

VISA requirements for visiting Bulgaria

A. EU countries (12 countries)

1. Country list

Bulgaria (hosting country), Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

2. Travel document requirement

- a. Citizens of European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries can visit Bulgaria using either **a valid national ID card** or **a valid passport**.
- b. While **biometric e-passports** are the absolute standard across the EU, a few rare exceptions exist where a non-biometric travel document might still be used.
- c. There have been rare cases where students with foreign nationality were selected as student competitors without violating IJSO competition rules. Please confirm their nationality and the required travel documents.

B. Countries with Visa Exemption (15 countries)

1. Country list

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Hong Kong China, Macau, Malaysia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, South Korea, United Arab Emirates

2. Travel document requirement

- a. **Visa-Free Entry:** Holders of biometric passports from the above can enter Bulgaria without a visa for up to 90 days within any 180 days.
- b. **Passport Requirement:** Travelers must carry a valid biometric passport that remains valid for at least three months beyond their planned departure date from
- c. **European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS):**
ETIAS is not required yet, but it will be needed in the future. Because Bulgaria is an official member of the Schengen Area, Citizens of countries with VISA exemption will eventually be required to obtain an ETIAS travel authorization before visiting. You are suggested to check the following website occasionally for the latest updates.
<https://travel-europe.europa.eu/etias/about-etias/who-should-apply>

C. Countries that require a Schengen visa (30 countries)

1. Country list

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, India

Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya

Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman

Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Ghana, Russia

Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand

Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vietnam

2. Travel document requirements

- a. **A Schengen VISA** issued by Bulgaria or another European Schengen country is definitely required. To apply for a short-term visa to visit Bulgaria, you must submit your application through the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria portal or its authorized visa application centers, such as VFS Global. Bulgaria issues short-term Schengen (C) visas for visits up to 90 days. <https://www.mfa.bg/en/services-travel/consular-services/travel-bulgaria/visa-bulgaria>
- b. Bulgaria's visa policies are now entirely aligned with the unified EU Schengen visa regulations. When using a Schengen visa issued by another country to enter Bulgaria, you must strictly comply with the following three core usage rules:
 - (i) **Adhere to the "Main Destination" Principle:** According to Schengen rules, you cannot apply to a specific country just because their visa process is perceived to be easier. The country issuing your visa must be your main destination (the place where you will spend the most consecutive days on your trip). Example: If your itinerary includes spending 7 days in Germany and 3 days in Bulgaria, you must apply for your Schengen visa through Germany. Once approved, you fly to Germany first, and then proceed to Bulgaria. This is completely lawful.
 - (ii) **First Entry and Activation Restrictions:** If you hold a single-entry Schengen visa issued by another country, it is highly recommended that you enter the issuing country first to activate the visa before traveling onward to Bulgaria by flight or land. Do not attempt to fly directly into Bulgaria as your initial port of entry without having visited the issuing country first, as border control officers may deny you entry.
 - (iii) **Consolidated Counting of the 90-Day Stay Limit:** Since Bulgaria's full integration into the Schengen Area, any days spent in Bulgaria are combined and counted toward the standard Schengen limit of "90 days within any 180 days." **Important Note: In the past, travelers often used Bulgaria (when it was non-Schengen) as a "visa-run" destination to reset their Schengen stay days. This strategy no longer works. Every day spent traveling in Bulgaria will now count against your available Schengen days.**