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Montenegro Ends Visa-Free Entry for Russians Amid 2028 EU Membership Bid

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Unsplash

Montenegro will require Russian citizens to obtain visas starting Nov. 1, the small Western Balkan nation's government announced Monday, as it tightens border rules in line with EU standards to join the bloc by 2028.

"Nationals of countries whose visa regimes were previously not aligned with that of the European Union (Belarus, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye) will require a visa to enter Montenegro as of Nov. 1, 2026," Montenegro's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Montenegro has for years remained one of the few European countries to offer visa-free entry to Russians for up to 30 days. It saw a massive influx of anti-war Russian citizens after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Local media reported this spring that 14,000 out of the 21,000 registered Russians left Montenegro following news of Podgorica's plans to introduce visas.

In Monday's statement, Montenegro said it was "mitigating any potential adverse effects" by partnering with a third-party visa processing center, and that it planned to introduce an e-visa system in the future.

Montenegro adopted the euro in 2002 and applied for EU membership in 2008. It also followed the EU in imposing financial restrictions and travel bans on Russia for its annexation of Crimea in 2014, and then the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

"Montenegro's accession as the 28th member state by 2028 is within reach," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at an EU-Western Balkans summit in June.

AFP contributed reporting.

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