

SRI LANKA TO SCRAP ON-ARRIVAL VISAS



Barring a few exceptions, Sri Lanka is set to introduce a new visa system, meaning that visitors will have to apply online for a visa instead of getting visas on arrival as they used to do.

For 76 countries the rules have changed: visitors from these countries will have to apply online for their visas to Sri Lanka rather than get the visa on arrival as the situation used to be. Notable exceptions include Singapore and the Maldives, whose citizens will keep the privilege of being able to pick their visas up on Sri Lankan soil rather than going through the new Internet ordeal.

This is because the named countries still have the same rules in place for Sri Lankan citizens. **The new legislation is expected to come into force at the end of this year, though probably in January.**

The government of Sri Lanka expects that the new rules may entice more tourists to visit, as it should dispel fears that tourists could be turned away at ports and should make their lives easier. On the contrary, travel agencies have pointed out that the online process may prove to be merely an extra burden for many tourists instead. **Sri Lanka has a target of 2.5 million tourists by 2016, bringing in revenue of around \$2 billion.**

The visa issue has been on the tip of many tongues in and around Sri Lanka for some time, with visa fraud, asylum cases and emigration problems giving Sri Lanka a less than perfect reputation on the international scene. Emigration is, indeed, big business, with advertisements in many quarters tempting Sri Lankans to flee elsewhere. Only time will tell what the new legislation does to Sri Lankan tourism.

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<http://www.tourism-review.com/visa-in-sri-lanka-new-online-form-for-tourists-introduced-news2958>