

Note: The following information is extracted from Newland Chase's <COVID-19 TRAVEL AND IMMIGRATION UPDATES> on 25 June. For the full information, please visit <https://newlandchase.com/covid-19-latest-travel-and-immigration-disruption/>

## CHINA

### Entry Restrictions

- Effective 15 March 2021, China has announced an easing of visa restrictions for applicants who have proof of vaccination with a COVID-19 vaccine produced in China. Certain Chinese embassies have announced the following measures for applicants fully vaccinated with Chinese vaccines:
  - There is no need to provide a Letter of Invitation (PU), an Invitation Letter (TE) or an Invitation Verification Notice issued by the foreign affairs office or department of commerce of the provincial government or the headquarters of a state-owned enterprise;
  - Foreign family members of Chinese citizens or permanent residents of China, including spouses, parents, children and other close relatives living together (siblings, grandparents and grandchildren), can now submit visa applications for the purposes of reuniting with family, taking care of elderly, visiting relatives, attending funerals or visiting critically ill relatives, whereas this entry exception was not previously available.
  - Holders of valid APEC business travel cards can now apply for an M visa by presenting their original valid APEC business travel card and the invitation letter issued by the inviting party in China.
  - This has been announced by Chinese embassies and consulates in many countries, **including but not limited to the ones in: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, ROK (Republic of Korea), Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Samoa, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, The Commonwealth of Dominica, The cooperative Republic of Guyana, The Federated States of Micronesia, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, The Republic of San Marino, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE (United Arab Emirates),**

**Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Vietnam.**

- The consular requirements for COVID-19 testing and HDC health codes, and the quarantine requirements in the relevant destination cities, continue to apply.
- **Macao** foreign residents (including permanent and non-permanent) can apply for visas to the mainland by providing residence certificates to prove they did not leave Macao in the last 28 days. All foreign nationals in Macao can apply for a new Chinese visa once they complete COVID-19 vaccines produced in China (14 days after finishing the 2 vaccines as the prescribed time interval) and hold a vaccination certificate issued by the Macao Health Bureau. For foreign nationals from other counties/regions who has not been inoculated with COVID-19 vaccines produced in China, visa requirements remain the same.
- Effective 16 March 2021, the Chinese Visa Application Service Centre (CVASC) in London will partially resume services.
  - The CVASC will be open from 09:00 to 14:00 every **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** from 27th April on for some specific categories of visa application and legalisation application.
  - The processing time for visa and legalisation applications will be 7 days from the date of submission.
    - Express service is not available.
    - Postal return service will take approximately two weeks from the date of submission.
    - The processing time might be longer if the Embassy requires further documents. In this case, the CVASC will contact the applicant for a new collection date.
  - An appointment is required for all visa applications except those on humanitarian grounds and pre-approved by the Embassy by email. The CVASC will not accept any visa application without an appointment.
    - Applicants aged between 14 to 70 inclusive must come to the CVASC in person to submit their visa application and have their biometric information taken. Applicants under 14 or over 70 can entrust another person to submit their application, but they must book an appointment online in advance.
    - Please note that the online application form will no longer be valid or retrievable after 30 days from the date completed.
  - An appointment is also required for a legalisation application. **New legalisation appointments for the following week's working days will be released at 14:00 every Tuesday. The CVASC resumes the limited quantity walk-in service for legalisation between 9:00-9:30 only every Tuesdays and Thursdays in order to assist those with urgent applications.**
  - All application fees need to be paid in full after being successfully accepted by the CVASC. The CVASC will have to terminate and return applications where no fees have been paid on the day of submission.
- Many Chinese embassies and consulates (including but not limited to the ones in Austria, Belarus, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland,

**Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, United States and United Kingdom)** now require that when applying for the health code, passengers taking direct flights should upload the local residence certificate, and no longer issue the health code to the local residents who go to China through a third country or the travellers from a third country where have direct flights to China.

