organization of the urgent issuance of visa).

## The refusal to issue visa

Those foreign nationals who want to apply for a visa to enter Russia receive it not in all cases. Reasons for refusal to issue Russian visas depend on many factors. The Russian consulate may refuse to issue a visa in the following cases:

* because of an incomplete set of documents
* because of incorrectly completed questionnaires
* because of the existence of the ban on entry into the Russian Federation

Incomplete documents - the most common reason for denial of a visa. Also refuse to issue a visa may be connected with the wrong application form for a visa. In that case, if the foreign national is prohibited from entry into the Russian Federation, the Russian embassy or consular office will deny a visa.

*The refusal to issue a visa on the grounds of an incomplete set of documents*

This is possible if the foreign citizen submits to the Russian embassy or consulate not all the requested documents. In order to minimize the risk of such a situation, you must first look at the list of documents required to obtain a Russian visa. This list may vary depending on the type of visa, which is determined by the purpose of his visit to Russia.

For a list of all the necessary documents to obtain a visa, you can call the Consular Section by phone or clarify at the Embassy's website.

*The refusal to issue a visa due to incorrectly completed questionnaires*

Refusal in issuing visa to Russia is possible when the application form for a visa in it have information that differs from the information specified in the invitation. In order to avoid such a situation, the foreign national must be very careful when completing the questionnaire.

The most common errors are identified when completing the questionnaire such items:

* Purpose of the trip (it should be the same as the stated purpose of the trip, recorded in the invitation to Russia). In the case of a foreigner draws a tourist or business visa to attend in Russia his relatives or friends he has to specify the purpose of the trip in the questionnaire same as in his invitation (tourism or business). If you specify in the application purpose of the trip, which is different from the recorded in the invitation, the visa will be denied.
* the name of the host organization (the cause of this common mistake lies in the fact that foreigners indicate the data of the organization, which is connected with the purpose of their journey, and not that which has issued an invitation for them). To avoid this, when filling out the questionnaire you should consult with an invitation and rewrite in the form the name of the company that has issued the invitation. If the information about the inviting party in the application form and the invitation is different, a visa to a foreign citizen will not be given.
* place of residence (it must coincide with the place of residence which is specified in the invitation). For example, if a foreign citizen fills out a questionnaire for a tourist visa he needs to write in the form the name of the hotel and its address being booked for his stay (and you should be ready to provide the booking confirmation document). When filling out the questionnaire for a business or private visa it’s necessary to fill out the column "place of residence" guided only by the list of those cities, which are specified in the invitation. If the place of residence will be indicated in the village, which is not mentioned in the invitation, it may cause the refusal to issue a visa.

*The refusal to issue a visa because of a ban on entry to the Russian Federation*

A foreigner will be denied in issuing visa if his entry to the Russian Federation is prohibited. Such a ban may appear due to violation by foreign citizen of the Russian Federation legislation in his previous visit to Russia.

The reasons for the refusal to give a visa to enter Russia may be:

* the presence of unpaid fines;
* deportation from the Russian Federation;
* violation of rules of stay of foreigners on the territory of Russia in previous visits.

The fact that he was refused from entry to Russia a foreign citizen can find out at the stage of registration of the invitation to the Russian Federation by the inviting party. For example, when you make a business or private invitations to invite foreigners data is checked by employees of the Federal Migration Service, because these invitations are issued by FMS. When making a tourist invitation information on invited foreign citizen is checked in the consulate or embassy of the Russian Federation, where he applied for a visa. If this citizen entering the territory of the Russian Federation is prohibited he will be refused a visa issuance, despite the invitation.

*The reason for the refusal of a visa can also depend on international political situation:*

* military operations in the country in which he lives;
* epidemy in the country of residence of the foreigner who applied for a visa;
* severance of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the country of citizenship of the applicant for a visa.

Hope this information help you and you enjoy your travelling to Russia.