



Dear Future AFSer/Applicant,

Please find enclosed general instructions on obtaining an **Entry Visa** for Russia. **AFS will obtain this visa for you.** As you will note, obtaining a visa is a detailed and time consuming process, and for this reason, visa information is sent not only to students who are guaranteed, but also to students whose applications are still in review. It is important that you begin preparing for this process immediately. **Visa documents submitted by you later than the deadline (see below) might result in your not being able to travel on time or even not being able to participate in the program. You are responsible for any additional cost incurred by your late submission of documents.**

Obtaining a Passport

If you still do not have a passport, you must apply for one **immediately!** You cannot obtain any other type of travel or residence authorization without a valid passport and it will take approximately 4-6 weeks to obtain one. If you delay in obtaining your passport, you will need to request that your passport application be “expedited” (rushed) which will mean an additional cost.

Additional Support Documents

In order for AFS to obtain your visa for Russia, along with the completed visa application and other documents required by the Russian Consulate, we will also need additional support documents and approvals which are provided by AFS-Russia. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will wire an electronic authorization to their consulate in New York, once your visa has been approved. AFS USA will then immediately apply for your visa.

The process of obtaining the necessary approvals and documentation for this process can take time and in some cases, possible delays may result. If your documentation does not arrive within adequate time to obtain a visa, you may have to travel later than originally scheduled. Staff in the National Offices of both AFS-USA and AFS in Russia will continue to monitor the situation closely in the up coming months. Be assured that AFS-Russia is doing everything possible to have all placements confirmed as early as possible. In addition to this, visa and immigration regulations are constantly changing.

Participants who we feel may not be able to travel as scheduled will be notified approximately two weeks prior to the original departure date.

Domestic Travel

Regarding your domestic travel to the gateway orientation site, please do not book any tickets until you receive what we call the *Travel Notification Packet* in the mail from the AFS USA Travel and Logistics Department. This packet will give you important detailed information about travel and logistics for your trip. AFS always recommends that participants book domestic tickets that are both refundable and changeable. This is due in part to the possibility of changes in international flights students will be taking to return home, but also due to the fact that complications may arise in obtaining visas and these complications can at times delay a student's departure. **Please note that participants will be responsible for paying any penalties incurred for changes they may need to make in their domestic travel in the event that they are not able to obtain their visa in time for their scheduled departure.**

Taking Trips before the Start of Your Program

You should not plan any excursions outside of the United States prior to your program. As mentioned before, obtaining a visa takes time and your passport will be required. **Should you choose to travel before the start of your program and not allow enough time for AFS to procure your visa, you will run the risk of not being able to participate on this program.**

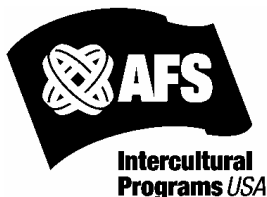
Getting Started

We have included here information concerning the visa application process for Russia. AFS will obtain this visa for you. It is very important, however, that you follow the accompanying instructions very carefully and comply with all the requirements.

Should you have any questions or require assistance, do not hesitate to contact your **Admissions Advisor at 800-237-4636.**

Sincerely,

AFS Visa Team



VISA INFORMATION

RUSSIA YEAR, SEMESTER AND 18+ PROGRAMS 2008-09

A visa is required for your entry and stay in Russia. **AFS will obtain this visa for you.** To do so we must receive the following items from you **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** or **no later than JULY 10th**. Please follow instructions carefully as any errors or omissions will cause delays, which can jeopardize your travel arrangements.

1. **UNITED STATES PASSPORT:** *Yes, you must send AFS your passport, since the visa is a stamp that the consulate will affix to one of its free pages.*

- Your passport must be *signed* and valid for at least six months beyond your intended stay, as well as have at least two blank pages for visa.

If you hold a passport from a country other than the US, please call your Admissions Advisor **IMMEDIATELY** at 1-800-237-4636. Additional documents may be required. If you do not yet have your US passport, you must apply **RIGHT AWAY**. You can not apply for a visa without a valid passport. In some cases, you may have to expedite (a rush service) your passport application at an additional cost. Normal processing time may take 4-6 weeks excluding peak seasons. You can inquire at your local post office about where you can apply.

2. **TWO (2) PASSPORT-TYPE PHOTOS:**

- Photos must be identical and SIGNED on the back.
- Snapshots, graduation photos or digital copies are not acceptable.
- Photos need to be color, full face, and stapled to the photograph box of application.

3. **VISA PROCESSING FEE-\$300.00:**

- Please send a MONEY ORDER in this amount made payable to the RUSSIAN CONSULATE
- Personal checks will not be accepted

4. **VISA APPLICATIONS:** (enclosed)

- Complete both applications in block letters.
- Please refer to the enclosed sample application when completing your applications

BE SURE TO SIGN AND DATE APPLICATION WHERE IT IS INDICATED.

5. **CERTIFICATE OF HIV INFECTION TEST:**

- The certificate must include the blood test results for HIV infection, the date of the test, signature of the doctor who conducted the test, and the seal of the hospital or medical organization. A mouthswap test will not be accepted.

- **The HIV test results must be translated into Russian by an official translating service and authenticated by the Russian consulate in your jurisdiction or a notary.** You can do a websearch to find the appropriate consulate in your area.

Please send the above items to us **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE or no later than July 10th.** Please use a traceable mail service such as UPS, DHL or Federal Express and remember to retain your tracking number. *Do not use regular, certified, priority or delivery confirmation mail. The US Postal Service will not be able to locate your package should it become lost in their care.* Please send these items to:

International Documents/ RUS NH08

AFS-USA

One Whitehall St., 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10004

NOTE: Please do not call AFS to check if your documents were received. AFS will contact you in case something is missing or if documents are not received in time. You can check with your carrier to see if the package was delivered.

IMPORTANT NOTE regarding additional FEES:

In addition to the visa processing fee, there is also a **residence permit fee of \$60.** Please be aware that you are responsible for these fees in cash upon arrival.

YOUR PASSPORT WITH THE VISA WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU AT THE GATEWAY DEPARTURE ORIENTATION. You will need another form of Identification to travel your Gateway orientation. Please check with your airline for alternative forms of identification. Please remember to retain a copy of your passport for your own records.

Once in Russia, please keep your passport along with the Immigration card you will get on the plane at customs in a safe place at all times.

AFS will apply for your visa. Visa requirements, issuance regulations and fees are established by government authorities and/or consular officials, who reserve the right to make changes at any time. Please note that AFS cannot intercede to revoke decisions made by these authorities. Therefore AFS is not responsible for any changes in requirements or fees that occur after we have provided you with these instructions.

If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact your **Admissions Advisor in Portland, OR at 1-800-237-4636.**