

JUNE 7, 2016 GLOBAL IMMIGRATION BULLETIN

## Several Countries Initiate Online Immigration Processes

Over the past several years, we've seen more countries take their immigration processes online. Some have instituted online forms, some have automated portions of the adjudication, and some have made the entire visa process completely paperless. Here are some notable recent changes:

**AUSTRALIA:** Citizens of certain countries, who are travelling to Australia for tourism or business, may be eligible to apply for an online ETA. An online ETA is an Electronic Travel Authorization issued by the Australian government, which is electronically linked to the traveler's passport. In most cases, travelers holding an ETA can make multiple entries to Australia for tourism or business within a 1 year period. Each entry usually allows the traveler a maximum stay of up to 90 days.

**RUSSIA:** Beginning in May, the Russian Foreign Ministry has introduced a new online visa application. If you have completed the old online Russian visa form but have not submitted it yet, the Russian Consulate requires you to complete the new online visa form prior to submission.

**BRAZIL:** The government of Brazil has introduced changes to the already digital visa application process. The new visa application has several additional steps and questions, and also requires uploading a digital passport-size photo.

**INDIA:** In addition to the traditional Tourist Visa, the Indian government now offers an electronic e-Tourist Visa ("eTV") for certain nationals whose sole purpose for visiting India is recreation, sight-seeing, visiting friends or relatives, short duration medical treatment, or casual business (including attending a conference). Applications for e-TVs must be made at least four days prior to the anticipated date of arrival in India. The visa is valid for a single entry with a maximum stay of 30 days, and can be obtained only twice in each calendar year. The eTV cannot be extended or converted to another status, and is invalid for travel to Protected/Restricted and Cantonment Areas. The eTV is completely electronic (i.e. there is nothing applied to the holder's passport to indicate status) and is valid for arrival only in 16 designated Airports: Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Bengaluru, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Gaya, Goa, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Tiruchirapalli, Trivandrum & Varanasi. eTV holders can exit from any of the authorized Immigration Check Posts (ICPs) in India.

## **Temporary Allowances:**

**BRAZIL:** To encourage attendance at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, citizens of certain countries will be admitted to Brazil without a visa between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The particular terms of the entry varies, depending on the type of passport and the nationality of the holder. Citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan, and the USA, for example, will be admitted for up to 90 days. This category of entry is not appropriate for business visitors, workers, students, etc.

**ARGENTINA:** US passport holders can travel to Argentina for business or tourism, for a stay of up to 90 days, without a visa. Although they would normally be required to pay a "Reciprocity Fee" prior to traveling to Argentina, the Argentine government has temporarily lifted this requirement. Please note, however, that this temporary exemption may be rescinded at any time, again requiring US passport holders to pay the reciprocity fee before traveling.

## **Preparing official documents that still need to be submitted on paper:**

**LEGALIZATION AND APOSTILLE OF U.S. DOCUMENTS FOR USE ABROAD:** In order for an official document from the United States to be recognized in foreign countries, the document must be authenticated or "legalized". This is a process in which various seals are placed on the document to certify the document's authenticity. Different countries require different levels of authentication and have different procedures. The apostille certificate is a special seal issued on documents for use in Hague Convention member states that have agreed to standardized statutes to verify the authenticity of foreign documents. Members of The Hague Legalization Convention, or "Apostille Convention", have agreed to abolish the requirement of legalization of public documents between member states—accepting the apostille certificate instead. To date, more than 110 countries have signed this agreement and recognize the statutes in whole or in part. Document legalizations or apostilles are required for many foreign permit and/or visa processes, but they're frequently overlooked during a trip's planning stages. Depending on the country where the document will be used, it can sometimes take several weeks to get the appropriate seals.

If you have any questions about any of the above information, or wish to discuss a particular immigration concern for any destination outside the United States, please feel free to speak with any member of our Global Immigration Practice by calling us at 412-297-4900. To receive future bulletins, please send an e-mail to [bulletins@cohenlaw.com](mailto:bulletins@cohenlaw.com).

*NOTE: We are knowledgeable and experienced immigration professionals, but we are not authorized to practice law or give advice in every jurisdiction in which our clients do business. Therefore, and when appropriate and/or required by local laws, we seek the counsel of authorized immigration professionals within the target jurisdiction and work closely with them to evaluate immigration requirements and options, prepare and file applications, etc.*

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