



Global Immigration alert

June 2024

Costa Rica

Updated rules for driver's licenses for foreign nationals

Executive summary

The Costa Rican government recently implemented new rules regarding driver's licenses that impact foreign visitors (including for business purposes) and lawful temporary and permanent residents of Costa Rica.

Key developments

Foreign nationals visiting Costa Rica for business purposes who hold a valid driver's license issued abroad may now use their foreign license to drive the same type of vehicle authorized by such document in Costa Rica during their full term of authorized stay, granted upon legal entry to the country. Previously, visitors were only allowed to use their foreign driver's license for three months.

Foreign nationals whose applications for temporary or permanent residence are approved may now immediately apply for a Costa Rican driver's license through a process known locally as "homologation" prior to receiving their actual residence permit. Previously, foreigners had to wait until they received a Migratory Identity Document for Foreigners and had spent at least 91 consecutive days in the country before being eligible to apply for a Costa Rican license.

The Costa Rican authorities reserve the right to request that foreigners (both visitors and residents) provide evidence that their license is in good legal standing by authenticating it through an apostille.

Foreign nationals who are minors and hold valid driver's licenses issued abroad are not eligible to use their foreign licenses in Costa Rica.

Nationals of Venezuela who hold a digital driver's license may be asked to provide additional documentation when applying to obtain a Costa Rican driver's license.

Impact on employers

The new rules benefit foreign visitors and Costa Rican residents by simplifying the requirements associated with driving motor vehicles in the country and reducing the incidence of foreigners incurring traffic penalties related to unauthorized driving in Costa Rica.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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