



## Planning a Trip to U.S.? You May Have to Wait till 2024 for a Visitor Visa Appointment

Isha Sharma

August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Are you planning a trip to the US? You might want to check the wait time for a visitor visa appointment, as Indians will have to wait until 2024 to book a relevant appointment.

The average wait time for a visitor visa is more than 500 days or almost 1.5 years. If you apply for a visa this month, your appointment date will likely be in 2024.

The appointment for a visitor visa at the US consulate in New Delhi is 582 calendar days, and for a student visa, it is 471 days, according to the US Department of State's travel website [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov).

The average wait time in Mumbai for a US visa appointment is ten days for a student visa and 517 calendar days for a visitor visa.

The average wait time in Hyderabad is 479 days for a student visa and 518 calendar days for a visitor visa. The average wait time in Kolkata for a US visa appointment is two days for a student visa and 587 calendar days for a visitor visa.

The standard wait time in Chennai for a US visa appointment is eight days and 513 calendar days for both a student visa and a visitor visa.

Why has the wait time significantly increased?

The two-year lockdown of US consulates worldwide brought on by the pandemic has halted visa services, according to David Bier, associate director of immigration policy at the libertarian Cato Institute, as per a report in VOA news.

*"They just stopped doing work during COVID. And that produced what we're seeing now: year-plus waits, massive backlogs, and all the problems associated with that,"* he told VOA.

Though wait times vary significantly from consulate to consulate, Bier said, "it is the worst it's ever been since 9/11."

*"The estimated wait time to receive an interview appointment at a US Embassy or Consulate can change weekly and is based on actual incoming workload and staffing. These are estimates only and do not guarantee the availability of an appointment,"* according to the website's visa page.

The US embassy responded to delays by stating that the Department of State is committed to facilitating legitimate travel to the US for both immigrant and non-immigrant travelers.

As per a report in NDTV, the embassy spokesperson in a statement said,

*"The US government is taking steps to reduce wait times and backlogs by actively addressing consular staffing gaps created by the pandemic, including onboarding and training new employees. The Department of State has doubled consular hiring of US officers this fiscal year over last year, and newly trained employees are making their way to overseas consular adjudicator positions, including in India."*

*"Visa processing is rebounding after a near-complete shutdown and freezing of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this recovery, the US government is prioritizing national interest and repeat travel (for applicants who have already had a US visa), which may mean that some travelers applying for their first visitor visa experience a longer wait time,"* the statement added.

The State Department noted that overseas consular offices might be able to move up the applicant's interview date *"if there is an urgent, unforeseen situation such as a funeral, medical emergency, or school start date."*

In addition to the US, other nations like the UK, Schengen states, Canada, etc., are reportedly taking a long time to process visa applications.

In the UK, for instance, the wait time for a visa has risen to four to ten weeks. Germany no longer issues visas for an indefinite stay.

The Danish Embassy in India temporarily suspended applications for residence permits and short-stay visas on May 30, 2022, and were reopened on July 6.

For new applications made through the sponsored work and student visa routes, the UK will soon resume offering its Priority Visa (PV) and Super Priority Visa (SPV) services.

On August 12, the announcement was made public through the British High Commission on India's official Twitter account.

The High Commission stated that it expects many applicants in the weeks ahead and advised students to submit their applications as soon as possible since collecting the relevant paperwork can take some time.

The UK High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis, apologized the same day for the unnecessary delay experienced by Indian citizens applying for UK visas. In the video message on Twitter, he said,

*"Most of you are getting visas to go to the UK within 15 working days, but there is a long tail of complex cases that take much longer. "*

He also issued an apology to those who were troubled by the delays. He also explained why the delays are happening, saying,

*"First, because of the unprecedented surge in demand for UK visas post-Covid. Secondly, because of global events, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine."*

He said they bring more resources, train more people, and keep the priority visa service open. He went on to advise, saying,

*"Don't commit to your air tickets until you have got your visa to be on the safe side. We want to see an unprecedented number of Indian students coming to the UK this year, and we will do everything we can to ensure you get your visa on time. But again, follow the guide to the letter."*

In addition, some countries have made it more difficult to obtain visas due to the COVID outbreak. A few additional checks have been added to the processing, such as verifying the vaccination certificates.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) discussed streamlining student visas for Indian nationals with Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, New Zealand, Poland, the UK, and the USA in June 2022.

People in India have been preparing to travel abroad now that COVID restrictions have been eased and regular international flights have restarted.