- Passengers from a third country which does not have direct flights to China in their habitual residence should follow the principle of "only transit once", first obtain the health code approved and issued by the Chinese embassy and consulate in their permanent residence, and then apply to the Chinese embassy or consulate again after taking two COVID-19 tests according to the local requirements in the place where the direct flights are located.
- The Chinese embassy and consulates in Japan clarify that health codes won't be issued to transit passengers to China in Japan. If passengers really need to go to China from a third country (region) via Japan, they need to abide by the Japanese epidemic prevention policy and go to China after 14-day quarantine. When applying for health codes, they need to upload the photos of Japanese entry seal and the itinerary to China as well.
- The Chinese embassy in the UK has issued a notice, stipulating the specific requirements for nucleic acid and antibody testing at the institutions designated by the Chinese Embassy and consulates in the UK for persons departing from or transferring to China via the UK, as well as the process for Chinese and foreign citizens to apply for the health code. At the same time, it is clear that the health code will no longer be approved for passengers who have made two or more transfers from the UK since 19 February.
- The Chinese consulates general in Los Angeles and San Francisco have respectively issued announcements, requiring foreign nationals holding valid work, private and family reunion residence permits to send relevant materials to the designated mailbox in advance if they really have urgent, humanitarian and other necessary reasons, and then to purchase air tickets and conduct "double test" after obtaining the e-mail of the Chinese consulate general for pre-verification and -confirmation. For those without the prior approval of the consulate general, the health code will not be issued.
- Chinese embassies and consulates in Washington, New York and Chicago continue to call for the postponement or cancellation of "non-essential, non-urgent" travel. All embassies and consulates will consider various factors to decide whether to issue a health code. Even if the passengers provide qualified "double test" reports and a valid residence permit or visa, they may not be able to get a health code.
- **Many Chinese embassies, including but not limited to the ones in Algeria, Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, South Africa, Sudan, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates** are implementing more stringent measures against overseas visitors. Before traveling to China, the passengers must undergo home quarantine for at least 14 days and provide relevant quarantine certificate and "cross double tests" and other additional documents.

The embassies and consulates of Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan and Kazakhstan have made it clear that these measures are also applicable to Chinese citizens planning to return home.

- **Entry to China** is suspended for all foreign nationals, except certain holders of valid business or humanitarian visas issued after 28 March 2020, valid residence permits for work, family reunion or personal matters.
  - All visa waiver programs are suspended.
  - Entry with diplomatic, service, courtesy or C (crew) visas is not affected.
  - Foreign nationals coming to China for necessary economic, trade, scientific or technological activities or out of emergency humanitarian needs may apply for visas at Chinese embassies or consulates.
  - Companies in China are allowed to apply for an M visa **invitation letter** (“PU Letter”), for a maximum stay of 180 days, for essential foreign workers performing necessary and urgent economic, trade, scientific or technological activities. If the invitation letter is approved and issued (under limited circumstances), the foreign national can apply for an M visa at the relevant Chinese consulate. Please contact Newland Chase for a case-specific consultation.
- Foreign nationals holding valid residence permits (including for work, family reunion, or personal purposes) are permitted to enter China **without applying for a new visa**.
  - Foreign nationals from certain countries holding valid visas or residence permits issued before a certain date may be denied entry (see below),
  - Holders of residence permits in these three categories which have expired since 28 March can apply for a new visa (for the same purpose) by presenting the expired residence permit among other documents to the Chinese consulate.
- China has temporarily suspended the entry of foreign nationals from several countries holding valid visas and residence permits. Affected countries include **Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Ethiopia, France, India, Italy, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine** and **United Kingdom**.
  - According to the Chinese embassies, they will no longer issue QR Code with "HDC" / “HS” Mark or Certified Health Declaration Forms for these people.
  - Entry by holders of diplomatic, service, courtesy or C visas will not be affected. Foreign nationals visiting China for emergency needs may apply for visas at the relevant Chinese embassy or consulate.
  - Entry by foreign nationals with visas issued after the announced date of entry suspension will not be affected.
- The provincial Foreign Affairs Offices (FAO) in several cities in China have tightened up the requirements for **issuance of PU letters** and now require more concrete evidence demonstrating that the proposed visit is truly essential. Processing times for PU letters have therefore increased in many cases.

