

What Ghana's new visa-on-arrival scheme means for tourism and hospitality

For all African Union Nationals whose countries do not have a visa-free agreement with Ghana, the country has started a visa-on-arrival scheme at Kotoka International Airport (KIA).



All AU nationals affected by the policy who arrive in the country must have a passport, valid for at least three months from the date of entry; they must have a return ticket or evidence of onward travel; they must show evidence of sufficient funds and proof of accommodation before they are granted visas according to the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS).

This is great news for many travellers. However, what does it mean for the tourism and hospitality industries? Jumia Travel looks at the advantages and disadvantages of this development to these industries:

No more running around

For many travellers from African Union countries who plan on coming to Ghana either for business or for a vacation, this is welcoming news. What this basically means is that there is no need for running around embassies hustling for a visa before entering Ghana. All you have to do is be on that plane and you can acquire the visa once you arrive at the airport in Ghana. This eliminates the headache most travellers get from the processes and the bureaucracy involved. Coming to Ghana has never been easier than this.

It saves time and money

Secondly, the visa on arrival saves time and money. For many travellers, it was very time consuming filling out various forms and assembling many supporting documents to process a visa. The stress involved even discourages travelers and they tend to end the process as fast as they begin it. The monies involved in acquiring these visas are also exorbitant. From transportation costs to visa fees and agent fees, some travellers end up spending so much money to secure a simple visa to Ghana can be discouraging.

More people, more business

The new system means that more people will be willing to visit Ghana as it has become very convenient, cheaper and less time consuming. For the hospitality industry, the more people who arrive in Ghana, the more need for accommodation

(hotels) and the more use of restaurants which means more business for stakeholders in the industry. For the Tourism sector, as more people are able to travel freely to Ghana, sales at tourist sites will be boosted and referrals from tourists to other travellers will also increase. There will be increased pressure on stakeholders to improve infrastructure and services in order to accommodate the large numbers of tourists trickling into the country.

High rates and competition

On the other hand, many hotels are already selling their rooms at high rates due to certain socioeconomic factors. If the number of foreign entry increases a bit more, then rates will be out of range because of the need to compete and provide adequate and efficient services to these travellers. This will have an adverse effect on the hospitality sector and a rippling effect on tourism. If travellers have to pay huge fees to get comfortable accommodation, they will hardly have any money left to tour and visit historic destinations and attractions that will fetch good revenue for the nation.

A limited service

Significantly, the issuance of visas on arrival is a very limiting service. Although highly beneficial, it is limited to only air travellers and doesn't make room currently for travellers who enter Ghana by road and sea. This means that many African travellers who cannot afford to travel by air would not benefit and this will stop them from planning trips to many beautiful destinations in Ghana. What this also means is that there will be long queues at the airport as every African traveller will be in line for a visa on arrival at the airport. This may be frustrating especially for the old, children or disabled.

Pressure on scarce resources

Finally, making it easy for African travellers to get visas on arrival in Ghana means that a few people might enter the country and not return to their various home countries. This will have grave effects on the demographics of certain areas of the country, putting excess pressure on the already scarce resources.

The new visa on arrival policy for AU countries is a good initiative and all stakeholders must ensure that it operates smoothly and with little disadvantages so as to grow the hospitality and tourism industries and cause a positive effect on foreign exchange and Ghana's GDP.