

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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South Korea – Extension of Temporary K-ETA Exemption for Eligible Nationals

The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea has extended the temporary exemption from the Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) requirement for eligible foreign nationals until December 31, 2026. This measure aims to support inbound tourism and simplify entry procedures for travelers from exempt countries.¹

WHY THIS MATTERS

This development is significant for global mobility managers, HR leaders, and internationally mobile employees planning travel to South Korea in 2026. The extension reduces administrative requirements for eligible travelers by waiving the K-ETA application process, which can lower compliance costs and streamline entry procedures. Employers managing business travel to South Korea may benefit from simplified travel logistics and fewer documentation-related delays. For employees traveling for business, the exemption may enhance travel flexibility and reduce pre-departure administrative tasks, although organizations should advise travelers to verify their eligibility and submit online entry declaration (e-Arrival card) if eligible for the K-ETA exemption.

Background

Prior to this announcement, South Korea had implemented a temporary exemption from the K-ETA requirement for select nationalities to facilitate travel and support tourism. The exemption was set to expire at the end of 2025. Eligible travelers were able to enter South Korea without applying for K-ETA, while others continued to follow the standard K-ETA application process. The temporary measure aimed to balance border control with the promotion of inbound tourism.

Key Highlights

- **Extended exemption period:** January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026 (Korean Standard Time).

- **Affected populations:** Nationals of countries and regions previously exempt under the prior framework remain covered. Eligible travelers will also be notified by a pop-up confirming the exemption during the K-ETA application process. Please refer to the list below:
 - Asia: Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Macao
 - America: United States, Canada
 - Europe: United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Austria
 - Oceania: New Zealand, Australia
- **Online entry declaration (e-Arrival card) submission:** Any foreign travelers (including business visitors and work visa holders) not subject to the K-ETA application process are required to submit an e-Arrival card within three days (including the day of arrival) before their arrival in South Korea. The e-Arrival card is an online entry declaration form for travelers entering Korea, replacing the former paper Arrival card. E-Arrival card submission applies to all travelers (with limited exceptions) effective January 1, 2026.²
- **Optional K-ETA application:** Exempt travelers may apply voluntarily for benefits such as exemption from submitting an e-Arrival card. Standard fees apply and are non-refundable.

KPMG INSIGHTS

The extension reduces compliance burdens for eligible travelers and organizations, supporting smoother entry to South Korea in 2026. The pop-up notification system helps clarify eligibility and reduce potential confusion during the application process. Optional application remains useful for those seeking additional entry benefits.

In light of the changes, organizations might wish to:

- Update travel guidance and communications to reflect the extended exemption period.
- Advise eligible employees to verify their exemption status during the application process.
- Highlight the e-Arrival card submission requirement to all employees not subject to the K-ETA application process.

Questions or concerns about the process and/or who qualifies for the K-ETA exemption should be directed to qualified travel professionals and/or immigration advisers or a member of the immigration team with KPMG in South Korea (see the Contacts section).

FOOTNOTES:

1 K-ETA Portal (Republic of Korea – Ministry of Justice), official notice: “[Notice on Extension of K-ETA Temporary Exemption](#),” published on December 23, 2025.

2 Korea Immigration Service (Republic of Korea – Ministry of Justice), official notice: “[Inbound Passengers to Gain Online Arrival Card Option Soon](#),” published on February 18, 2025.

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Contacts

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professionals or the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in South Korea:



So-Hyeon Jung
Partner
Tax
Tel. + 82 (2) 2112 7657
sohyeonjung@kr.kpmg.com



Han Moi (Matt) Park
Director
Tax
Tel. + 82 (2) 2112 0604
hpark11@kr.kpmg.com



Henna Puumala
Supervisor
Tax
Tel. + 82 (2) 2112 6702
hpuumala1@kr.kpmg.com

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