

Wednesday 12 August 2015

Indian tourist visas: e-visa scheme extended to British travellers

India is finally opening up its e-visa system to UK passport holders, in an attempt to boost tourism



Majestic cities such as Udaipur will be within easier reach of British tourists as e-visas are introduced from August 15.



By [Lizzie Porter](#)

2:57PM BST 11 Aug 2015

 [8 Comments](#)

From August 15, Britons will be one of 113 nationalities who will be able to apply for [India's](#) “e-Tourist visa”, making the process of obtaining correct entry documents cheaper and quicker.

UK passport holders will be able to apply and pay for an online visa using the Indian government’s tourist visa website, removing the need to book an appointment at the outsourced visa processing agency, or make a laborious postal application.

The cost will be reduced from the current fee of £89.44 to \$60 (£39), and rather than book an appointment at an application centre or provide documents in the post, applicants will now be able to upload documents, pay the balance and track their application online.

The visa customer services desk also told Telegraph Travel that applicants could expect to pay a processing fee of \$1-2.

Visas will still not be issued immediately - once an online application is submitted, travellers can expect to receive entry documents via email within four days. But it is an improvement on the previous arrangements, which saw a typical postal application take up to two weeks.



e-Tourist visas are valid for travellers visiting India only for recreation, sight seeing, meeting friends or family or casual business visits (AP)

The Indian government website says that e-visa applications must be submitted a minimum of four days in advance of arrival in India.

The arrival of e-visas for British travellers comes after months of wrangling and confusion over the visa application process. In February this year, Indian authorities announced that all travellers would need to [attend an appointment at an application centre for fingerprinting](#), but [backed down after tour operators raised concerns](#) about the possible negative impact on tourism.

Travellers entering India on an e-visa must arrive at one of 16 designated airports, which include Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai. Biometric data, including fingerprinting, will be collected on arrival at the border.

- [A guide to visa application processes around the world](#)

Sue Livsey, India manager for Cox & Kings, welcomed the extension of e-visas to UK travellers, saying it was, "great news for anyone planning to visit India."

She added that the ability to apply online from home would be "far quicker and easier" and it would also enable people to apply for visas nearer to the date of departure.



India's heritage hotels are one of its main attractions for tourists

Specialist tour operator Greaves India said that the Indian tourist board had notified them of the e-visa scheme extension yesterday, and they were expecting more detail from a press conference due to be held next week.

- [The best heritage palace hotels in India](#)

Managing director Mehra Dalton said: "After much lobbying by the UK travel industry, we are thrilled that travel to India will become more accessible and affordable, allowing travellers more flexibility than ever before."

The e-visas are still subject to several constraints: the official Indian government visa website says that they may only be used for a maximum of two visits a year, are single-entry only, and that their 30-day validity cannot be extended.



Tour operators have welcomed the extension of India's e-visa scheme to UK travellers (Alamy)

The website also says that e-Tourist visas are valid for travellers visiting India only for recreation, sightseeing, meeting friends or family, “short duration medical treatment”, or for a “casual business visit.”

It also advises that passports must have at least six months’ validity from the date of arrival in India, and that applicants should carry a copy of the e-visa while travelling.

A spokesperson for Abta, the Association of British Travel Agents, said they were liaising with the Foreign Office as to what exactly it would mean for British travellers. It said their general experience was that costly or arduous visa processes deterred British travellers from visiting a country. "ABTA welcomes measures to streamline the process for holidaymakers", she added.

The Indian government hopes that the e-visa scheme extension will attract more tourists to visit the world's second most populated country.

India has seen a steady increase in visitor numbers over the past decade - official statistics record 7.68 million foreign arrivals last year. But tour operators have said India [has become a difficult destination to sell to tourists in the past year](#), notably due to high-profile sexual assaults on women.

The UK Foreign Office currently says that 800,000 Britons travel to India every year, and that most visits are "trouble free".

The e-visa system was introduced for 77 nationalities in November last year, and Indian authorities say that it has so far been used to issue 200,000 visas. Nationalities other than the UK that will also be able to use the e-visa scheme from this month include citizens of Ireland, Spain and Portugal.

Follow this link for the [official Indian e-visa home page](#).