



IJRASET

International Journal For Research in
Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 6 Issue: II Month of publication: February 2018

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2018.2014>

www.ijraset.com

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An Evaluation of the E-Tourist Visa as an Instrument to Boost Inbound Tourism in India

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Abstract: *Tourism is considered to be a major tool worldwide, instrumental in economic development, employment generation, poverty alleviation and international understanding. India is slowly and steadily registering its presence in the global arena, especially in the Asia and Pacific Region in the Tourism Sector. The share of India in terms of International Tourist Arrivals and rankings has increased considerably since 2014 (India Tourism Statistics, 2017). Since 2014, the Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism has surpassed the 20 billion USD mark. In 2014 India earned 20.2 billion USD which increased to 21.07 billion USD in 2015 and 22.92 billion USD in 2016. The Government of India, in order to position India as a major tourist destination, initiated various schemes such as Incredible India Campaign 2002, Atithi Devo Bhavah (ADB) in 2005, Visit India Year 2009 and Tourist Visa on Arrival(TVOA) in January 2010. Visa on Arrival was enabled by Electronic Travel Authorization on November 27, 2014. In April, 2015 this scheme was renamed as e-TV i.e. Electronic Tourist Visa. The scheme is already paying dividends as the journey began with 5 countries in 2010 (Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, Finland, Luxemburg) and as of now, nationals of 161 countries are availing e-Tourist Visas to India. In 2016, overall 1.079 million foreign tourists availed this facility as compared to 4,45,300 during January-December 2015, registering a growth of 142.5%. The paper aims to discuss the e-Tourist Visa and its impact on improving the inbound tourism in India*

Key Words: *Visa on Arrival-Tourist Visa, Inbound Tourism*

I. INTRODUCTION

International Tourism has grown by leaps and bounds in the last six decades from 25 million International Tourist Arrivals in 1950 to 940 million International Tourist Arrivals in 2010. (UNWTO, World Tourism Highlights, 2011). The growth has been phenomenal across all the five regions defined by UNWTO. The Tourism sector has emerged as one of the fastest growing economic sectors worldwide mainly attributed by higher disposable incomes especially of the middle class, increased time for leisure and recreational activities and the emergence of low cost carriers globally. The growth has been commendable especially in Asia and the Pacific Region as far as Tourism is concerned. India has strongly registered its presence on the Tourism Map of South Asia. It is the most visited nation in the South Asian Sub Region. To position India as a major Tourist Destination, Government of India introduced this lucrative scheme i.e. Visa on Arrival in 2010 and supplementing it further by enabling Electronic Travel Authorization on November 27, 2014 and renaming it as e-Tourist Visa in April, 2015. The facility of e-Visa has been made available by the Government of India to the citizens of 161 countries, arriving at 16 International Airports in India

II. E-VISA

This facility is completely online application by the applicant from one of the 161 nations who are being provided by this facility. The best part is non-involvement of any intermediary or an agent. The Government of India strictly advises the applicants to keep away from the fraudulent elements who jump into the fray with false promises of speedy grant of the e-Tourist Visa after paying excess amount of money. The help desk can be reached round the clock at 00911124300666 and electronically at indiatvoa@gov.in

III. CATEGORY AND PROCEDURE

e-Tourist Visa is sub-classified into e-Tourist Visa, e-Business Visa and e-Medical Visa. The facility availing national is given the rights to club the categories. The applicant can apply for the visa online minimum 4 days in advance of the date of arrival with a window of 120 days. e-Visa fees vary according to countries and territories. There are additional bank transaction charges of 2.5% on the applicable visa fees. It is mandatory for the applicants to carry a copy of Electronic Travel Authorization and should make sure that their status is shown as granted on the website prior to the commencement of their journey.

The applicants should keep a track of their application status online by pressing Visa Status. The validity of e-Visa will be 60 days from the date of arrival in India. Double entry is permitted on e-Tourist Visa and e-Business Visa. Triple entry will be permitted on e-Medical Visa. e-Visa is valid for entry through 24 designated Airports:

