

VISA-ON-ARRIVAL: ALGERIA PLANS TO OPEN UP TO FOREIGN TOURISTS



Algeria is becoming more accessible to foreign tourists as a tourist destination. Previously, the country was hard to reach and not very well-known. However, with the introduction of the visa-on-arrival system, tourists can now easily visit the Sahara region. Hopefully, this system will soon be extended to other parts of the country.

The country's size and natural beauty are now attracting the attention of significant international travel and tourism media outlets. This has positively impacted its image among tourists, making it an attractive destination.

Algeria Facilitates Access for Nature-interested Tourists

Experts have raised concerns about the accessibility of foreign tourists in Algeria, **particularly concerning the visa-on-arrival process for those wanting to visit the Algerian Sahara.** According to the media, Algeria prioritizes tourism, unlike neighboring countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. The country has much to offer, from the breathtaking landscapes and prehistoric art of its vast Sahara Desert to the picturesque Mediterranean cities, Roman ruins, and picturesque mountains of the Djurdjura and the Atlas Mountains.

Since the start of last year, adventure tourists who prefer the Sahara's ruggedness over the comforts of traditional tourist destinations can travel to Algeria using a visa-on-arrival procedure. The Algerian Minister of Tourism, Mokhtar Didouche, explains that visa facilities are mainly granted to "people who want to discover the grandeur of nature." This system allows tourists to plan their trips flexibly and reduces the bureaucratic hurdles often associated with visa applications.

Tourism in Algeria: Is the Capacity of Hotels Sufficient?

Algeria needs to build more tourist facilities to attract more visitors. Currently, only 1,600 hotels offer services that meet international standards and 150,000 to 160,000 beds. The minister acknowledges that the capacity must be increased to accommodate more foreign tourists. These facilities include hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and tourist attractions.

Recognizing the need for more tourism infrastructure, the Algerian authorities have taken a proactive step. They have allocated a significant 58,000 hectares of land across the country to potential investors in the tourism sector. This commitment to improving the tourism infrastructure demonstrates the government's vision and presents a promising opportunity for investors in the sector.

Visa-on-arrival: Soon to Be Extended

The authorities have announced that 10,000 visas were granted during the tourist year that ended in February 2024 as part of the visa-on-arrival procedure in southern Algeria. **The minister also reported that 3.3 million people visited Algeria during these 12 months,** with the majority being members of the Algerian diaspora abroad. The minister said that this figure was previously unimaginable, and he hopes to see 10 million arrivals by 2030.

Regarding visas on arrival, **applications are processed within ten days, and visitors must book their trips through approved travel agencies in Algeria.** Usually, visitors are accompanied by a security escort, a precautionary measure to ensure their safety. Some tour operators have indicated that, in addition to exploring the desert, they can take their groups to sites located in the north of the country.

The minister has also announced plans to extend the visa-on-arrival policy for the Sahara to the entire country soon. While he did not provide specific dates, this is a significant step towards making Algeria more accessible to foreign tourists.

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