



# GMS Flash Alert

## Immigration Edition

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# Japan - COVID-19: Re-Shutting of Borders for One Month Due to Omicron Variant

Japan has banned the entry of foreign nationals from all countries until 31 December 2021, due to the spread of the omicron variant of the coronavirus around the world.

The new entry ban is effective from 30 November 2021 (0:00 am, JST) until 31 December 2021.<sup>1</sup>

As a consequence:

- the online applications for approval (screening) certificates to the ministries and visa applications at the Japanese embassies/consulates are suspended during the entry ban;
- all airlines have been requested, as of 1 December 2021, to halt new reservations for international flights to Japan until the end of December 2021.<sup>2</sup>

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## WHY THIS MATTERS

The various COVID-19 containment measures have had a profound impact on both professional and personal travel. Companies worldwide have had to cancel or postpone/reschedule business trips and assignments.

However, it appears the increased travel restrictions triggered by the rise of the new omicron variant will again impact travel and relocations to Japan in the near future at least.

To the extent possible, it may be prudent for some individuals to delay any plans to depart Japan (if their plan is to return to the country) to prevent potential complications and the possibility of being refused re-entry at the border, as the situation is fluid.

The decision by Japan's government comes only three weeks after Japan had partially eased the entry restrictions for the foreign nationals on 8 November (for prior coverage, see [GMS Flash Alert 2021-278](#), 12 November 2021).

# Entry Ban for All Foreign New Arrivals and Halting of Flight Reservations

The prime minister of Japan announced on Monday, 29 November that Japan would close its borders to all foreign new arrivals from 30 November (0:00 am JST) as the new coronavirus variant – omicron – spread around the world.<sup>3</sup> The entry ban will remain until 31 December until additional information about the omicron variant becomes clear; thus, the ban may be extended due to the situation.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism also requested the airlines, as of 1 December 2021, halt new reservations for international flights to Japan until the end of December. This means Japanese nationals and foreign residents abroad who haven't made a reservation as of 1 December will not be able to return to Japan until next year.

Those Japanese nationals and foreign residents with valid Residence Cards who already booked flight tickets before 1 December 2021, are to be subject to stricter quarantine requirements upon arrival in Japan. Arrivals from the listed countries<sup>4</sup> where cases of omicron have been confirmed will be required to undergo 14-days quarantine including 3 to 10 days stay at the government-designated accommodation upon arrival in accordance with the departure country. The list of countries will be regularly updated. All arrivals from non-listed countries are still required to undergo 14-days quarantine at home.

New measures for border enforcement that came into force on 8 November 2021 are suspended until 31 December 2021. Applications for approval (screening) certificates made to the ministries and visa applications at the Japanese embassies/consulates are all suspended for the duration of the entry ban. Those applications already submitted to the relevant authorities are on hold till the entry ban is lifted. Applications for Certificates of Eligibility (CoEs) at the Immigration Bureau in Japan are still available during the entry ban.

## FOOTNOTES:

1 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: [https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/cp/page22e\\_000925.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/cp/page22e_000925.html); [https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page22e\\_000921.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page22e_000921.html); [https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page4e\\_001053.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page4e_001053.html)

Also see the webpage of the Embassy of Japan in the United States: [https://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/travel\\_and\\_visa.html](https://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/travel_and_visa.html).

2 S. Murakami and E. Lies, "Japan escalates Omicron emergency as airlines halt reservations, 2nd case found," *Reuters* (online) (1 December 2021): <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-expand-travel-ban-some-foreigners-with-resident-status-2021-12-01/> \*.

S. Takagi, "Japan asks airlines to forgo new reservations until end of year," *Ashai Shimbun* (online) (1 December 2021) at: <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14493023> \*.

3 "Japan considering further border controls as Omicron spreads -PM Kishida," *Reuters* (online) (28 November 2021) at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-considering-further-border-controls-omicron-spreads-pm-kishida-2021-11-29/> \*.

4 See the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare: <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000861398.pdf>.

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**The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in Japan.**

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