

The world's most innovative visa application system for travellers from Saudi Arabia.

The worldwide introduction of Biometrics is changing the way people apply for a visa around the world.

Driven by an EU directive, the United Kingdom will have completed its global rollout of Biometrics by the end of 2007. Already, applicants for UK visas are enrolling their biometrics in over 80 countries across Europe, Africa, Central America, SE Asia and the Middle East.

In Saudi Arabia, the UK's new visa process will come into effect from late-September 2007. To create awareness about the new system and also focus on the spirit of 'Ribat' between Gulf countries and the United Kingdom, UKvisas, the government department responsible for the worldwide visa operation, has recently launched a visitor-focused campaign branded 'uk-ok' ([www.uk-ok.info](http://www.uk-ok.info)).

### The bold new world of biometrics

Biometric technologies such as iris scanning and electronic fingerprinting are increasingly providing highly secure identification solutions around the world. Over the next few years, the use of Biometrics and automated access gates will become commonplace at British ports of entry such as Heathrow, enabling quick and convenient admission into the UK.

Modern laser scanning technology is used to enrol an applicant's Biometrics. The procedure, which involves electronic fingerscanning (a 10-finger scan) and live digital photography, adds less than five minutes to the application process.

### So how long will it take to get a UK visa in the future?

In short, still within 24 hours for nearly all applications maintaining our reputation as the fastest and most reliable visa service in the Kingdom. At present, our Visa Sections handle an ever-increasing number of applications while maintaining a same-day service – although at peak periods during the summer, many applications are dealt with on a 'next-day' basis. The same-day service is only possible because a large number of applications (as many as 60 - 100 at a time) are brought in by courier, which reduces the time spent in visitor/staff interactions and security procedures.

The physicality of individual biometrics means this will no longer be possible. Our Visa Sections are simply not big enough to accommodate all applicants during their limited opening hours. We would be unable to maintain the efficient and speedy service that has come to be expected of us and which we are rightly committed to protecting and enhancing where possible.



That is why we are introducing another change that will enable us to maintain a service of excellence. This innovative change is a Commercial Partnership and is proof of our continued commitment to ensuring the process of applying for a UK visa is as easy and convenient as possible.

### Commercial Partnership at work

To cope with the extra footfall, UKvisas has 'outsourced' its visa application administrative services in selected countries/regions worldwide - the Gulf being one of them.

In the Gulf, the Commercial Partner of UKvisas is Visa Facilitation (Global) Services Ltd (VFS) a subsidiary of the Kuoni travel group. They will operate Visa Application Centres (VACs), on behalf of the Embassy, in Riyadh, Jeddah and Al Khobar.

UKvisas has had similar partnerships across the globe in countries such as India, Russia, Nigeria, China and SE Asia since 2003. By the end of 2007, such partnerships will operate in 73 countries and account for around 87% of worldwide UK visa applications.

Other countries such as Australia and Ireland already have similar partnerships in the wider Gulf region.

