

State Department Makes Progress in Reducing Visa Wait Times

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In recent weeks, the U.S. State Department has made progress toward reducing visa wait times.

According to U.S. Travel, steps have been taken to reduce the wait time by as much as half in many key markets such as India, marking substantive progress after months of advocacy from the travel industry.

“By enacting smart and effective policies, the State Department is taking an active role in investing in the travel economy’s recovery,” said U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Geoff Freeman. “State must remain laser focused on solving this critical issue and set clear goals and limits for acceptable wait times.”

There is still progress to be made as U.S. Travel points out that the top 10 inbound visa-requiring markets (excluding China) still exceed 400 days, according to association’s analysis. However, global average wait times have dropped below 150 days for the first time since 2021.

Helping alleviate wait times is the new “Super Saturdays” initiative where embassies and consulates open on Saturdays to process visas.

One of these events, which took place in Monterrey, Mexico, saw the visa wait time fall more than 100 days from a peak of a 545-day wait.

In addition, the State Department projects it will be fully staffed by this summer and have interview wait times down to under 120 days by the end of the fiscal year 2023.

Reducing visa wait times is crucial to the inbound travel market. In 2019, 35 million international visitors and \$120 billion in spending came from countries where a visa is required to enter the U.S. Brazil, India and Mexico alone accounted for nearly 22 million of these visitors.

“Wait times are still excessively high despite marked improvements in countries like India,” said Freeman. “While we appreciate State’s efforts, much work remains to bring interview wait times down to an acceptable level.”

