

Visa-free travel has arrived for citizens of Serbia

Beginning on 19 December 2009, citizens of Serbia no longer need to be in possession of a visa to travel to the 25 EU member states and 3 non-EU countries that are part of the Schengen area. Serbian citizens, who hold **a biometric passport** can now travel freely for **short-term trips up to 90 days** every six months (180 days) to these countries, be it for business, study or tourism purposes.

To which countries can you now travel without a visa?

The new rules apply to all EU member states except the UK and Ireland, as well as to Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

Why are the UK and Ireland excluded?

The UK and Ireland remain outside the Schengen area and as such the new rules do not apply to them. For information on entry requirements to these two countries for citizens of Serbia, please contact the British or Irish Visa Offices.

Do the new rules apply to residents of Kosovo?

Since the visa liberalisation dialogue between Serbia and the European Commission did not cover the territory of Kosovo¹, the new rules will not apply to holders of biometric passports issued by the Coordination Directorate of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia in Belgrade. Holders of these passports need to have a valid visa for travelling to the Schengen area.

List of countries that do not require visas: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden,

How do I know if my passport is biometric?

Biometric passports (red cover) have been issued in Serbia since July 2008. Check whether your passport has this symbol **[include photo]** on the front.

If it does, it is biometric and you will be able to travel on it without a visa to the countries in question.

How do I obtain a biometric passport if I don't already have one?

If you do not yet have a biometric passport, you will need to obtain a new one from the Serbian passport issuing authorities in order to be able to travel to the countries concerned without a visa.

Can I still travel on my old non-biometric passport?

As non-biometric passports (blue passports) do not qualify for visa free travel, you will not be able to travel with them without visa to the Schengen area. For further information please contact your country's authorities or the Consular representations of the Schengen countries.

¹ Under UNSCR 1244/99

How long can travellers from Serbia stay in the Schengen area under the new rules?

Under the new rules, Serbian passport holders can remain in the Schengen area (all EU Member States except the UK and Ireland and the countries associated to the Schengen area: Switzerland, Norway and Iceland) for a **maximum period of 90 days** from the date of entry within a period of 180 days (6 months). The period starts when you enter the territory for the first time within the 180 days period. For example, if you first enter the Schengen area on 1st January, the next six month period starts on 1st July. If you often travel to the Schengen area you are responsible for counting what the remaining number of days is within the six month period.

Hence, you may undertake several short term trips, provided that their duration does not exceed 90 days in total within a 6 months period (180 days).

Can I live and work in Schengen countries under the new rules?

The new rules apply to travel only. They do not grant citizens of Serbia the right to reside for more than 3 months or take up employment in the countries covered.

Please note that if you intend to stay longer to take up an employment or undertake studies exceeding 90 days, you must apply for a long term visa or residence permit at the Embassy or Consulate of the country which is your destination **before** undertaking your travel. Working or living in the Schengen area without the relevant national residence or working permit is illegal.

Are there any other requirements for entry into the countries concerned?

There are no extra financial or administrative requirements for biometric passport holders to fulfil in order to travel freely to the Schengen countries. However, the normal entry conditions for all third country nationals travelling to the Schengen area apply. At the border, travellers can be asked to demonstrate the means of their travel and show means of subsistence during their stay in the Schengen area. Travellers can also be asked to specify the place they will stay (e.g. to show a hotel reservation or address at which they will be staying). In addition, the persons shall not be considered to be a threat to public order, public health or internal security and they shall not be persons for whom an alert has been issued for the purpose of refusing entry. The Member State border authorities have the right to refuse entry if these requirements are not met and have the final decision on entry (Article 5 of the Schengen Convention).

Recommendations to Travellers Travel with reliable travel agencies, check the website <http://www.yuta.rs>

- Check if you need to obtain health insurance and under which conditions (document/confirmation from the main health office) Republicki zavod za zdravstvenu zastitu <http://www.rzzo.sr.gov.yu>. Taking out health insurance is recommended.
- If driving to the Schengen area, visitors must have a valid international driving license and international car insurance (green card). For more information, including EU traffic regulations, consult the website of the Auto Moto Savez Srbije www.amss.rs
- If travelling under private arrangements, check the address, town, telephone and name of hotel or other accommodation in the Schengen countries on an Internet browser
- Please note that the European emergency number is 112 and is applicable in all EU countries (for police, ambulance or the fire department).