- A. Ahmedabad (Gujarat)
- B. Amritsar (Punjab)
- C. Bagdogra (West Bengal)
- D. Bengaluru (Karnataka)
- E. Calicut (Kerala)
- F. Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
- G. Chandigarh(Union Territory)
- H. Cochin(Kerala)
- I. Coimbatore(Tamil Nadu)
- J. Delhi (National Capital Territory)
- K. Gaya (Bihar)
- L. Panaji (Goa)
- M. Guwahati
- N. Hyderabad (Telangana)
- O. Jaipur (Rajasthan)
- P. Kolkata (West Bengal)
- Q. Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)
- R. Mangalore (Karnataka)
- S. Mumbai (Maharashtra)
- T. Nagpur (Maharashtra)
- U. Pune (Maharashtra)
- V. Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu)
- W. Trivandrum (Kerala)
- X. Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)

Apart from these there are 3 designated seaports (i.e. Cochin, Goa, and Mangalore). However, the foreigner can take exit from any of the authorized Immigration Check Posts (ICPs) in India. e-Visa can be availed for maximum of two times in a calendar year i.e. between January to December

IV. BENEFICIARY NATIONS AND TERRITORIES

Albania, Andorra, Angola, Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Aruba, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon Union Republic, Canada, Cape Verde, Cayman Island, Chile, China, China- SAR Hong Kong, China- SAR Macau, Colombia, Comoros, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Laos, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Montserrat, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger Republic, Niue Island, Norway, Oman, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Island, Tuvalu, UAE, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vatican City-Holy See, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe

V. IMPACT ON INBOUND TOURISM IN INDIA IN VIEW OF THE E-TOURIST VISA:

The growth of Inbound Tourism in India has been slow and steady which can be understood by the below mentioned Table:

Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India, 1981-2016

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India	Annual Growth (%)
1981	1279210	2.0
1982	1288162	0.7
1983	1304976	1.3
1984	1193752	-8.5
1985	1259384	5.5
1986	1451076	15.2
1987	1484290	2.3
1988	1590661	7.2
1989	1736093	9.1
1990	1707158	-1.7
1991	1677508	-1.7
1992	1867651	11.3
1993	1764830	-5.5
1994	1886433	6.9
1995	2123683	12.6
1996	2287860	7.7
1997	2374094	3.8
1998	2358629	-0.7
1999	2481928	5.2
2000	2649378	6.7
2001	2537282	-4.2
2002	2384364	-6.0
2003	2726214	14.3
2004	3457477	26.8
2005	3918610	13.3
2006	4447167	13.5
2007	5081504	14.3
2008	5282603	4.0
2009	5167699	-2.2
2010	5775692	11.8
2011	6309222	9.2
2012	6577745	4.3
2013	6967601	5.9
2014	7679099	10.2
2015	8027133	4.5
2016	8804411	9.7

The transformation from VoA ,VoA through ETA and e-Tourist Visa

A. An Evaluation of 2010

As a facilitative measure to attract more foreign tourists to India, Government has launched a Scheme of “Visa on Arrival” (VoA) from January 2010 for citizens of five countries, viz. Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore, visiting India for tourism purposes.

- 1) During the period January - December 2010, a total number of 6549 VoAs were issued under this Scheme
- 2) The number of visas issued under this scheme, during January to December 2010 for nationals of the five countries were Singapore (1814), New Zealand (1944), Japan (1457) ,Finland (1263) and Luxembourg (71).
- 3) Total number of VoAs issued during December, 2010 were 905 with country-wise breakup as Finland (140), Japan (216), New Zealand (340),Singapore (191) and Luxemburg (18).

- 4) During the year 2010 (January–December), the maximum number of VoAs were issued at Delhi airport (3493), followed by Mumbai (1511), Chennai (1211) and Kolkata (334).

B. An Evaluation of 2011

As a facilitative measure to attract more foreign tourists to India, Government launched a Scheme of “Visa on Arrival” (VoA) from January 2010 for citizens of five countries i.e. Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore, visiting India for tourism purposes. The Government has now extended this Scheme for the citizens of six more countries all from the ASEAN Region namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Laos and Myanmar from January 2011.

- 1) During the month of December 2011, a total number of 1640 VoAs were issued under this Scheme. The number of VoAs issued during the month of November 2011 were 1382
- 2) During the period January-December 2011, a total number of 12761 Vo As were issued.
- 3) The number of VoAs issued under this scheme, during December 2011 were New Zealand (473), Japan (265), Indonesia (247), Finland (246), Singapore (194), Philippines (173), Vietnam (18), Myanmar (9), Luxemburg (8) and Cambodia (7)
- 4) The number of VoAs issued under this scheme during January-December 2011 were New Zealand (2762), Japan (2344), Indonesia (2063), Philippines (1956),Singapore (1848), Finland (1335), Cambodia (149), Vietnam (145), Luxemburg(74), Myanmar (71) and Laos (14).
- 5) During the period January-December 2011, the maximum number of VoAs were issued at Delhi airport (7340), followed by Mumbai (2816), Chennai (1948) and Kolkata (657).

