

# VIRGIN ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY(BVI)

THE MARITIME ADMINISTRATION OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS



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COMPANY  
CRUISING**

THE ULTIMATE ADVANTAGE

# MEET OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM



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# REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

## VIRGIN ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY

### BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS PROCEDURE FOR FIRST (INITIAL) REGISTRATION

The Virgin Islands Shipping Registry (VISR) is a Category 1 member of the Red Ensign Group (REG) of British Registries.



### FIRST (INITIAL) REGISTRATION

First (or Initial) Registry means placing a vessel upon the Register for the first time.

The requirements are as follows:-

#### 1.0 APPLICATION TO REGISTER UNDER THE BVI MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT 2001

- 1.1 There must be an application to the Registrar of Ships for registry of all vessels. Applicants must use the prescribed forms which can be obtained from the Registrar of Shipping.

**ALL REGISTRATION FORMS MAY BE ALSO  
DOWNLOADED FROM THE VISR WEBSITE:  
[WWW.BVIMARITIME.VG](http://WWW.BVIMARITIME.VG)**

#### 2.0 SHIP NAME - APPROVAL

- 2.1 The name of the vessel must be officially approved. The proposed name for a British ship, obtainable from the Registrar, must be completed and returned. This ensures no duplication /confusion of names on the Register.

#### 3.0 SURVEYS: PRE-REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE OF SURVEY/TONNAGE CERTIFICATE

- 3.1 The vessel must be surveyed and measured to obtain details of size, and other descriptive particulars necessary for the registration of British Ships under the Merchant Shipping Acts. This is carried out by a Surveyor of one of the approved classification societies (see paragraph 10), or a Surveyor appointed or authorized by the Administration. The Surveyor issues a Certificate of Survey and a Tonnage Certificate (British or International). A simplified procedure where a combined Certificate of Survey/Tonnage Measurement is issued is applicable to Vessels of under 24 Metres, Load Line Length.
- 3.2 The owners of pleasure vessels must ensure the vessel is equipped in accordance with a Safety Matrix prepared by VISR. The owner or master completes the relevant parts of the Matrix and submits a copy of it to the Registry.
- 3.3 Additional Survey requirements for safety in respect of commercial vessels are summarized in paragraph (10) of this document.

#### 4.0 OWNERSHIP-QUALIFIED CATEGORIES: PERSON OR BODY CORPORATE

4.1 Citizens of and /or Bodies Corporate registered in the BVI, or any of the following countries are qualified to own a Virgin Islands (British) vessel:

- United Kingdom and it's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.
- Nationals of and Bodies Corporate incorporated in; Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA).
- Overseas Territory or Member of EC or EEA. (Bodies corporate must have a place of business in such Member State or Overseas Territory)
- Bodies corporate incorporated in a Member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) or the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (and registered in the BVI.)

4.2 A Body Corporate must submit a valid Certificate of Incorporation issued by the respective Registrar of Corporate Affairs, and Individuals must provide certified proof of nationality ( Passport etc.)

4.3 List of new eligible jurisdiction: See page 12

#### 5.0 TITLE: EVIDENCE OF OWNERSHIP

5.1 The Owner(s) must produce satisfactory evidence of title to ownership in the form of:-

- (a) Builder's Certificate ; with descriptive details of the vessel, showing quite clearly the full name(s) and address of the person (s) or body corporate on whose account the vessel has been built.
- (b) Prior to registry any vessel that has not been acquired from the Manufacturer as a newly built vessel requires a Bill of Sale.
- (c) Vessels condemned by a competent court



require a Bill of Sale given by the Admiralty Marshall or such other competent person; this may be accepted as foundation of title.

- (d) With the documents produced as evidence of title to ownership, every owner is required to make a Declaration of Eligibility. Such declaration can only be made after the vessel has been acquired by the applicant. Therefore, the date must not precede the date in the Builders Certificate or the Bill of Sale. Any departure from this warrants an explanation.
- (e) A form entitled, Appointment of Authorized Officer which enables naming of an Individual to sign Declaration of Eligibility etc., is required in respect of Body Corporate.
- (f) Bodies Corporate or Individuals not resident in the BVI are required to appoint a company, or individual residing in BVI as its Representative. This facilitates correspondence between the Registry and the vessel's owner.
- (g) Pursuant to our "Know Your Customer" principles, a form entitled "Appointment of Representative /Undertaking to Act as Rep" is to be completed.

## 6.0 OFFICIAL NUMBER

- 6.1 When all required documents and fees are provided, and found to be in order, the vessel is given an Official Number, by which it may be known and recognized irrespective of its name and other description.

