

Global Immigration alert

September 2025

South Africa

Minister of Home Affairs announces phased rollout of new Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) visa

Executive summary

On 18 September 2025, South Africa's Department of Home Affairs (DHA) announced that it will roll out a new ETA visa in phases, starting in mid-October 2025.

Background

The ETA visa is part of the DHA's broader digital transformation strategy known as "Home Affairs @ Home." It is designed to streamline visa processing by allowing applicants to apply and submit their biometrics online and receive decisions in real time. The ETA visa will be linked to the upgraded Electronic Movement Control System (EMCS 2.0) (i.e., a facial recognition-based border management platform that automates identity checks) initially at OR Tambo and Cape Town International Airports. This initiative aims to reduce processing times and enhance border security by enabling qualifying individuals to apply for a visa online instead of at a consulate.

Key developments

Qualifying individuals will be eligible to apply for the ETA on the DHA's [eVisa portal](#). Once approved, the visa will be emailed to the applicant, digitally linked to their passport, and valid for up to 90 days. Immigration officials will verify travelers' ETA by scanning their passports upon arrival.

User acceptance testing of the ETA visa system is expected to begin at the end of September 2025. The first phase of the rollout, scheduled for mid-October 2025, will apply to G20 delegates from the Chinese mainland, India, Indonesia and Mexico, who require visas to enter South Africa and will arrive at OR Tambo or Cape Town International Airports.

Following the G20 leaders' meeting in late November, the second phase will extend ETA access to tourists from the same four jurisdictions (i.e., the Chinese mainland, India, Indonesia and Mexico). Once the system is fully operational, the ETA will become the single-entry point for all tourist visa applications from visa-required jurisdictions.

Over time, it is expected that business travelers and individuals applying for other types of visas will be eligible to apply for and obtain an ETA visa. The South African authorities are also evaluating the possibility of incorporating facial recognition technology to manage entry and exit processes at all ports of entry.

Impact on employers

The ETA is expected to reduce administrative requirements and improve travel planning. Employers may monitor developments related to the ETA and adapt their internal policies as needed over time to ensure ongoing compliance.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.



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