

# Kosovo

## Information for applicants

### Kosovo

Kosovo lies in the centre of South-East Europe, a region also known as the Balkans or Western Balkans. After the violent conflicts of 1999 and subsequent international administration by the United Nations, Kosovo celebrated its independence in 2008. This makes the country Europe's youngest state. Germany recognised Kosovo on 20 February 2008. The state of Kosovo has an area of 10,908 km<sup>2</sup> and approximately 1.74 million inhabitants. The capital of the country is Pristina. Albanian and Serbian are the co-official languages.

### Climate and points of interest

Kosovo has a temperate continental climate. This means severe winters, in which heavy frosts, snowfalls and temperatures dipping to -20 °C are not unusual, and hot summers with temperatures above 30 °C. Kosovo is very rich in mineral resources, especially lignite. The mining tradition in Kosovo dates back to pre-Roman times. The lignite reserves are estimated to be around 14.7 billion tonnes, making them the fifth largest in the world (see section on Health). Approximately 40% of Kosovo's territory is forested. Like its neighbouring states, Kosovo has an extensive and unique biodiversity, not least because of its mountains (6% of the total area). The number of indigenous plants is estimated at between 1,800 and 2,500. Day and weekend excursions to the mountains are therefore one of the most popular leisure activities.

### Health

Medical care in Kosovo cannot be guaranteed to meet German standards. State hospitals do not always have adequate equipment and sometimes may not be able to provide appropriate care to patients with certain medical conditions. Drugs must always be purchased from the private sector. Doctors in private, well-equipped clinics often offer better treatment. Of course, private treatment comes at a significantly higher price. Expats can also obtain advice and treatment from the medical units of EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission Kosovo) and KFOR (Kosovo Force). The air quality in the capital is very poor during conditions of temperature inversion in the winter months because of the nearby lignite-fired power plants and emissions from private households and traffic. GIZ therefore provides air filters.

### Accommodation and lifestyle

The housing market is very dynamic in Kosovo, especially in Pristina. There is an extensive supply of accommodation for both short-term and long-term stays. Very simple lodgings (single rooms for 150 euros a month) are available for rent as well as entire villas for several thousand euros a month. On the outskirts of the city there are gated communities, such as the International Village for expats.

Although a number of agents offer real estate for rent or sale on the internet, it is best to find an apartment on the spot through acquaintances or work colleagues.

### Shopping and daily supplies

The supply of everyday commodities is very good, although sometimes compromises have to be made when it comes to variety and quality. There are many

big supermarkets and shopping centres with an abundant range of goods in Pristina as well as in other major cities and on the main transport routes. The shopping centres have international brand name stores as well as branches of a German pharmacy chain. Almost every settlement has smaller shops with basic food and everyday items.

## Accompanying partners and children

Accompanying partners who are citizens of the EU or Schengen member states do not need a visa for Kosovo and can stay in the country for up to 90 days within a period of six months with a valid travel document or biometric identity card.

For longer stays, accompanying partners are issued with a diplomatic ID (Diplo-ID) as a residence permit, which also constitutes a work permit. Registration and subsequent procedures are handled by the local GIZ country office.

In Pristina there are several international schools that teach in English (mostly according to the American curriculum and in one case according to the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum). Kindergartens and child care for young children are also available, as well as domestic staff.

## Special features

Many people in Kosovo speak several foreign languages, including German. This has mostly historical reasons. Many GIZ colleagues in Kosovo also speak German, although the working language is English.

In terms of leisure activities, this small country offers beautiful, though limited, tourist attractions. In addition to the aforementioned mountains, its

proximity to the neighbouring countries of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia is a great advantage. The proximity to three seas also offers plenty of variety, especially in summer. The Aegean Sea and Thessaloniki (Greece) can be reached in just under four hours, the Adriatic Sea and Lezhë (Albania) in just under three hours, and the Ionian Sea and Sarandë (also in Albania) in about seven hours' drive.

The international airport in Pristina has several flights daily to Germany and other European countries, where there are connections to other destinations.

## Useful links

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen/kosovo-node>

<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/298.html>

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