

His Excellency Ranil Wickremasinghe
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 1

Your Excellency,

NEW VISA PROCESS FOR TOURISTS VISITING SRI LANKA

We the industry want to bring to your attention recent changes in the tourist visa process for visiting Sri Lanka. On April 16th, 2024, the Controller General of Immigration issued a notice suspending the Government ETA (Electronic Travel Authorization) website. Consequently, visas will now be processed exclusively through a private company-operated website at <https://www.srilankaevisa.lk/> starting April 17th, 2024.

We have raised our concerns with the Honorable Minister, who has assured us that a single-entry tourist visa will be made available for US\$ 50 inclusive of all charges by May 1st, 2024. However, the application process remains complex and unfriendly, with additional fees likely to apply.

There has been a significant increase in the cost of tourist visas, with the new private website not offering the previously available single-entry tourist visa with a 30-day validity. Instead, only a more expensive six-month multiple-entry visa is currently available at a total cost of US\$ 100.77 due to additional service and convenience fees.

A recent study indicates that Sri Lanka now has the highest visa costs in Asia, creating a significant barrier for tourists compared to competing destinations like Thailand, Vietnam and many other destinations that offer free visas or charge much lower fees. Moreover, as we go into the period of family travel in July & August, the current fees would require a family of four to pay US\$ 400 just to enter the country.

We have attached herewith a report with information on visa costs and how this change of process and cost increase will affect the industry in Sri Lanka. We have also attached an email sent out from the new visa website to a tourist, asking him to re schedule his holiday as they are unable to issue the visa in time, due to a glitch in the system.

The tourism industry, a key pillar of our economic recovery, is aiming for 2.3 to 2.5 million tourist arrivals in 2024. However, these visa changes threaten this goal. The abrupt fee increase and complicated process are likely to deter tourists, potentially reducing arrivals to below 2 million. We cannot therefore help but wonder your excellency, whilst yourself together with the tourism authorities and industry lead by the Honorable Minister, are working tirelessly to rebuild, that some elements, from within your government, are trying to disrupt the progress.



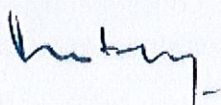
We respectfully urge you to intervene and restore a competitive and user-friendly visa process through a government-operated website, similar to the previous ETA system to enable a tourist to obtain the necessary 30 days, single entry visa, with ease. This adjustment is crucial to sustaining the positive momentum in our tourism industry and supporting the broader economic recovery efforts.

Thank you for your attention and continued support of our industry.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO)



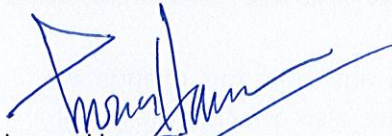
Nishad Wijetunga
President

Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka (TAASL)



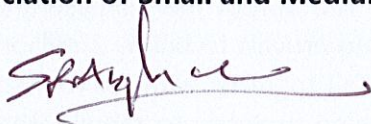
Duminda Kuruwitaarachchi
President

Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference Exhibition & Event Organizers (SLAPCEO)



Imran Hassen
President

Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism (ASMET)



Rohan Abeywickrema
President

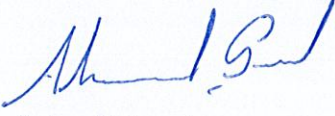


C/o Ceylon Chamber of Commerce

50, Nawam Mawatha, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka.

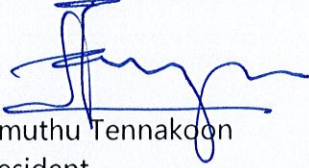
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IATA Agents Association of Sri Lanka (IAASL)



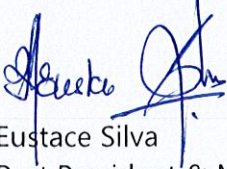
Sabry Bahaudeen
President

Board of Airline Representatives (BAR)



Dimuthu Tennakoon
President

Sri Lanka Association of Airline Representatives (SLAAR)



Eustace Silva
Past President & Member Industrial Committee

Cc: Hon. Sagala Ratnayake – Chief of Staff of His Excellency the President
Hon. Harin Fernando, Minister of Tourism, Lands, Sports and Youth Affairs
Hon. Nimal Siripala De Silva – Minister of Transport and Aviation
Hon. Tiran Alles, Minister of Public Security
Mr. Buwaneka Herath, Secretary Ministry of Tourism and Lands
Mr. Priantha Fernando, Chairman SLTDA



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Issues & concerns with the high visa fees & the new system.

Issue with the Price Increase –

- Loosing competitiveness – Sri Lanka now will have the highest Visa Fee of any of our direct competitors.
- Against the trends – Sri Lanka's increase is out of step with regional competitors like China, Thailand, and Bhutan, who are either offering free visas or lowering costs.
- High Costs - High additional service fees (approximately \$25) are very excessive for a process that was previously more efficient and locally managed. If 2 million Tourists area reached 50 million USD in additional fees will be charged.

Country	Nationality	Visa Type	Duration	Fee
Sri Lanka	India	ETA	30 days	\$62
	Europe/UAE	ETA	30 days	\$101
Thailand	India	Visa on Arrival	30 days	\$60
	Europe/UAE	N/A	30 days	Free
Cambodia	All	E-visa	30 days	\$36
Maldives	All	Visa on Arrival	30 days	Free
India	Europe/UAE	E-visa	30 days	\$25-\$40
Vietnam	South Korea, Japan, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain	E-visa	14 to 45 days	Free
	All	E-visa	30 days	\$25
Laos	All	Visa on Arrival	30 days	\$30-\$40
China	Austria, Belgium, Hungary Luxembourg France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland.	Standard Visa	30 days	Free
	Other	Standard Visa	30 days	\$75-\$90
Indonesia	India	Visa on Arrival	30 days	\$35
	Europe/UAE	N/A	30 days	Free
Malaysia	India	eNTRI	30 days	\$20
	Europe/UAE	N/A	90 days	Free
Singapore	India	E-visa	30 days	\$30
	Europe/UAE	N/A	90 days	Free

Issue with the new system –

- **No Multi Language Functionality** – the bulk of the visitors to Sri Lanka have limited English.
- **Ease of use** – The previous system was straightforward and extremely easy to use for those with limited IT knowledge. The current system is complex with an OTP system, scrolling sections that are not easy to find, requirements of documents, complex format requirements for documents, unnecessary required fields (Second Address Line, Post Code) & asks for unnecessary details like Facebook, Twitter accounts.
- **Group Requests** – The previous system had a simple system to add multiple people to a request. Currently this system has a feature but requires you to re-enter a lot of the information.
- **Security & Privacy**– The website lacks a clear privacy policy and does not seem to adhere to global data protection laws. The security of data must be evaluated further.
- **Bugs** – Various users have reported down time on the site, bugs, unclear error messages and no confirmations.

Other Issues –

- **Communication** – The launch and communication of the said launch have been poor making Tour Operators around the world panic. It is vital that all major changes and price increases be announced with enough lead time and clear communication on process in order not to damage the reputation of Sri Lanka.
- **Longer Visas** – Creating longer stay visa's will further impact the current issue of foreigners illegally working in Sri Lanka. Further, attracting long-stay tourists may discourage traditional, shorter-term visitors, potentially reducing overall tourist spending and impacting the local tourism capacity as longer-stay tourists are always lower spenders and maybe travelling for other reasons than tourism.