

# RUSSIA: SIMPLIFIED E-VISA ON OFFER FOR 53 COUNTRIES



As countries reopen tourism destinations amidst the coronavirus pandemic, Russia is set to begin a new electronic visa policy for tourists from different countries starting from 2021. According to media reports, the new legislation will allow foreign tourists from 53 countries to visit Russia with simplified e-visa.

Before Russia closed its borders in March due to the pandemic, the nation had introduced e-visas for tourists visiting Kaliningrad, Petersburg, and the Far East. **With the new expansion plan, tourism officials look forward to encouraging more visitors and increase revenue generation for the sector after months of hardships.**

The new legislation requires citizens of all 53 countries, including China, India, Turkey, Japan, and EU member states to apply for the visas on the Russian Foreign Ministry website.

According to reports from Kommersant newspaper, visitors from these countries can get a 16-day single-entry tourist visa online beginning from January 1st, 2021.

The visas will be issued within a maximum of 4 days after application and valid for 60 days. The simplified e-visas will be free for children 6 years and below, while adults will pay a \$50 fee.

According to the Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Ivanov, the draft regulations will be submitted to the Russian government on July 18th following the legislation passing first reading at Russia's lower house of parliament last week.

Rostourism, Russia's Federal Tourist Agency, had recommended cost-free e-visas to encourage tourism and make the visas multiple entries and extend the e-visas from 16 days to between 90 and 120 days.

In response to these recommendations, Yevgeny Ivanov noted that visa fees are necessary to prevent database overload and also discourage manipulation. He also added that the nation gained over 2000 illegal immigrants after the visa waiver program during the 2018 football World Cup; hence, any changes made should be done slowly and orderly.

Ivanov had earlier stated that Britain, Canada, and the U.S might join the eligible countries if talks go well.

**He however, explained that Russia could adjust the e-visa policy in the future to expand the validity period to 1 year or 5 years and allow multiple entries within that period.**

Although it is currently uncertain as to when Russian embassies and consulates in other countries will reopen, diplomats abroad are gearing up to resume once their offices resume from the closure occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic.

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