Applying for a UK visa in Russia
Contents

Introduction

When do I apply?

Where do I apply?

How do I apply – A step by step process

Supporting documents

How do I expedite my application

What if I need my passport to travel?

Txt Message (SMS) Service

Extra services

VIP premium lounge, Moscow
This newsletter is intended to provide a general overview of the current UK visa application process in Russia.

At present, VFS Global is working in partnership with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and together they operate five Visa Application Centres in Russia, where Russian citizens and those with residence in Russia can submit their UK visa applications.

We work closely with VFS and the UKBA, and we have had very positive experiences with the services which they have provided to date. Application volumes have increased significantly this year, and VFS continue to maintain excellent performance levels within their published standards. However, high volumes of applications, security clearance procedures and resourcing issues can, on rare occasions, result in minor delays with some applications.

VFS are dedicated to the maintenance of a high standard, and strive to ensure customer satisfaction on every visa. PwC aims to assist VFS to ensure that they achieve this goal, by assisting applicants with all aspects of their applications prior to submission with the UKBA and VFS.

This newsletter aims to highlight the steps involved in the visa application process in Russia. There are many different application routes, depending on each individual’s circumstances. In particular, there are premium services available, where individuals can pay a fee to expedite the processing of their visa application. This newsletter also includes information regarding the supporting documents which are required for standard visa applications from Russia.

Please note that this is a general overview of the current processes and rules. However, Governments are at liberty to alter requirements, processes and timeframes at any time – often at short notice. As such, this should be treated as a general guide and does not replace advice given in respect of specific cases. We would advise you to visit the British Embassy’s website to confirm the current process prior to starting any application.
### When do I apply?

Different timelines are applicable according to the type of visa which has been applied for.

If you have applied for a visa and a Certificate of Sponsorship is required, you can apply for your visa up to three months in advance of your intended date of travel to the United Kingdom.

However, there is no such requirement for other visas such as Business or General Visitor visas.

### Where do I apply?

There are visa application centres in the following locations in Russia:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Working Hours</th>
<th>Document Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moscow</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolshoy Savvinskiy Pereulok 12, Building 18, 119435</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 09:00 - 16:00</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 12:15 - 18:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saint Petersburg</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozernoy pereulok 7, 1st floor, 191014</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 08:00 - 15:00</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 15:15 - 17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ekaterinburg</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gogol St. 36, 10th floor, Office 1002, 620075</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 08:00 - 15:00</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 15:15 - 17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rostov-on-Don</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialisticheskaya St.74, 13th floor, Office 1308, 344002</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 08:00 - 15:00</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 08:00 - 15:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novosibirsk</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla Markska Prospect.26/4, Office - 207, 630087</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 08:00 - 15:00</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 08:00 - 15:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do I apply?
A step by step process

**Step One: Applying online**

You must initially complete a Visa Application form (VAF) online at http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/ApplyNow.aspx before submitting the necessary documents to the British Embassy in Russia.

You will be asked to enter the following details which will direct you to the appropriate form:
- Current location;
- Nationality;
- Purpose of application; and
- Type of application.

This VAF will differ according to the type of visa that you are applying for. You will also need to submit an accompanying Self-Assessment form for any Points Based applications. Again the format of this form will differ according to the type of visa you are applying for.

**Step Two: Scheduling a biometric appointment**

You must schedule an appointment at your nearest Visa Application Centre (VAC) to enrol your biometrics (fingerprints and digital photograph) and submit your visa application. You should generally take the earliest biometric appointment date available, or the date that is most convenient for your travel taking into account the processing times. Please note that the sooner you apply for your entry clearance visa, the less likely you are to experience unforeseen processing delays.

After you have saved and submitted the online application, you will receive an email with a unique application ID number that starts with GWF. The ID number should be kept for future reference. You should then print out your completed application form and biometric appointment confirmation and bring it with you to the application centre. The form should be printed on good quality paper and you should ensure that the information does not extend beyond the margins on the paper. A bar code should appear on the final page of your printed visa application form. Please note you will be required to sign the application form. This signature should match the signature in your passport.

**Step Three: Attending your biometric appointment**

You must attend the relevant VAC on the designated date and the appropriate time to have scans of all 10 fingers and a full-face digital photograph taken. The finger scans procedure uses an electronic scanner. No ink, liquid or chemical will be used and the procedure will normally take no more than 5 minutes to complete. If you refuse to provide finger scans, your application cannot be processed. You should ensure that your fingertips are free from any forms of decoration (for example - henna), abrasions or other markings as these may affect your ability to provide acceptable finger scans. Your application cannot be processed until you are able to provide acceptable finger scans.

The digital photograph will be taken with full face and without sunglasses, hat or other head covering unless the head cover is worn for cultural or religious reasons. You should not wear white clothing as this can affect the quality of the picture. This digital photo is not a substitute for the photo that you are required to submit along with your application.

