

Sri Lanka Scraps Long-Term Visa for Russians, Ukrainians

By [AFP](#)

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Sri Lanka said Sunday it had ended long-term tourist visa extensions for thousands of Russians and Ukrainians using the policy to live on the island since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"The government is not granting further visa extensions," Commissioner-General of Immigration Harsha Ilukpitiya told AFP, giving a March 7 deadline for departure.

"The flight situation has now normalized and they have no difficulty in getting back."

Just over 288,000 Russians and nearly 20,000 Ukrainians have visited Sri Lanka in the past two years, according to official figures.

It is not clear how many stayed longer than the usual 30-day tourist visa.

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But thousands of Russians and smaller numbers of Ukrainians are believed to have settled in Sri Lanka, some to avoid potential draft into the army.

Some who stayed have started restaurants and set up nightclubs.

The government decision coincided with a furious social media backlash against a Russian-run nightclub which had organized a "whites-only" party in the southern coastal resort town of Unawatuna.

Sri Lanka sought to boost tourism by granting 30-day visas on arrival, as the country desperately needed foreign exchange as it recovers from its worst economic crisis since mid-2022.

The country defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt in April 2022 and months of street protests led to the resignation of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa three months later.

An IMF bailout of \$2.9 billion has helped stabilize the economy and end shortages of essentials such as food, fuel and medicines.

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