

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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Sri Lanka – Tourist Visas to Be Offered with No Fee for 35 Countries

Sri Lanka has approved free tourist visas for 35 countries to boost tourism. Tourists will be given 30-day visas under a six-month pilot programme that will start from 1 October 2024.¹

WHY THIS MATTERS

This new visa-free policy may be welcomed by foreign nationals who intend to apply for the Tourist Visa - Sri Lanka. Waiving visa fees could significantly enhance Sri Lanka's appeal as a tourist destination (especially for tourists from the 35 countries in question).

It is important to note that the tourist visa does not permit the traveller to work in Sri Lanka. This, therefore, will have no effect on globally-mobile employees or their multinational employers.

Context

The country – like many countries – saw its tourism industry hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. But the tourism industry is reaping the benefits of a turnaround. India is the largest source of tourists with 246,922 arrivals, followed by United Kingdom with 123,992, latest data from the Sri Lanka Development Authority showed.²

Further Details

The 35 countries included in the new free visa initiative are:³

Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, the People's Republic of China, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, UAE, and the United States.

KPMG INSIGHTS

Currently, the issues around the functioning of the online visa process for travellers to Sri Lanka is ongoing – online facilities have been suspended in the country for the time being.⁴ Tourists may obtain visas through Sri Lanka’s overseas missions and on-arrival at the points of entry. (On-arrival visas are not available to nationals of Afghanistan, Syria, Ghana, Nigeria, Pakistan, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, North Korea, and Myanmar. Applicants from these countries can now lodge their applications with the Immigration Department head office through a representative.)⁵

Concerned parties should reach out to your usual global mobility professional or immigration counsel or a member of the global immigration team with KPMG in Sri Lanka (see the Contacts section).

KPMG in Sri Lanka will continue to monitor developments and provide updates as they become available.

FOOTNOTES:

1 See the Cabinet office statement:

(in English):

https://www.cabinetoffice.gov.lk/cab/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=49&lang=en&dID=12764.

(in Sinhala):

https://www.cabinetoffice.gov.lk/cab/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=49&lang=si&dID=12764.

Also, see the following press reports:

See "Sri Lanka announces “visa-free access for 38 nationalities with immediate effect” on Visanews.com (2 September 2024) at: <https://visasnews.com/en/sri-lanka-announces-visa-free-access-for-38-nationalities-with-immediate-effect/> . Please note that by clicking on this link, you are leaving the KPMG website for an external site (non-governmental, non-KPMG), that KPMG is not affiliated with nor does KPMG endorse its content. The use of the external site and its content may be subject to the terms of use and/or privacy policies of its owner or operator.

And "Sri Lanka: free visas for tourists from 35 countries" on Visanews.com (22 August 2024) at: <https://visasnews.com/en/sri-lanka-free-visas-for-tourists-from-35-countries/> . Please note that by clicking on this link, you are leaving the KPMG website for an external site (non-governmental, non-KPMG), that KPMG is not affiliated with nor does KPMG endorse its content. The use of the external site and its content may be subject to the terms of use and/or privacy policies of its owner or operator.

See: U. Jayasinghe, “Sri Lanka approves free tourist visas for 35 countries to boost tourism” in *Reuters* (22 August 2024) at : <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/sri-lanka-approves-free-tourist-visas-35-countries-boost-tourism-2024-08-22/> . Please note that by clicking on this link, you are leaving the KPMG website for an external site (non-governmental, non-KPMG), that KPMG is not affiliated with nor does KPMG endorse its content. The use of the external site and its content may be subject to the terms of use and/or privacy policies of its owner or operator.

FOOTNOTES (CONT'D):

2 See: Sri Lanka Development Authority “ Weekly Tourist Arrival 2024-August Report” at: https://www.slttda.gov.lk/storage/common_media/WeeklyReportAUGUST-01-19.pdf.

3 See: C. de Silva, “Presidential boost for tourism with free-visa to 35 nationals” in *Daily FT* (22 August 2024) at : <https://www.ft.lk/top-story/Presidential-boost-for-tourism-with-free-visa-to-35-nationals/26-765842> . *Please note that by clicking on this link, you are leaving the KPMG website for an external site (non-governmental, non-KPMG), that KPMG is not affiliated with nor does KPMG endorse its content. The use of the external site and its content may be subject to the terms of use and/or privacy policies of its owner or operator.*

4 For news of the online system being suspended, see the press release dated 4 August 2024, on the website of the embassy of Sri Lanka High Commission in the United Kingdom ("Notice: Revised Visa application process w.e.f. 02 August 2024") at: <https://srilankahc.uk/2024/08/04/urgent-notice-revised-visa-application-process-w-e-f-02-august-2024/>.

5 See: N. Wijedasa, “Online visa process suspended by SC” in *The Sunday Times* (4 August 2024) at : <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/240804/news/online-visa-process-suspended-by-sc-566208.html> . *Please note that by clicking on this link, you are leaving the KPMG website for an external site (non-governmental, non-KPMG), that KPMG is not affiliated with nor does KPMG endorse its content. The use of the external site and its content may be subject to the terms of use and/or privacy policies of its owner or operator.*

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Contact us

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* Please note the KPMG International member firm in the United States does not provide immigration or labour law services. However, KPMG Law LLP in Canada can assist clients with U.S. immigration matters.

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