## 7.0 CARVING AND MARKING NOTE

- 7.1 When the Registrar is satisfied that the vessel is eligible to be registered, a Carving and Marking Note is issued. It shows the vessel's Name, Port of Registry, Official Number and Registered Tonnage which are to be carved/marked on the vessel and contains relevant instruction for doing so.

- 7.2 The ports of registration for Virgin Islands ships are; Road Harbour, Gorda Sound and White Bay.

## 8.0 CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRY

- 8.1 After the completed Carving and Marking Note is returned to our administration, the vessel is formally registered and a Certificate of British Registry issued. It contains details about the ship, ownership and expiration date.
- 8.2 A Certificate of British Registry may be issued within 24 hours of receiving a properly certified Carving and Marking Note.
- 8.3 This Certificate establishes the vessel's Nationality, Owner(s), Description and Tonnage. It does not prove Ownership or show mortgages, liens or any encumbrances. These may be obtained from the Registrar, in the form of a Transcript of the Register; upon payment of the prescribed fee.



8.4 In circumstances where relevant documents have been received to the satisfaction of the Registrar, a "Provisional Certificate of British Registry may be issued" on owner's request .

## 9.0 FEES

9.1 The Schedule of Fees for registration services is obtainable from the Registry in Tortola (BVI). Fees for Registry services must be paid before documents or certificates are issued. Cheques and Money Orders must be made payable to "Accountant General", BVI.

9.2 Services include Certificates of Registry, Provisional Certificates of Registry , Transcript of the Register , Recording of Mortgage Intents, Registration of Mortgages, Transfer or Discharge of Mortgage, Change ( Transfer ) of Ownerships and Change of vessel or company name.

## 10.0 GENERAL CONDITIONS

### 10.1 STATUTORY SURVEYS

(a) All commercial vessels are subject to statutory certification and must be surveyed or inspected prior to acceptance for registration, to ensure their compliance with the provisions and requirements of applicable International Conventions, regulations and codes and national legislation. These surveys may be carried out by surveyors from VISR or surveyors appointed by an authorized classification society. Also, surveyors from MCA or any of the other Red Ensign Registries may be engaged, if necessary. Some of the surveys may be initiated by the ship-owner; but all preregistration surveys must be submitted directly to the Registry.

(b) The following six Classification Societies are authorized by VISR for undertaking statutory surveys on behalf of British Virgin Islands:

American Bureau of Shipping (ABS)  
Bureau Veritas (BV)  
Class NK (NK)  
Det Norske Veritas (DNV )  
Lloyd's Register (LR)  
Registro Italiano Navale (RINA)

(a) Yachts under 24 metres in load line length, engaged in commercial use:

These vessels must hold a "Certificate of Compliance" issued under the relevant MCA Code of Practice (Blue Code, Yellow Code or MGN 280) to operate as commercial vessels. The survey/examination necessary to issue such a certificate may be conducted by surveyors from VISR, Classification Societies or, a certifying authority approved by MCA. Other surveyors may be appointed by VISR.

(b) In order to initiate a statutory survey an application is made to VISR in writing. On receiving the application, the Chief Marine Surveyor will contact the Owner or his representative to discuss the survey procedures and make the arrangements to carry out the survey and issue the required certificates.

### 10.2 COSTS

All costs connected with survey and certificates of a vessel are for owner's account and must be settled as required by VISR.

### 10.3 TELECOMMUNICATIONS DOCUMENTS

Radio Station, Radio Licences, Call Signs, MMSI Numbers and other Ship Radio and Telecommunication matters and certification are regulated and issued by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) in the Virgin Islands.

10.4 CONTACT DETAILS ARE PROVIDED AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT.

# SUMMARY OF REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

### Introduction (Why Register?)

The main reason for registering a ship has always been to prove its nationality. For Merchant/Pleasure ships, identification is essential for international voyages.

Registration is also required to use the ship as security to obtain a marine mortgage; which is also registered. Ownership details are fully investigated. Purchasers of British registered ships can obtain a Transcript of Registry which shows the registered owners of a ship and whether there are any out-standing Mortgages or liens against the vessel.

Always apply for registration well before the date you want to sail.

### Q. What are the benefits of BVI Registration?

A. There are several advantages, including:

- VISR Registry is a member of the Red Ensign Group. Ships flying the Flag are entitled to British Diplomatic / Consular support and Royal Navy Protection.
- Registered ownership is permitted to citizens of, and companies registered in BVI, UK and all British Territories. Likewise, those of the EU,

CARICOM & OECS are eligible for registration as Owners of BVI Ships. Other nationals (individuals and/or company) permitted to own minority interest in BVI ship.