This biometric data is then checked against records held by the UKBA in the UK.

You should arrive at the VAC no earlier than 15 minutes before your appointment. You will be directed to reception, and then to the waiting area. If you are too early, the security staff will ask you to come back at the appointed time.

**Step Four: Submitting your application and paying the visa application fee**

Once the biometrics has been taken, you will be required to pay the visa application fee (payable in cash only) and submit the documents required for the application.

You must bring your visa application and supporting documents to the biometric appointment and submit them to the VAC when your biometrics are taken.
Step Five:

Once the UKBA has considered the application, it will contact you using the email address that you provided when you submitted your online visa application. You can either collect your visa application or arrange for your documents to be couriered.

Options

You can collect your visa application in person or you can ask a travel agent, tour operator, friend or relative to collect it on your behalf.

If you are collecting your documents in person you must present the following:

• Proof of your identity. Staff at the visa application centre will verify your identity before the passport is given back to them; and

• All original receipts that you were given in the visa application centre when you submitted your visa application.

If a representative is collecting the documents on your behalf they must present the following documents:

• A letter of authorisation letter signed by you and proof of their identity;

• All original receipts that you were given in the visa application centre when you submitted your visa application;

• Copy of your passport biometric page; and

• Copy of representative’s passport biometric page.

The times and visa application centre addresses are given on Page 4. You can only collect your documents within the collection times.

Alternatively, you may choose to have your documents delivered to your home or business address using the courier service (fee payable). Please see the additional services page on the VFS website for more information about courier services.

Provided your application is approved, your passport will be endorsed with entry clearance for the relevant grant of stay applied for.

Once the application has been approved, you may travel to the UK.
Supporting documents

The following information provides guidance on the types of supporting documents that visa officers will find helpful when deciding an application to come to the UK. You will have to satisfy the Entry Clearance Officer that you meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules; supporting documents can help them to do this. The UKBA has produced guidance to help you choose the documents to submit with your application, but they do not produce a list of documents that you must provide. It is for you to decide which documents are relevant, and which best support your application to come to the UK.

Exceptionally you may be asked to attend an interview. However, in most cases, Entry Clearance Officers will make a decision based on the documents that have been submitted with the visa application. It is therefore essential that you provide all documents that you think are relevant with your application, as you will not be able to submit further documents after you have submitted your application.

The Entry Clearance Officers will make a decision by carefully checking the application form, passport, your immigration history and supporting documents. They will make their decision based on whether they think the application meets the Immigration Rules.

Submitting supporting documents does not guarantee that a visa will be issued but it will allow the Entry Clearance Officers to make a decision about the application based on everything you have provided.

The passport or travel document must contain at least one blank page on both sides so the visa can be inserted. Please also check visa application centre websites for specific local document requirements.

You should not include documents that are not relevant to the application.

Originals or photocopies?

You should include the original documents and a photocopy of each original document (including passport photograph and information page) that you choose to submit. You should also ensure that the photocopies are good quality and can be easily read. If you are not able to provide original supporting documents then you should submit certified copies from the issuing authority. Failure to submit original documents may mean your application is delayed or refused.

Original documents might not be returned if you do not provide photocopies.

Translations

You will also need to provide a professional translation of any supporting documents which are not in English, or your application may be refused. Each translated document must:
- be dated;
- include the translator’s name and signature;
- include confirmation that it is an accurate translation of the original document; and
- the translator’s contact details.

What if I do not have a document that I think might be relevant to my application?

If you do not have a document that you think might be relevant to the application, you should explain why you do not have it. You must not submit a false document. If you submit a false document, the application will be refused and you may face an 'automatic refusal period' from the UK of up to 10 years.

We strongly recommend that applicants do not buy a non-refundable ticket or confirm travel arrangements to come to the UK, until the visa application has been approved and they have received their visa.
How do I expedite my application?

Premium Service in St. Petersburg

If you choose to use this service, you should receive a decision on your visa application and have your passport returned within two working days after the documents have been submitted to the VAC. For example, if you submit your application on Monday (subject to the conditions below), your passport and the decision on your application will be returned on Wednesday.

You must apply or submit your application at the VAC on any working day between 08:00 to 11:00. You can expect the decision on your visa application on the second day during 19:00 - 21:00. Please note that for some zip codes around the outskirts of St Petersburg, the delivery is on day 3 before noon.

You can only use this service if you are applying for 6 months visit visa categories such as Business, Sports, Child / Family. The service charges are: Roubles 10575 (GBP£232), plus the visa application fee.

Please note: There is no guarantee that you will be issued a visa if you use this premium service. All applications are considered on their individual merits, against the requirements of the UK Immigration Rules. There can sometimes be unavoidable delays in processing visa applications. Applicants should note that there are possibilities of delays in deliveries during the winter period due to delay/ cancellation of cargo flights used by the courier company.
**What if I need my passport to travel?**

**Submission without a passport- all VACs**

You can only use this service if you are applying for long term visa categories. This includes General/Family/Business visit applications of 2 years or more, settlement applications and applications under Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the points-based system. In addition to this, the UKBA and VFS are also offering this service to the following short term visa categories: sports visitor, Olympic and Paralympics games visit visa, and Tier 5 of the Points Based System.