C. An Evaluation of 2012

As a facilitative measure to attract more foreign tourists to India, the Government launched the “Visa on Arrival” (VoA) Scheme in January 2010 for citizens of five countries, viz. Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore, visiting India for tourism purposes. The Government extended this Scheme to the citizens of six more countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar in January 2011. The following are the important highlights of VoAs issued during December, 2012.

- 1) During the month of December 2012, a total number of 2,181 VoAs were issued under this Scheme as compared to 1,640 VoAs during the month of December 2011, registering a growth of 33.0%
- 2) During the period January-December 2012, a total number of 16,084 VoAs were issued as compared to 12,761 VoAs during the corresponding period of 2011, registering a growth of 26.0%.
- 3) The number of VoAs issued under this scheme during December 2012 for nationals of the eleven countries were Japan (691), New Zealand (505),Indonesia (310), Singapore (256), the Philippines (239), Finland (104),Vietnam (34), Myanmar (20),Cambodia (13), Luxembourg (9) and Laos (0).
- 4) The number of VoAs issued under this scheme during January-December 2012 were Japan (4,604), New Zealand (3,150), the Philippines (2,444),Indonesia (2,426), Singapore (1,974), Finland (914), Vietnam (186),Cambodia (157), Luxembourg (110), Myanmar (109) and Laos (10).
- 5) During the period January-December 2012, the highest number of VoAs were issued at Delhi airport (9,596), followed by Mumbai (3,276), Chennai (2,273) and Kolkata (939)

D. An Evaluation of 2013

As a facilitative measure to attract more foreign tourists to India, the Government launched the “Visa on Arrival” (VoA) Scheme in January 2010 for citizens of five countries i.e. Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore, visiting India for tourism purposes. The Government extended this Scheme to the citizens of six more countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar in January 2011. The following are the important highlights of VoAs issued during December, 2013.

- 1) During the month of December 2013, a total of 2,700 VoAs were issued under this Scheme as compared to 2,181 VoAs during the month of December 2012, registering a growth of 23.8%.
- 2) During the period January to December 2013, a total number of 20,294 VoAs were issued as compared to 16,084 VoAs during the corresponding period of 2012 registering a growth of 26.2%.

- 3) The number of VoAs issued under this scheme during December 2013 for nationals of the eleven countries was Japan (744), New Zealand (619), Singapore (416), Indonesia (358), the Philippines (352), Finland (141), Vietnam (24), Cambodia (20), Luxembourg (19), Myanmar (5) and Laos (2)
- 4) number of VoAs issued under the Scheme during January to December 2013 was Japan (6,448), New Zealand (3,968), the Philippines (2,967), Indonesia (2,758), Singapore (2,486), Finland (1,030), Vietnam (205), Myanmar (148), Luxembourg (145), Cambodia (120) and Laos (19)
- 5) During the period January to December 2013, the highest number of VoAs were issued at New Delhi airport (11,046) followed by Mumbai (4,206), Chennai (2,815), Kolkata (1,351), Bangalore (380), Kochi (229), Hyderabad (165) and Trivandrum (102)

E. An Evaluation of 2014

Government of India has launched Tourist Visa on Arrival (TVoA) enabled by Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) on 27th November 2014 for 43 countries. Prior to it, only the normal TVoA scheme was in operation for 12 countries. The following are the important highlights of TVoA (including ETA enabled) issued during December, 2014:

- 1) December 2013, registering a growth of 421.6%. During January –December 2014, a total number of 39,046 TVoA were issued as compared to 20,294 TVoA during corresponding period of 2013 registering a growth of 92.4%. This high growth is due to introduction of ETA enabled TVoA for 43 countries in November 2014
- 2) The percentage shares of top 10 source countries for TVoA, in India during December 2014, were as follows: USA (24.26%), Russian Federation (15.06%), Republic of Korea (11.01%), Ukraine (8.16%), Australia (7.98%), New Zealand (5.08%), Japan (4.30%), Singapore (4.27%), Germany (4.05%) and the Philippines (3.10%)
- 3) The percentage shares of different ports for TVoA, in India during December 2014, were as follows:
- 4) New Delhi (35.78%), Mumbai (21.05%), Goa (18.24%), Chennai (7.17%), Bengaluru (5.76%), Kochi (4.54%), Hyderabad (3.13%), Kolkata (2.35%), and Trivandrum (1.98%).

