

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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People's Republic of China - Expanded Visa Exemptions for Travellers from Certain Countries

On 24 November 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China ("PRC" or "China") made an announcement regarding the implementation of an expansion of unilateral visa exemptions for six countries.¹

WHY THIS MATTERS

Visa-exemption policies can bring considerable convenience to international travellers for short-term visits to China; however, the duration of stay in China under the visa exemption policies cannot be extended in China. Companies and individuals (especially mobile employees, frequent travellers, and students) should apprise themselves of the new policies, avail themselves of the more favourable opportunities, and, importantly, take steps to stay compliant.

The changing policies and practices in the country's immigration regime appear to be aimed at easing travel into China by foreign nationals from certain countries and facilitating business and trading, work, and study in China by such foreign nationals.

Highlights

Expanded Visa Exemption Policy for International Travellers to China

- Starting from 1 December 2023 until 30 November 2024, citizens of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Malaysia holding ordinary passports who come to China for business, tourism, visiting relatives and friends, and transit reasons, will be exempted from needing a Chinese visa to enter China, for a period not exceeding 15 days from the date of their entry. The 15 days should be counted from the day following the arrival date.

- Citizens of these six countries who do not meet the above-mentioned reasons and time limit for the visa exemption or they do not hold service (official) passports still need to apply for a Chinese visa before entering China.
- Besides the new six countries, China had already implemented unilateral visa exemptions for citizens of Singapore and Brunei.

Relaxed Visa Policy for Chinese Citizens

- Following the announcement, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an announcement on 25 November 2023, in regards to a new visa policy that PRC citizens who have successfully obtained a master's degree and completed at least one semester of study in France will now be eligible to apply for a five-year multiple-entry visa.²
- Later, the prime minister of Malaysia made an announcement that starting from 1 December 2023, PRC citizens with ordinary passports will be granted a visa exemption when visiting Malaysia for tourism purposes for a maximum duration of 30 days. The prime minister of Malaysia recently also announced the latest entry notice and requirements for PRC citizens who wish to travel to Malaysia.³
- On 7 December 2023, the Chinese and Singapore ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed to waive visas for individuals holding ordinary passports of Chinese and Singapore citizens.⁴ At present, the competent authorities of the two countries are in close communication on the specific matters and detailed requirements of implementation.

KPMG INSIGHTS

In view of these updates, KPMG in the People's Republic of China reminds international business travelers who travel to China, especially those who are eligible for a visa exemption, to take the following into consideration when planning their journeys: regularly review and assess their travel plans, keep track of the duration of their stay accumulated in China, and document the nature and purposes of the activities (to be) performed in China.

It is important to plan ahead in respect of the business traveller's personal immigration status and cross-border tax arrangements.

For travellers who foresee their stay in China exceeding 15 days, it is highly recommended they contact their usual immigration counsel or a KPMG immigration consultant (see the Contacts section) for assistance to help ensure that the necessary arrangements are made to meet the needs of travelling.

We will continue to closely monitor these and future regulatory updates and will endeavour to keep readers of *GMS Flash Alert* informed.

FOOTNOTES:

1 See: http://cs.mfa.gov.cn/gyls/lsgz/fwxx/202311/t20231124_11186388.shtml.

2 See the X posting by the Ambassade de Chine en France:
<https://twitter.com/AmbassadeChine/status/1729138330653327810>.

3 Details can be found at: http://my.china-embassy.gov.cn/fwzc/lsw/lbsh/202312/t20231203_11193790.htm.

4 The visa-exemption arrangement between the two countries is noted in Singapore, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong co-chaired the 19th Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation and Related Joint Steering Council Meetings in Tianjin on 7 December 2023" (7 December 2023) at:
<https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2023/12/DPM-Wong-Meetings-in-Tianjin-on-7-December-2023> .

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Contact us

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** Please note the KPMG International member firm in the United States does not provide immigration or labour law services. However, KPMG Law LLP in Canada can assist clients with U.S. immigration matters.*

The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in the People's Republic of China.

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