



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Japan - Phased Resumption of Cross-Border Travel with Thailand and Vietnam

The government of Japan has resumed cross-border travel with Thailand and Vietnam if travellers fulfil the requirements set between the countries. These can be referred to as “restrictive” travel “bubbles” or travel “corridors.” The Japanese embassies and consulates in these two countries initiated processing from 29 July of visa applications for applicants whose immigration status relates to “work purposes,” as specified.

Japan will also allow re-entry, from 5 August, those foreign residents regardless of the nationality who left Japan with a re-entry permit before the government imposed the entry ban on their countries of origin.

WHY THIS MATTERS

While maintaining current border control measures, Japan will implement a special framework for cross-border travel for business and other purposes, though gradually, on the condition that eligible travellers follow additional quarantine measures.

Although currently Japan still imposes an entry ban for 146 countries/regions, special exemption measures will be applicable to those foreign nationals meeting the requirements. At this point, Japan has signed agreements only with Thailand and Vietnam, which will allow the resumption of cross-border travel. However, the government of Japan is in similar talks with Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, Singapore, the People’s Republic of China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Laos, and Taiwan (Republic of China). The framework and the specific requirements may vary according to the respective agreement reached with each country.¹

Cross-Border Travel for Business Purposes with Thailand and Vietnam

Japan reached agreements with Thailand and Vietnam, which will introduce phased measures intended to re-open certain cross-border travel. Individuals covered by the agreements are nationals of Thailand and Vietnam and Japan. Travel via direct flight between these countries for work purposes will be permitted. Foreign nationals who hold a long-term visa and are residents of Thailand and Vietnam and those dependents of business visa holders are not included. The embassies and consulates of Japan in Thailand and Vietnam commenced processing visa applications from 29 July.²

1) Type of Immigration Status to Be Entitled to Enter Japan

- A) Temporary visitor (Single Entry ONLY) for a business traveller whose duration of stay is less than 90 days, and whose activities are limited to a client visit, meeting/conference, advertisement, business market research, after-sales service, etc., and whose activity does not involve being remunerated in Japan.
- B) Long-term resident for work:
 - Business Manager
 - Intra-Company Transferee (ICT)
 - Engineer/Specialist in Humanities/International Services
 - Highly-Skilled Professionals
 - Nursing Care
 - Specified Skilled Worker. (Only selected types of Specified Skilled Worker can apply. The authority currently set a limit for this type of visa due to the number of applications. Further information will be announced in due course.)

NOTE: Since there will be an excessive number of applications, the authorities do not provide the expected processing time for visa applications per case. The authorities may temporarily suspend acceptance of applications if they receive applications that exceed the maximum number of visas that they can issue.

2) Types of Cross-Border Frameworks and Requirements before and after Entry in Japan³

- Business Track: For those Thai and Vietnamese nationals who wish to travel to Japan for business trips under 90 days described in 1)-A) above.
- Residence Track: For those Thai and Vietnamese national who obtain a CoE /Visa categorised in 1)-B) above.

Necessary Process for Entry

[Before entry]

1. Japanese host company must complete a designated declaration letter provided by the government that confirms the reason for travel and that the traveller fully meets the requirements to enter Japan. The original copy must be kept by the traveller until his/her entry into Japan.
2. Obtain an appropriate visa type.

3. Must be fully covered by private medical insurance for the duration of the stay in Japan, in particular for those on Business Track. (Residence Track will be covered by the local health insurance system after the residence registration occurs.)
4. Fourteen-day health monitoring until departing the original country (not allowed to travel if the traveller has fever over 37.5 degrees).
5. PCR testing within 72 hours before the departure and must obtain a certificate* from the medical institute confirming that the traveller has tested negative for COVID-19. (*Must use the format provided by the government.)
6. For Business Track, the traveller must complete a "Schedule of Activities of Japan."
7. Traveller must be able to demonstrate proof of having all documents at the departing airport.

[During the flight to Japan]

8. To be provided with a questionnaire by the crew, which must be fully completed before arrival.

[Upon arrival]

9. PCR testing at the airport in Japan.
10. Submit all documents (declaration letter, medical certificate, schedule of activities in Japan, and questionnaire).
11. Install several mobile applications for COVID-19 tracing system.

[After entry]

12. Refrain from using public transportation including shuttle buses operated by hotels, trains, taxis, etc. for 14 days upon arrival.
13. Self-quarantine at home or chosen accommodation for 14 days upon arrival.

NOTE: For Business Track, travellers will be allowed in a limited way to commute between their accommodation and their designated destination (e.g., a client's site) according to the "Schedule of Activities" for 14 days from the date of arrival.

14. Fourteen-day health follow-up after the date of arrival.
15. Save location map data in your mobile application for 14 days upon arrival.

Re-entry for Foreign Residents Who Left Japan before Entry Ban

Foreign residents regardless of their nationality will be permitted to re-enter Japan from 5 August if they had temporarily left Japan with "re-entry permission" prior to the enforcement of the entry ban. Those eligible for re-entry include permanent residents, long-term residents (work, dependent, and students etc.), spouses and children of permanent residents, as well as spouses and children of Japanese nationals. To be granted permission to re-enter Japan, the foreign resident must obtain a "Letter of Confirmation of Submitting Necessary Documentation for Re-entry into Japan" (so-called "Re-entry Confirmation Letter") at the competent Japanese embassy/consulate overseas before the departure.

They also must follow the necessary steps before/during/upon/after entry as described above.⁴

Those foreign nationals who left Japan after the imposition of the entry ban or planning to leave Japan now are not covered by this grant of permission as above-described.

KPMG NOTE

Though the government is heading toward an easing of entry restrictions with those countries/regions with relatively low infection rates, it continues to be the case that the majority of foreign nationals are not allowed to enter Japan.

The Immigration Services Agency, Ministry of Justice has decided on new policies regarding the period of validity of the Certificate of Eligibility (CoE) due to COVID-19. The CoE for all status of residence is now **valid until six months from the date on which entry restrictions from the applicant's country of residence are removed, or until 30 April 2021**, whichever is the earliest, provided certain conditions are met.⁵ The date on which the entry restriction measures were lifted means the date on which both the “denial of landing” for the country/region where the foreign national was staying and the “suspension of the validity of the issued visa” were lifted.

For visa applications, the applicant must submit a letter from the Japanese host company stating that they are still willing to accept the applicant with the same purpose/activities as had been stipulated at the time of the CoE application. If an applicant has been granted a visa using his or her COE but has not been able to enter Japan before the expiry date of the visa due to the COVID-19 outbreak and he or she meets the conditions above, then he or she may re-use the COE to apply for a new visa.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in Japanese) at: https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ca/cp/page22_003380.html .
- 2 See Embassy of Japan in Vietnam (in Japanese) at: https://www.vn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/corona0722.html .
- 3 See the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (in English) at: <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/10900000/000643770.pdf> .
- 4 See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in English) at: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page25e_000334.html .
- 5 See “New Handling Regarding the Period of Validity of the Certificate of Eligibility,” the Ministry of Justice at: <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001316875.pdf> .

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Contact us

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