

New Saudi Arabia stopover visa: stay up to 96 hours free

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Dhaka: The new Saudi Stopover Visa will allow passengers to stay in the country for up to 96 hours to explore Saudi Arabia's incomparable historical, cultural, and spiritual sites.

The new Saudi Arabia stopover visa is open to passport holders of more countries than the tourism e-visa.

It is the latest move to promote tourism and make the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia more accessible.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism (MT), Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah (MOHU), Saudi Tourism Authority (STA), SAUDIA and flynas, has announced the launch of a new stopover visa.

In Q1 this year airline capacity into Saudi Arabia is expected to grow by over

65 per cent compared to the same period in 2022 when four of the Top Ten busiest international routes were to or from Saudi.

Travellers will also be able to use the Stopover Visa to perform the spiritual Umrah ritual. Spiritual travelers can book flights through Saudia and flynas, but must also register for Umrah through the Nusuk platform.

Stopover visa holders will be eligible for a complimentary one-night hotel stay during the stopover when booking through Saudia.

To help visitors make the most of their stopover, custom 24, 48, 72 and 96-hour itineraries have been developed to inspire visitors to stroll through Jeddah's Al-Balad, or visit the Al-Turaif district in Diriyah, one of Saudi's six UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Visitors can also use the stopover visa to break up long-haul flights or book a bonus trip to experience Saudi's burgeoning entertainment and seasonal events calendar or even extend a business trip on the way to their final destination.

The stopover visa application will be automatically available through the airline booking platforms for all passengers traveling to their final destination on Saudia or flynas airlines. A stopover can be made through any airport in Saudi. For many, the application process can be completed in under three minutes and can be applied for up to 90 days before travel.

The stopover visa provides yet another flexible option for visitors to experience the authentic home of Arabia and will contribute to Saudi's vision of reaching 100 million visits annually by 2030.

On the occasion, Ahmed Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism of Saudi Arabia, and Chairman of the Board of Saudi Tourism Authority, said, "The new stopover visa is open for travellers passing through Saudi on our national carriers whether for leisure, business or Umrah. We will continue to work together across government and the tourism ecosystem as Saudi transforms into a leading global tourism destination."

Captain Ibrahim Koshy, CEO of Saudia, said, "The launch of this innovative and seamless Stopover Visa is the first of its kind in the aviation industry and a significant milestone in our digital transformation program. It is a testament to Saudia's commitment to support the Kingdom's strategic goal of reaching 100 million visits by 2030 and we are confident it will positively impact the growing number of transit passengers while enhancing our position as a hub that connects East and West. The new service will also encourage passengers to perform Umrah, visit key destinations and attend

events and Saudi seasons."