

Which Visa Do You Need to Visit Suppliers in India?



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Apply for the e-Business visa. Factory visits, supplier meetings and trade fairs are business, and India runs a separate e-visa for them. The official portal says an e-Business visa runs 365 days from grant with multiple entries, each stay up to 180 days, and should be applied for at least four days before arrival. You need a business card or an invitation letter.

The Short Version

- A sourcing trip is a business trip. Use the e-Business visa, not a tourist e-visa.
- Per the official portal, the e-Business visa runs 365 days from grant, multiple entry, with no single stay over 180 days.
- Apply at least four days before arrival, and up to 120 days ahead. Allow two weeks in practice.
- Upload a business card or an invitation letter from the Indian company. Councils issue letters for fairs.
- Apply only on indianvisaonline.gov.in. Many lookalike sites resell the same visa.

Get the e-Business visa. Meeting suppliers, walking factory floors and attending trade fairs are business activities, and India issues a separate e-visa category for them. Most buyers from Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the US, the EU and the UAE can apply online, and the official portal says it runs a year from grant with multiple entries.

It sounds like a small thing. It isn't always. A UK buyer wrote that "as a UK citizen applying for an Indian visa was painful even though I was visiting a supplier in India" ([Hacker News, 2023](#), from our forum logs). This post sets out what the official e-visa page says, what it doesn't, and how to plan the

trip so the visa is the easy part. The caveat – visa rules change and depend on your passport, so the portal's current page beats anything here, including this.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01 **The e-Business visa (e-B1) runs 365 days from grant, with multiple entries, and no continuous stay may exceed 180 days.** (*Government of India e-visa page, read 18 Oct 2026*)
 - 02 **Apply at least four days before arrival and up to 120 days ahead, with a scanned passport page and a business card or an invitation letter from the Indian company.** (*Same page*)
 - 03 **Buyers find the process itself a friction cost on supplier visits, so start early.** (*Our forum logs, UK buyer, 2023 · Reported, one voice*)
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What we don't know yet

- ☐ The portal's exact wording on whether a supplier meeting is ever acceptable on a tourist e-visa. We couldn't read a clear line, so we advise the business visa.

1. Can You Visit Factories on a Tourist e-Visa?

Don't. India's portal runs e-Tourist and e-Business as separate categories, and a trip to inspect samples, negotiate prices and visit production is plainly business. We couldn't find a clear official line saying a supplier meeting is fine on a tourist visa, and the immigration desk at Delhi is the wrong place to test it.

The business visa also helps on the ground. Councils, fair organisers and suppliers write invitation letters for it, and if you're on a hosted-buyer

programme the paperwork is built around it. Our [India fairs](#) page lists which organisers issue letters.

2. What Does the e-Business Visa Allow?

The official page lists the e-Business visa for general business, with separate e-visa categories for conferences, film shoots, sports and academic lectures (indianvisaonline.gov.in, read 18 October 2026). When you apply, you choose the business purpose that fits, such as meetings or a trade fair. Pick the one that matches your plan and keep it consistent with your invitation letter.

What it doesn't allow matters as much. The page says "e-Visa is not allowed for employment". If your plan is to base someone in India to run production for months, that's employment territory, and you should ask the Indian mission in your country which visa fits. The e-visa also isn't valid for protected, restricted or cantonment areas without prior permission, so if a supplier sits in a border or protected district, check the permit first.

3. How Long Does It Last, and How Early Should You Apply?

Per the portal, read 18 October 2026 –

- **Validity:** 365 days from the date the electronic travel authorisation is granted, with multiple entries.
- **Each stay:** no continuous stay over 180 days.
- **When to apply:** at least four days before arrival, and no earlier than 120 days ahead.
- **Not extendable** and not convertible to another visa.

Four days is the floor, not the plan. Our fair's research found councils advising two weeks, and longer around Diwali, when everything slows. One business e-visa covering a year also means you can make a second trip, say for pre-shipment inspection, without applying again. Time the first application so the year covers both.

4. What Documents Do You Need?

The portal asks for a scanned passport bio page plus a business card, meaning one issued by the company you work for, or an invitation letter from the Indian company with its address and phone number. An invitation from the Indian party you'll visit is optional but useful. Documents must be in English.

For a fair, ask the organiser. For a factory visit, ask your main supplier for a short letter on its letterhead, with its GST number and address, naming the dates and the purpose. A supplier that can't produce one in a day is telling you something about how organised the visit will be.

One more warning from our own searching. Type "India business visa" into a search engine and many results are commercial lookalike sites that resell the same form. Apply only on indianvisaonline.gov.in.

5. Who Can't Use the e-Visa?

The page excludes some passport holders and backgrounds. Among them are holders of Pakistani passports or of Pakistani origin, diplomatic and official passport holders, and people with a serving or retired defence, military, security or police background. People endorsed on a parent's or spouse's passport can't use it either. If any of that applies, apply for a regular business visa through the Indian mission in your country, and allow weeks, not days.

6. How Do You Plan the Visit Itself?

The visa is the easy part. Clusters are spread out, and a week can disappear on roads. A few rules from what buyers tell us -

1. **Group suppliers by cluster** and plan one cluster a day, at most. Moradabad and Jaipur aren't an afternoon apart.
2. **Book the meetings before the flight**, with a named person at each unit and the production you want to see running.
3. **Ask to see the unit that will make your order**, including any partner units, not just the showroom.
4. **Bring your spec and your reference samples**, and leave with written notes both sides agree.
5. **Keep boarding passes and passport stamps** if a council is reimbursing you. [Does India pay for buyer trips?](#) explains the programmes.

What a visit should check once you're there is covered in [quality control in India](#). If you'd rather someone else built the schedule, booked the factory slots, travelled with you between clusters or went in your place, [SourcingSync](#) can help with visit planning and on-the-ground support in India.

Questions Buyers Ask

Can I attend a trade fair on a tourist e-visa? ^

Use the e-Business visa. Fair organisers issue invitation letters for it, and a fair visit is business.

How long before travel should I apply? v

Do I need an invitation letter?



Can I make several trips on one visa?



Where do I apply?



7. Back to the Painful Application

That UK buyer's visa was painful because it was an afterthought. Make it the first booking instead. The e-Business visa, applied for two weeks out with a supplier's letter, is a short online form, and it covers a year of trips. The hard part of visiting Indian suppliers is everything after landing, so spend your planning there.