

Immigration Guide

China



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Entry Visa

Citizens from Singapore, Japan and Brunei are able to enter China for up to 15 days without the requirement to obtain a visa.

All other foreign nationals are required to obtain a visa in advance of entry into China. The type of visa required will depend on the purpose of the trip.

Business Visitor

A Business Visa to China is referred to as an 'F' Visa.

The F Visa will be issued to foreigners who visit China to participate in business meetings, explore business opportunities, conduct research, lectures, scientific-technological and cultural exchanges, short-term advanced studies or internships of up to six months.

Citizens from Singapore, Japan and Brunei who enter China to participate in the above business activities will require an F Visa only if the duration of their visit exceeds 15 days.

Processing time is approximately three to five working days following submission of the application to the relevant overseas Chinese consulate. The duration of visa issued can range between one month to one year, and may be valid for single, dual or multiple entries.

Employment Permit

All foreign nationals (including those from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) must obtain an Employment Permit in order to work in China.

A multiple-entry Z Visa (referred to as a Foreigner Residence Permit) must also be obtained to enable the individual to reside and work in China. People from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan are not subjected to this visa requirement and are able to travel and reside in China as holders of the Home Return Pass.

In assessing an application, the authorities will consider factors including:

- whether the applicant is employed by an establishment of a foreign company in China;
- whether the applicant possesses adequate competencies, including work experience and academic credentials required for the post in China; and
- whether the position can easily be filled by a local individual.

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Family Members

The spouse, children up to the age of 18 and parents of the applicant are eligible to apply for a Dependant Visa and Foreigner Residence Permit.

A family member holding a Dependant Visa is not authorised to work unless they first obtain an Employment Permit in their own right.

A common law spouse is not eligible to apply for a Dependant Visa. Other options may be available depending on the individual's circumstances, for example, by applying for a tourist (L visa) or F visa for entry into China. A local entity would be required as a sponsor for the F visa application.

Application Process

The key stages in the application process are:

1. Application by the employer for an Employment Licence (if the employee will be working for a Foreign Investment Enterprise) or Working Card (for Foreign Representative Offices) subject to the limitation of application.
2. Visa Notification issued by the local commercial bureau and addressed to the relevant Chinese Embassy or Consulate.
3. Application for a (single entry) Z visa prior to entering China.

Supporting Documents

Supporting documents will include a resume, academic and professional qualification certificates, Employment Licence or Working Card and Visa Notification.

Documents must be in Chinese and display the local entity's company stamp.

4. Medical Examination

In order to be considered eligible to obtain an Employment Permit, the foreign national must undergo a medical examination at a designated Chinese hospital.

5. Employment Permit

The applicant must apply for an Employment Permit within 30 days of arrival in China, following successful completion of a medical examination.

6. Application for Foreigner Residence Permit

Once an Employment Permit has been granted, the applicant must then apply for a Foreigner Residence Permit which must also be applied for within 30 days of arrival in China. Therefore stages five and six must be completed within the same time frame.

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Timeline

The processing time for completion of all stages for a standard application is approximately eight weeks. This may vary depending on the supporting documents required by the relevant authority.

Additional Points to Note

Where a foreign national is present in China holding an F Visa and subsequently needs to work on a full time long-term basis, the mandated procedures while the foreigner is present in China must be completed before the existing F Visa expires. This will include completion of the Employment Licence, Employment Permit, and Foreigner Residence Permit processes.

Both the Employment Permit and Foreigner Residence Permit application review and approval are administered on a local level, which is usually by the local municipal agency. Therefore, the intended place of residence and work is critical. If an employee relocates from one city to another during his or her assignment in China, they must update their work papers with the local labour bureau and local public security bureau of the new employment location.

The processes will vary according to the regulations and requirements of the specific location of the application.

Non-compliance

If foreigners commence work in China without obtaining approval from the relevant authorities, it may lead to penalties for both the individual and the employer. In addition, subject to the circumstances, the individual may be deported and subject to travel restrictions to China in the future.

Contact

This Guide is intended to provide a general overview of the immigration requirements and options for foreigners seeking to reside and work in China. For advice relating to a specific immigration matter please contact:

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