**Procedure**

- Apply at the visa application centre, submit biometrics and supporting documents including a photocopy of the entire passport (including blank pages).
- Collect passport before you leave the visa application centre;
- The visa application centre will send the visa application the British Embassy in Moscow for processing. Once a decision has been made, the visa application centre will contact you. You should then contact the VAC to arrange to submission of your passport. It takes 2-5 working days for onward submission of passport to the UKBA at the British Embassy in Moscow. It will then take a further 5 working days for the passport to be returned to the applicant; and

- The fee for using this service is: Roubles 2350 (GBP£52), in addition to the visa application fee.

There is no guarantee that you will be issued a visa if you use this service. All visa applications are considered on their individual merits, against the requirements of the UK Immigration Rules. There can sometimes be unavoidable delays in processing visa applications. Please note that there are possibilities of delays in deliveries during the winter period due to delay/cancellation of cargo flights used by the courier company.
Text message (SMS) service

SMS news updates will be sent to you informing you of the status of your visa application. Once purchased you will receive several automated feedback messages (available in English and Russian) to your mobile phone informing you of what processing stage your visa application is at. At the end of the process you will receive an automated email message (in English only) to your registered email address, informing you that the UKBA has made a decision on your visa application and that your documents have been returned to you using the courier service (fee payable) or are ready for collection.

You can buy this service for 85 Roubles (GBP £1.90) at the same time that you submit your visa application form, supporting documents and biometric information at the visa application centre. The SMS application form can be downloaded and completed before you visit the visa application centre.
Extra services available

Photograph service - St Petersburg & Moscow

You have an option of having your photographs taken according to UK Border Agency requirements at the following visa application centres:

Moscow

250 Roubles (GBP£5.50) for 4 photographs

St Petersburg

200 Roubles (GBP£4.40) for 4 photographs

Printing and photocopying services - all visa application centres

Printing visa application forms

25 Rubles per page (GBP£0.55 per page)

Photocopying

20 Rubles per page (GBP£0.44 per page)

Courier Return - all visa application centres

You do not need to return to the visa application centre to collect your documents. You can opt for them to be returned by courier, for an additional nominal courier charge. This is an optional service. The charges below in the table are in Roubles and are inclusive of VAT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courier Charges - Zone wise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VIP premium service lounge at the visa application centre in Moscow

The VFS VIP premium service lounge is only available at the visa application centre in Moscow.

The fee for using this service is 7000 Roubles (GBP£154) in addition to the visa application fee. The service includes:

An exclusive premium service lounge;

- A personalized service;
- Refreshments; and
- Photocopying service.

For more information please contact:
Phone: +7-495-662-54-93
Fax: +7-499-246-09-44

You should book an appointment online using the online visa application system. If you decide to choose this service, you can select Moscow (VIP Lounge) from the drop down option when you are asked to select the visa appointment centre. Appointments are available every working day between 9:00 and 16:00.

Please note: There is no guarantee that your visa will be approved if you use the VIP Premium Service - all applications are considered on their own merits, against the requirements set out in the UK Immigration Rules. **Important: This service does not guarantee a faster turnaround time for the processing of visa applications by the UK Border Agency in Moscow.**
Your contacts

**Julia Onslow-Cole - Global Head of Immigration**
Tel: +44 (0)20 7804 7252 Email: julia.onslow-cole@pwclegal.co.uk

Julia is a partner and Head of Global Immigration for PwC Legal LLP. The PwC immigration network consists of more than 600 practitioners in 119 countries. Julia is co-editor of several leading textbooks on immigration law and currently represents the International Bar Association as a core stakeholder to the UK Border Agency. In 2005 Julia was appointed a member of the Advisory Board to the UK Minister on Naturalisation and Immigration.

**James Perrott - Day to Day Contact**
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7213 2681 Email: James.perrott@pwclegal.co.uk

James is a Senior Manager and solicitor in PwC Legal’s Global Immigration Team. He has more than eleven years experience in immigration. He has been heavily involved in the evolution of the Points Based System, drafting discussion papers for the Home Office on key policy areas. James has lead discussion groups with the Home Office on Immigration. James is a member of the Immigration Law Practitioners Association’s Economic Migration Sub Committee and is a regular speaker at conferences.

**Stephan Judge**
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7212 21094 Email: stephan.judge@pwclegal.co.uk

Stephan is the Manager of Global Immigration Services at PwC Legal in the UK. He is bilingual in German and English and holds a Master’s degree in Management from the London School of Economics. Stephan has seven years of experience in immigration; handling cases in Europe, Middle East and Africa.