F. An Evaluation of 2015

Commencing from 27th November 2014 e-Tourist Visa facility is presently available for citizens of 113 countries arriving at 16 Airports in India. The following are the important highlights of e-Tourist Visa during December, 2015:

The following are the important highlights of e-Tourist Visa during December, 2015:

- 1) During the month of December, 2015 a total of 1,03,617 tourist arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 14,083 during the month of December, 2014 registering a growth of 635.8%
- 2) During January- December, 2015 a total of 4,45,300 tourist arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 39,046 during January-December, 2014 registering a growth of 1040.4%
- 3) This high growth may be attributed to introduction of e-Tourist Visa for 113 countries as against coverage of earlier ETA enabled TVoA scheme for 43 countries.
- 4) The percentage shares of top 10 source countries availing e-Tourist Visa facilities during December, 2015 were as follows: UK (23.81%), USA (19.59%), Russian Fed. (9.33%), Australia (5.44%), Germany (4.86%), France (4.44%), Canada (4.40%), China (3.10%), Republic of Korea (1.83%) and Ukraine (1.67%)
- 5) The percentage shares of top 10 ports in tourist arrivals on e-Tourist Visa during December, 2015 were as follows: New Delhi Airport (36.23%), Mumbai Airport (21.90%), Goa Airport (16.54%), Bengaluru Airport (5.54%), Kochi Airport (4.68%), Chennai Airport (4.21%), Kolkata Airport (2.74%), Hyderabad Airport (2.68%), Trivandrum Airport (2.05%) and Ahmedabad Airport (1.79%).

G. An Evaluation of 2016

The facility of e-Visa has been made available by the Government of India to the citizens of 161 countries, arriving at 16 International Airports in India. The number of e-Tourist Visa availed by foreign tourists visiting India during the month of December, 2016 has registered a substantial growth rate over the corresponding month of 2015. The salient highlights of e-Tourist Visa for and upto the month of December, 2016 are as follows:

- 1) During the month of December, 2016 a total of 1,62,250 foreign tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 1,03,617 during the month of December, 2015 registering a growth of 56.6%.
- 2) During January- December 2016, a total of 10,79,696 tourist arrived on eTourist Visa as compared to 4,45,300 during January-December 2015, registering a growth of 142.5%

- 3) This high growth may be attributed to introduction of e-Tourist Visa for 161 countries as against the earlier coverage of 113 countries
- 4) The percentage shares of top 10 source countries availing e-Tourist Visa facilities during December, 2016 were as follows: UK (22.4%), USA (16.4%), Russian Fed (7.7%), China (5.3%), Australia (4.6%), France (4.1%), Germany (4.0%), South Africa (3.7%), Canada (3.7%) and Republic of Korea (2.0%) .
- 5) The percentage shares of top 10 ports in tourist arrivals on e-Tourist Visa during December, 2016 were as follows:
New Delhi Airport (36.6%), Mumbai Airport (23.1%), Dabolim (Goa) Airport (13.6%), Chennai Airport (6.0%), Bengaluru Airport (5.1%), Kochi Airport (4.7%), Kolkata Airport (2.5%), Hyderabad Airport (2.4%), Trivandrum Airport (1.9%) and Ahmedabad Airpor (1.7%).

VI. CONCLUSION

Inbound Tourism is on the rise in India post 2002. Various promotional schemes initiated by the Government of India has benefited India to a great extent be it the Incredible India Campaign, Visit India Year and the lucrative e-Tourist Visa with a sound beginning in 2010 and going pretty strong as of date. The results seem to be very positive with the above mentioned data portrays the complete picture. The Government of India plans to increase the number to 180 countries who will be availing the facilities of e-Tourist Visa. The tourism ministry got 70 per cent hike in the Union budget 2016-17 with an allocation of Rs 1,590 crore, to focus on infrastructure development and promotion and publicity initiatives. Tourism is slowly and steadily becoming a prime objective of the Government of India as they have understood the importance of Tourism as a major generator the valuable foreign exchange adding to the Gross Domestic Product and the e-Tourist Visa can provide a helping hand in this vital and lucrative journey.

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