- Competitive Registration & Annual fees.
- VISR is specialized in Yacht registration and our Certificates are recognized worldwide.
- Our process facilitates simple yet secure registration of ship, mortgages, discharge of mortgages, change/transfer of ownership and other proprietary interests and services.
- Full corporate, legal, telecommunications and courier services are readily available in the BVI.
- Political and social stability in BVI.
- The BVI is the Yachting Mecca of the Caribbean, equipped with modern state-of-the-art facilities, berths, accommodation, supplies and services.
- VISR's prompt, courteous and efficient service is supported by a fully computerized Fleet Management System and Database.
- The BVI is recognized worldwide as a reputable offshore financial centre, leading the world in company formation and related corporate services.
- Procedural and economic advantages when cruising BVI waters.
- Electronic Document Validation
- Digital Processing Capabilities
- 24hr Turn around process



**Q. What is needed to register a Vessel?**

- A.
- Application to Register
  - Declaration of Eligibility / Ownership
  - Original Documents of Title/Ownership - Builder's Certificate/ Bills of Sale.
  - Certificate of Survey and Tonnage Measurement issued by one of the approved Classification Societies or approved organizations. If the vessel is over 24 metres in Load Line Length an International Tonnage Certificate (ITC69) is required.



- Certificate of Incorporation (if a company is applying)
- Certificate of Good Standing (if a company is more than one year old)
- Appointment of Authorized Officer (if a company is applying)
- Appointment of Representative Person / Undertaking to Act as Representative Person
- Initial Registration fee: (Available on request, from Registry)
- If the ship is leaving a foreign register the Deletion Certificate which must also indicate the last owner.

- If the ship is leaving a Red Ensign Register the Closed Transcript and copy of original Certificate of Survey/Tonnage Certificate.
- Any documents that are used to support an application and are in a foreign Language must be accompanied by a translation into English language and certified by a notary public.
- All applications must be accompanied by the appropriate fee. When applying to register a vessel, please provide a list of nominated names in order of preference. A list of fees and charges for registration are also available at the Registry.
- Owners not domiciled in BVI must appoint a Local (BVI) Resident Representative

**Q. How long does it take?**

- A.
- The Certificate of Registry is electronically generated and immediately issued after the required documents, including the Carving and Marking Note is returned and the fee is paid.

Commercial vessels are required to provide proof/certification that they comply with rules and regulations relating to safety, pollution prevention and maritime security; as applicable to them, before registration can be completed.

Courier companies with operations to and from the BVI can facilitate secure and expeditious dispatch and return of documents and certificates. Owners/Agents are advised accordingly.

**Q. What vessels are entitled to be registered?**

A. According to tradition, interest/ownership in a British Ship is divided into 64 Shares. A vessel is entitled to be registered, if a majority of the interest (at least 33 of the 64 shares) is owned by qualified persons (individuals or Bodies Corporate). Foreign persons may own a minority interest (up to 31 of the 64 shares) in the ship; or register ship under a qualified company owned by them.

**Q. What flag is to be flown on a ship registered in BVI?**

A. The Red Ensign with or without Virgin Islands coat of arms.

**Q. What about changes in ship's registered details?**

A. After a vessel is registered, the VISR must be notified of any changes that would affect the Certificate of Registration. If registered owners have changed their address, they must notify the Registry of the change by written correspondence. Any change in the primary details requires the issue of a new certificate. Therefore in such cases, the current certificate of registry must be returned for cancellation.



**Q. What is required to change the ownership of a registered ship?**

- A.
- Appointment of Authorized Officer (for company)
  - Appointment of Representative Person/ Undertaking to act as representative person
  - Declaration of Eligibility
  - Original Bill(s) of Sale ( VISR Format)
  - Certificate of Incorporation ; with Certificate of Good Standing (if a company is more than one year old)
  - Statutory Fee (see list obtainable from the Registry)
  - Certified list of directors ( stamped and issued by the company registry)
  - Deceleration of vessel use

**Q. What is needed to change the name of a registered ship?**

- A.
- Application to change the name, giving 3 names in order of priority
  - Letter from the Mortgagee (if applicable) confirming “no objection” to change the name of the ship
  - Fee to change the name and issue new Certificate of Registry.

**Q. What is needed to change the engine details of a registered ship?**

- A. A Certificate of Survey confirming the change; with the fee for a new Certificate of Registry.