- Some FAO offices may temporarily suspend the issuance of PU letters depending on the local pandemic prevention and control measurements (including to essential business travellers and workers).
- Almost all cities in China have suspended the issuance of PU letters to family dependents and many Chinese consulates of suspended the issuance of visas to family dependents even if they are holding a valid PU letter.
- A PU (invitation) letter from the Chinese government for business or work purposes no longer guarantees the approval of the visa application. Consulates also require a detailed explanation of why it is essential for the applicant to enter China at this time – such as a letter of invitation from the Chinese company.
- Chinese embassies and consulates have started to require that foreign national travellers to China (including Fast Lane passengers) present an **Electronic Health Declaration Form** (QR code with “HDC” mark) at boarding.
- All travellers are required to present **BOTH** a negative COVID-19 NAT/PCR test certificate **AND** a negative IgM antibody test certificate, from tests taken within 48 hours of boarding, in order to obtain a QR Code with “HDC”/“HC” mark or a Certified Health Declaration Form.
  - Travellers must obtain the certificates of the nucleic acid and IgM antibody tests from a designated or approved medical testing providers according to the requirements of the relevant Chinese Embassy/ Consulate where they depart from.
  - Most of the Chinese embassies and consulates do not issue health codes to passengers who come to China on non-direct flights
  - IgG antibody tests do not meet the new requirement.
  - Only IgM antibody test certificates marked with venous blood method are accepted for approval of green QR codes.
  - This also applies to travelers departing from New Zealand on China-bound flights, as IgM antibody test are now available in New Zealand.
- Foreign passengers must complete their information [here](#), declare their health status and upload their COVID-19 test certificate(s), which will then be examined and verified by the Chinese Embassy. Upon approval, they will receive the Electronic Health Declaration Form, in the form of a QR code with the “HDC” mark. They must present the electronic or printed code and follow the procedures for inspection by relevant airlines during boarding.
- **Some Chinese embassies and consulates (including but not limited to the ones in Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Czechia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States and Vietnam) now require that when applying for the health code, if passengers who have inoculated with vaccines (including a COVID-19 vaccine produced in China or abroad), must take the following measures:**
  - **Passengers with an inactivated vaccine must fill in the Letter of Commitment on COVID-19 Vaccination, sign it by hand and upload it together with the test reports and the vaccination**

- certificate to the "Health Code" applet or the web page, when applying for a health code.
  - Passengers vaccinated with non-inactivated vaccine may lead to a positive result in IgM antibody test. In such a case, passengers need to upload a report of the IgM antibody test against N protein, as well as the Letter of Commitment on COVID-19 Vaccination and the vaccination certificate, when applying for a health code.
- Chinese passengers (including the Hong Kong SAR, the Macau SAR and the Taiwan region) can still apply for the green health code with the "HS" mark via the WeChat Health Code app.
- ***Current quarantine requirements in major cities are as follows:***
- **Shanghai:**
  - Overseas inbound travellers are subject to a 14-day centralized quarantine at a designated hotel.
  - Effective 16 May 2021, this is followed by an additional 7-day community health monitoring, either at home or in a designated hotel at their own expense.
- **Beijing:**
  - Overseas inbound travellers are subject to a 14-day centralized quarantine at a designated hotel, followed by a 7-day home/centralized quarantine.
  - If entering China through other cities, they should not travel to Beijing within 21 days of arrival. Those who need to enter Beijing within 21 days for essential travel must notify their residential community (preferably during the first week of their arrival in China), register on 'Beijing Heartfelt Support' 72 hours prior to the trip and undergo a 7-day home/centralized quarantine upon arrival in Beijing.
- **Shenzhen and Guangzhou:**
  - Travellers from overseas should undergo quarantine for 14 days at a designated hotel followed by 7-day health monitoring at home or at a hotel designated by the local community.
- **Zhejiang Province:**
  - Travellers from overseas should undergo quarantine for 14 days at a designated hotel followed by 7 days of home quarantine.
- **Jiangsu Province:**
  - Travellers from overseas should undergo quarantine for 14 days at a designated hotel followed by 14-day health monitoring at home or at a hotel designated by the local community.
- ***Current vaccination appointment requirements in major cities are as follows:***
- Foreign nationals in Shanghai can book a vaccination appointment online via Jian Kang Yun (Health Cloud) APP.
- Foreign nationals working in Beijing can make a vaccination appointment through their employers, foreign national teachers and students can make an appointment through their universities, and other foreign nationals in Beijing can make an appointment through their local communities.

