



# China's Travel Restrictions due to COVID-19: An Explainer

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- *This article provides information on the latest travel policies in China – implemented temporarily due to COVID-19 – to help business travelers understand the current situation, and develop feasible travel plans.*
- *See also table below detailing China's provincial quarantine policies for inbound travelers.*

As the COVID-19 is now a pandemic, China has formally suspended the entry of most foreign nationals to prevent a second wave of the outbreak at home. