

CORONAVIRUS: Travel and Immigration Disruption

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China and various other countries have implemented restrictions on entry and exit, visa and work permit issuance, closed ports, tightened quarantine rules and taken other measures in an attempt to slow the spread of coronavirus. These restrictions may affect international business travel and assignment plans.

China

- At present, except for the closure of the exit channel at Wuhan ports, all port visa agencies are operating as usual. Visa-free transit for foreigners is still effective, and all land, sea and air ports of China are functioning.
- Foreign and mainland Chinese nationals can enter or exit as usual with their valid international travel documents, although many other countries have adopted entry restrictions for travellers from mainland China (see below).
- Foreign nationals going to China to work are highly encouraged to enter with a Z (work) visa after having obtained the notification letter of work permit, rather than trying to obtain the notification letter of work permit while in China on a business (M) or tourist (L) visa. Those who fail to enter China within the validity of their Z visa due to the coronavirus are allowed to enter China with another type of visa. The Chinese employer should provide an explanation statement in support of the use of an alternative visa.
- Chinese immigration authorities will exempt foreign nationals whose temporary visas or residence permits **expire** during this period of disruption from penalties, or impose lighter penalties, depending on the circumstances. Newland Chase's team in China is available to provide guidance and assistance with renewals and de-registration.
- Most **immigration offices** in China have reopened as of 4 February, and the Wuhan authorities are due to resume work on 14 February. Holders of valid endorsements to Hong Kong, Macao or Taiwan who are affected by the epidemic and fail to enter the above places within the validity period can re-apply for certificates of the same type and validity period for free when the outbreak is over.
- In **Shanghai**, foreign nationals whose visas/stays/residence permits/passports expired within the past 10 days - including those whose employment in China ended - may visit the local immigration authorities to file their visa, stay, or residence permit extensions immediately after 10 February.
- Shanghai authorities have suspended the submission of physical documents for work permit applications (including initial, renewal, transfer, and cancellation). Instead, all applications will be processed online only during this period, with a commitment letter provided by the Chinese employer. The commitment letter should affirm the authenticity and validity of their online submission and original documents should be kept for further check. A similar online practice has been adopted in other regions in China, such as Beijing, Zhejiang and Guangdong.
- In **Beijing**, immigration authorities are asking all foreign nationals and Chinese citizens to hold off submitting their visa/stay/residence permit applications in person if it is not urgent. Those who require urgent assistance with applications are encouraged to make appointment reservations in advance. As mentioned above, Beijing has adopted an online submission and commitment letter process for work permit renewals and cancellations.
- In **Shenzhen**, immigration authorities have opened green channels for expedited applications for emergencies and urgent requests. The authorities have also implemented other convenient measures to facilitate visa applications for those remaining in Shenzhen during this outbreak period.
- On 23 January, the government of Wuhan in Hubei province suspended all public transport and cancelled rail and air departures from the city. Hundreds of flights to and from Wuhan were cancelled. The travel ban has since been extended to several other cities in Hubei province.

Australia

- The Australian government has banned the entry of all travellers, regardless of nationality, arriving from any part of mainland China, who departed or transited China since 1 February. Exceptions apply to citizens and permanent residents of Australia and their immediate family members.
- Citizens and permanent residents of Australia and their immediate family members who enter Australia and who have been in mainland China will be required to self-isolate for 14 days from the time they left mainland China.
- Temporary visa holders who are ineligible for entry into Australia under these measures will have their visa cancelled. Arrangements will be made to reinstate visas as appropriate following the lifting of these enhanced border control measures.

Hong Kong, China

- The government has asked most civil servants to stay at home and most immigration services are suspended until at least Sunday 9 February. During this period, new applications cannot be submitted and approved entry visas cannot be collected.
- The government has also taken measures to limit travel between Hong Kong and the mainland, including the suspension of new visas to individual mainland tourists, closing borders, halving the number of flights to and from mainland China, suspending the MTR's intercity services, and closing West Kowloon station, which serves the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link. All but two land crossings with the Mainland have been closed - only the bridges to Zhuhai and Macau, the bridge to Shenzhen, and the airport remain open.
- Residents of Hubei, and anyone who has visited Hubei in the last 14 days, have been banned from entry to Hong Kong.

India

- As of 4 February, existing Indian visas of all Chinese nationals and other foreign nationals who are either based out of China or who have visited China in the last two weeks are cancelled.
- India has closed its e-visa services to all holders of Chinese passports and applicants of other nationalities residing in China, including those to whom e-visas have already been issued.

Indonesia

- Effective 5 February, Indonesia has temporarily banned entry and the issuance of any visas on arrival, visa exemptions, limited stay visas or visit visas for anyone of any nationality who has been in China in the 14 days preceding the date of entry into Indonesia,
- The Ministry of Manpower has unofficially confirmed that they will not accept any new work permit applications from Chinese citizens. Work permit renewals are not affected.
- All flights to and from China have also been suspended.

Japan

- Japan has banned entry to travellers confirmed to be infected with coronavirus and any foreign nationals who have visited Hubei in the last 14 days.

Macao

- Macao has suspended entry for non-residents from Hubei province and those who have visited Hubei in the last 14 days, unless proof of non-infection is provided.
- Travellers from Hubei already in China can stay but must enter quarantine.

Malaysia

- The government has put on hold the issuance of all types of entry visa, work permit and dependent permit from passports issued in Hubei.
- Applications for PRC nationals from other locations in China are accepted subject to further announcements from the Malaysian authorities.

New Zealand

- All foreign nationals who have departed from or transited through mainland China since 2 February will be refused entry.
- New Zealand citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members will still be able to enter NZ, but they must isolate themselves for the first 14 days of arrival.

Philippines

- From 2 February, the government has temporarily banned the entry of any person, regardless of nationality, except Filipino citizens and holders of Permanent Resident Visa issued by the Philippine Government, directly coming from China and its Special Administrative Regions;
- Also in place is a temporary ban on the entry of any person, regardless of nationality, except Filipino citizens and holders of Permanent Resident Visa issued by the Philippine Government, who within 14 days immediately preceding arrival in the Philippines, has been to China and its Special Administrative Regions;
- There is a mandatory 14-day quarantine for Filipinos and Permanent Resident Visa holders coming from any place in China and its Special Administrative Regions;
- There is also a temporary ban on Filipinos travelling to China and its Special Administrative Regions.

Russia

- Russia has closed its land borders with China to all traffic, and has also suspended the issuance of electronic visas to Chinese nationals. It has also suspended rail traffic and restricted air traffic with China
- The following immigration services have been suspended:
 - Issuance, extension and correction of work permits for Chinese citizens in Moscow;
 - Issuance of work visas at the Russian consulates in China;
 - Issuance of invitation letters for Chinese citizens;
 - Issuance of e-visas for Chinese citizens;
 - Issuance of tourist documents for organised tourist groups from China.
- In Moscow, already-approved work permits are not being handed over to Chinese citizens.
- Work visa extension and transfer applications are still being processed, until further notice.

Singapore

- Singapore citizens and permanent residents and long-term pass holders (including Work Passes and Permits, Student Pass, Dependent Pass, Long-term Visit Pass and in-principle approval (IPA) for a Work Pass) who have visited Hubei in the last 14 days, or are holders of PRC passports issued in Hubei, **and who are currently overseas**, will be quarantined on arrival. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) strongly urges employers to ask these employees to **defer coming into Singapore** until further notice. Employers must inform MOM by 7 February that they have deferred the return of these employees, and if not, provide the reasons why not.
- Singapore citizens and permanent residents and Long-Term Pass holders (including Work Passes and Permits, Student Pass, Dependent Pass, Long-term Visit Pass and in-principle approval (IPA) for a Work Pass) who travelled to mainland China within 14 days of arrival in Singapore from the 31 January onwards must be placed on a 14-day leave of absence (LOA) from the day of their return from China. Employers must obtain and retain written acknowledgement of the LOA from these employees, and

declare to MOM by 7 February that they have informed the affected foreign employees of the LOA requirement.

- MOM will reject all new work pass applications for foreign workers from mainland China until further notice. Renewal applications for existing pass holders will not be affected.
- PRC passport holders who have obtained their In-Principle Approval and are pending entry to Singapore and work permit issuance, will be allowed to enter Singapore but will be required to take a 14-day leave of absence. Processing of their work passes will only begin after their 14-day leave of absence. MOM will automatically extend Short-Term Visit Passes by 14 days and, on request, extend the work pass issuance deadline.
- MOM will review work pass privileges of employers and employees who do not comply with the requirements or have acted irresponsibly. Other sanctions may also apply.
- Employers are advised to regularly check MOM's [website](#) and [MOH's website](#).
- All new visitors with recent travel history to mainland China will not be allowed to enter or transit Singapore, and holders of PRC passports issued in Hubei, will not be allowed entry into Singapore, or transit through Singapore.
- Previously issued short-term and multiple-visit visas, as well as visa-free transit facilities, and the issuance of new visas, for all those with PRC passports, will also be suspended with immediate effect.
- It is currently unclear whether MOM will reject those work pass applications submitted and already in progress prior to the announcement by MOM on 31 January.