- Foreign nationals in Shenzhen can schedule a vaccination appointment through the "Jian Kang Shenzhen"(Health Shenzhen) WeChat official account.
- Foreign nationals in Zhejiang province (including but not limited Hangzhou, Ningbo, Wenzhou) can make a vaccination appointment through the following ways:
  - If foreign nationals are employed, they can make the appointment through their employer;
  - Individuals can make the appointment through their residential community; OR,
  - Individuals can book the vaccination appointment directly with the local designated hospitals.
- Foreign nationals in Jiangsu province (including but not limited Nanjing, Suzhou) can book a vaccination appointment through the following ways:
  - Submit vaccination request to their employers, which then make the group appointments with the local health departments;
  - Submit vaccination request to their residential community, which then make the group appointments with the local health departments;
  - Make appointments individually at the local inoculation centres.
- Foreign nationals in Tianjin can book a vaccination appointment through their employers or call the designated medical institution by themselves.
- Foreign nationals in most cities of the Mainland China can also make appointments for vaccination.
- Citizens of Hong Kong and Macau who live, work or study in mainland China and hold mainland China residence permits or medical insurance can obtain free COVID-19 vaccination.

### Immigration Restrictions

- Shanghai SAFEA has temporarily suspended the submission of physical documents for work permit applications (including renewal, information updating and cancellation).
  - The online process with commitments from Chinese employers has been fully implemented, and companies are exempt from submitting paper documents at the authority.
  - Processing times can be reduced by two working days.
  - Category B work permits can now be granted for up to two years, provided all the requirements are met.
  - Shanghai SAFEA has also simplified the required application documents to facilitate a change of employer - the new employer does not need to submit a certificate of no criminal record, certificate of physical examination, or work qualification certificate.
- Labour authorities **in other cities** have suspended the submission of physical documents for work permit applications (suspended processes may include initial, renewal, information updating, transfer, and

cancellation, depending on the local authority). 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.

- Medical authorities have the discretionary power to permit or refuse foreign nationals to undergo a medical examination based on their entry, residence, travel and other documents.

### Immigration Concessions

- 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.
- Holders of valid endorsements to Hong Kong, Macau 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**, high-level foreign talents over the age of 65 are exempted from submitting the insurance policy, commitment on insurance or commitment letter from tri-parties while applying for the work permit in Shanghai;
- The processing times for work permit cancellation in Shanghai will be reduced from 10 working days to 3 working days.
- In **Shanghai**, E-signature on employment termination letter or emails as well as WeChat messages can be accepted as evidence in support of the termination of employment relationship between the Chinese employer and foreign employee during the epidemic control period.
- While renewing the work permit in **Shanghai**, the authority accepts the tax payment evidence uploaded online by the Chinese employer. The foreign employee (who made the commitment on salary/ IIT before) does not need to go to the tax authority to get a printout of their tax payment record, which was previously required by the SAFEA authority.
- Foreign employees in **Shanghai** are allowed to submit their online application for work permit renewal before its expiry date during this epidemic control period. Previously, such a renewal application shall be submitted online 30 days before the expiry date.