

India Expected to Implement E-Visa Processing in 2015

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In a statement by India's tourism minister, employers and employees can look forward to E-Visa processing by June 2015. **E-Visa processing**, also known as Electronic Visa Authorisation (ETA), is **expected to be available to approximately 15 countries initially**. The list of countries is a point of contention among the three Indian government agencies involved in making the decision, as some officials are pushing for it to include the top 15 supply countries (which consists predominantly of the United States and European countries), while others want it to include countries from Africa and Asia. The list will likely include: United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Russia, Brazil, Australia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia; and will not include: Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Afghanistan. When E-Visa processing is finally implemented, foreign travelers will be able to make online visa applications and receive approvals within three to five working days. Upon arrival in India, foreign travelers will be eligible to remain in the country for up to 30 days.

In another related development, India is planning on extending its "Visas on Arrival" (VoA) program to at least six airports within the next couple of months as long as authorities can overcome "logistical" hurdles caused by India's current infrastructure which is being upgraded to handle the expected volume of foreign travelers that will apply for VoA.

These developments will be welcome news to frequent business travelers to India, as they will avoid the additional wait time associated with securing a business visa at an Indian Consulate abroad before entering the country. However, it will no doubt cause some headaches for global mobility managers who will have a harder time containing stealth business travel, whereby individuals travel to countries as business visitors, but are in fact performing work assignments.

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National Law Review, Volume IV, Number 280

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/india-expected-to-implement-e-visa-processing-2015>