South Korea

- South Korea will not impose any penalty fee on foreign national visitors and residents who are coronavirus patients for exceeding the period of stay until they are recovered and officially confirmed by the medical institutions.
- All foreign nationals who have stayed in or visited Hubei will not be allowed entry from 4 February.
- Chinese nationals with a Hubei-issued passport are prohibited from entering South Korea.
- Chinese nationals who have visited Hubei in the last 14 days will not be allowed entry on the visa waiver programme.
- All issued and effective visas issued at the Korean consulate in Hubei are temporarily suspended.
- All Chinese citizens and foreigner nationals arriving from China are temporarily prohibited from entering Korea through Jeju Island via the visa waiver program.
- The government has announced that all foreign nationals arriving from China must submit their mobile phone number, which will be checked before they are allowed to enter South Korea. One phone number per family with children will be checked, and all phone numbers for a group of friends. Airlines will be financially responsible for returning travellers who fail to submit working phone numbers. Phone number checking is expected to cause delays on arrival in South Korea.

Taiwan, China

- Starting 7 February, foreign nationals who have visited or resided in China over the past 14 days will not be allowed to enter Taiwan (including those who are eligible for visa-exempt treatment, landing visas, and e-visas, as well as those carrying valid visas).
- Foreign nationals seeking to enter Taiwan may apply for an entry visa as long as they have not visited or resided in China during the previous 14 days. Applications submitted by those who have visited or resided in China during this period will not be accepted.
- When applying for a visa, foreign nationals must provide additional documents, including a full travel history for the previous 14 days, a certificate of a health check-up conducted in the previous seven days showing that the applicant does not have a fever of 38 degrees Celsius or higher and is not suffering from respiratory tract or lung infections and a signed affidavit stipulating that the applicant shall immediately notify health authorities in Taiwan when experiencing any symptoms detailed above.
- Foreign nationals possessing a valid Taiwan Resident Certificate (ARC) who have visited or resided in China in the previous 14 days shall self-isolate at their homes and carefully monitor their health for 14 days after returning to Taiwan.

Thailand

- Chinese nationals or travellers from China will be required to provide a medical certificate when applying for a Thai visa in China.
- Thailand has not yet put in place any temporary suspension of visas on arrival for Chinese citizens, nor any relaxation of work permit or visa application or renewal deadlines for applicants unable to travel to Thailand due to the coronavirus outbreak.

United States

- Effective 2 February, foreign nationals (other than immediate family of US citizens, permanent residents, and flight crew) who have travelled in mainland China within 14 days of their arrival, will be denied entry into the United States.
- Those planning trips to the United States who are resident in China, have travelled to China recently or intend to travel to China before entering the US are advised to postpone their US visa interview until 14 days after their departure from China.
- US citizens who have been in Hubei province within 14 days of their return will be subject to up to 14 days of mandatory quarantine.
- US citizens who have been in other areas of mainland China within 14 days of their return will undergo proactive entry health screening and up to 14 days of self-quarantine with health monitoring.

Vietnam

- Vietnamese consular posts in mainland China and Hong Kong have stopped issuing visas (tourist or business) to all Chinese nationals and all other nationalities. Until further notice, no applications will be accepted.
- For visa on arrival (VOA) pre-approval letters, requested at the immigration dept in Vietnam, foreign nationals (other than Chinese) need to prove that they are not coming from China.
- Chinese nationals applying for Vietnamese visas from outside China may need to provide evidence (air tickets) that their travel to Vietnam will not originate from China, Hong Kong or Macau.
- All flights between China and Vietnam have been cancelled. There may still be limited flights from and to Hong Kong and Taiwan.
- From 5 February, the immigration department in Hanoi will temporarily stop granting visa on arrival (VOA) pre-approval letters for work and business purposes and for dependents. Only VOA for tourism purpose will be available, provided that the traveller is not travelling from China.
- Foreign nationals already granted pre-approval letters for VOA for work or business purpose will still receive their visa upon arrival at the airport as normal but note that Chinese nationals may not be allowed to enter Vietnam.
- For business and work purpose and for dependents, and whatever the nationality of the traveller, the visa pre-approval letter issued by the immigration department in Hanoi will only be possible with endorsement at the Vietnamese embassies/consulates abroad until further notice.
- The Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) immigration department has not as yet put in place similar restrictions. However, the labour department in HCMC has suspended new work permit applications and renewals or reissuing for Chinese nationals.

Elsewhere

- United Arab Emirates will suspend all flights to and from China, apart from Beijing, from 5 February. All passengers travelling from Beijing International Airport will be required to undergo a 6-8 hour medical screening at the airport before boarding.
- Kazakhstan has closed all transport links with China and suspended all visa on arrivals from China.
- Sri Lanka has suspended all visa on arrivals from China.
- Mongolia and Nepal have also closed their borders with China.

