

# Macedonia Relaxes Visa Rules for Russians

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More Russians could be taking in the historic center of Bitola, above, after the visa announcement.

Macedonia is scrapping visa requirements for Russian citizens visiting for less than a year in an effort to boost tourist flows, the Balkan country's prime minister announced Sunday.

"In our opinion, this will become the latest step in our efforts to attract Russian tourists to our republic. Macedonia is the cradle of Slavic culture and written language," Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski told Itar-Tass in an interview.

Macedonia had previously considering canceling visa requirements for Russians visiting for less than six months.

Gruevski explained the visa decision by his country's determination to deepen trade and investment ties with Russia, where he is traveling on an official visit Sunday.

"Macedonians are interested in delivering quality wine to the Russian market and receiving Russian investment in the Macedonian energy sector, which would help pay off Moscow's

clearing debt to Skopje from the initial construction of the gas grid in Macedonia by Stroitransgaz," he said.

Gruevski's announcement means that Macedonia now has the most relaxed visa rules for Russians among the former Yugoslav states.

Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro only allow 30 days visa-free travel to Russian citizens, while Croatia and Kosovo give 90 days visa-free travel if certain conditions are met.

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