**Q. What is needed to change the Tonnage /Dimensions or use of a vessel?**

- A.
- An original Certificate of Survey issued by one of the classification societies approved by VISR or organizations.
  - Payment of the fee for new Certificate of Registry.

**Q. What is needed to change the operation (use) of a vessel?**

- A. If the owner intends to change the operation (use) of the vessel, e.g. from “pleasure” to “commercial”, a Certificate of Compliance is issued under the rules of the respective Code of Practice or other regulation must be submitted; with fee for the new Certificate of Registry.

**Q. What is the cost of initial registration?**

- A. The current schedule of all the fees and charges connected with the registration in BVI as well as other administrative services are obtainable from the Registry.

**Q. Are there any recurrent Annual Charges?**

- A. Yes, the annual fee and fee are provided in the Schedule of Fees. These annual fee is paid on the anniversary date of vessel initial registration.

**Q. What about Mortgages?**

- A. The recording of mortgages is an important feature of ship registration. The Registry facilitates the Entry, Transfer and Discharge of marine Mortgages on registered vessels. Lenders (Mortgagees) may also submit a Notice of Mortgage Intent Form and documents, to preserve their priority whilst registration is proceeding. This form may also be used in respect of a vessel under construction.

**Q. What are the Safety, Pollution Prevention and Safety Requirements?**

- A. As members of the General British Registry of Ships, BVI registered vessels are subject to the same safety, security and environmental protection standards and regulations as UK vessels. Commercial vessels are to comply with MCA Codes of Practice for Commercial vessels of their type, class and size. Vessels operating in the Caribbean are to comply with respective Caribbean Codes or Regulation.

Certificates issued by the UK are recognized.

**Q. How are Statutory Surveys carried out?**

- A. Ships registered or operating in the BVI or intending to do so, to which statutory certification applies, may be surveyed by VISR surveyors or surveyors appointed by any of the approved classification societies or other approved organizations. Additionally, VISR may permit use of surveyors of the UK (MCA) or other members of the Red Ensign Group.

**Q. What are the requirements relating to Seafarer qualifications?**

A. All commercial vessels are subject to requirements of STCW 78/95. BVI issues appropriate STCW endorsements recognizing certificates issued by other administrations listed on the IMO White List.

Vessels certified under the Caribbean Small Commercial Vessel Code (SCV) must carry a master holding a Boat Masters Licence issued under the SCV Code.

**Q. What are the requirements relating to seafarer qualifications on large pleasure yachts?**

A. For pleasure vessels over 24 metres in length, please refer to UK MSN 1858 (M+F) (Deck Officers ) and MGN 1859 (M+F) (Engineer Officers).

**Q. What do you advise customers for “no hassle” registration?**

A. Always apply for registration well before you intend to sail. If a commercial vessel is involved ensure appropriate safety certificates are available and that the vessel is survey by or on behalf of VISR before registration. Ensure that you have completed the necessary documentation correctly and paid the correct fee.



## GET IN TOUCH CONTACT US

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# List of Eligible Jurisdictions

- Anguilla
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Argentina
- Aruba
- Ascension, St. Helena, Tristan da Cunha
- Australia
- Austria
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belgium
- Belize
- Bermuda
- Bonaire
- Brazil
- British Antarctic Territory
- British Indian Ocean
- British Virgin Islands
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Cayman Islands
- Chile
- China
- Croatia
- Curacao
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Dominica
- Dubai
- Estonia
- Falkland Islands
- Finland
- France
- French Polynesia
- Germany
- Greece
- Grenada
- Guadeloupe
- Guernsey
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Isle of Man
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jersey
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Martinique
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Montserrat
- Netherlands
- New Caledonia
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Panama
- Pitcairn Islands (Ducie, Oeno & Henderson Islands)
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- St. Barths
- St. Eustatius
- St. Maarten
- St. Martin
- Suriname
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- Gibraltar
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- South Georgia and Sound Sandwich Islands
- Spain
- Romania
- Saba
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Singapore



# Virgin Islands Shipping Registry

*"One Country, One Red Ensign Flag, 3 Ports of Registry, 60 Warm Islands, 70 Serene Anchorages, so much to do.....Registration is only part of our package"*

## ***Ports of Registration***



Road Harbour



Gorda Sound



White Bay



Virgin Islands Shipping Registry, 1st Floor Ritter House, Wickhams Cay II

Po Box 4751, Road Town, Tortola, VG 1110, BVI

TEL: (284) 393 0000

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