

USA AND RUSSIA ENTER HISTORIC VISA AGREEMENT



The Embassy of the United States, located in Moscow, has announced a historic agreement on Visas for citizens traveling between the two countries. The agreement went into effect on the 9th of September 2012.

This new agreement makes travel between the two countries easier and helps strengthen the ties between the two nations. The agreement is expected to be very beneficial to both tourists and business travelers, who make up the vast majority of all travel between Russia and the United States of America. Both countries are pleased at these changes to visa procedures and the good will the agreement displays and exhibits.

Starting last Sunday travelers from either country for business or tourism can request and receive visas that will be valid for multiple entries over a period of thirty-six months. While this is the major benefit to travelers from the new agreement, there are other changes that help simplify visa procedures.

These changes are expected to shorten processing time for visas in both directions and for travelers from both countries. As part of the agreement, the fee normally charged by the United States to Russians requesting a visa for tourist or business visits, will be reduced from \$100 to \$20. Fees for other types of visa, such as students, workers or media representatives will remain the same, at \$160 at the time of application.

One outstanding change brought about with this agreement is to make the multiple visit, three year validity visa the normal type of visa for citizens of both the United States of America and the Russian Federation. In the past a formal invitation was required to obtain either the business or tourist visa but this will no longer be required.

American citizens are still required to have advance arrangements for lodging made, and proof of such submitted with a registered tour operator. Both countries have pledged and committed to approve all visas within fifteen calendar days, or less.

For American citizens the restriction, previously enforced, that limited any stays in Russia to 90 days within any six month period, or one hundred eighty days, is changed to allow continual presence in the country for up to six months. The same change is now reciprocally made for Russian citizens coming to the United States.

U.S. travelers will be very happy to know that exit visas are no longer necessary in the case where a passport is lost while traveling or staying in any part of the Russian Federation. Russian visitors to the United States of America are already allowed to depart the United States without an exit visa. Citizens of either country currently within the other country must still adhere to current visa regulations that are, or were, in force before the effective date of this new agreement.

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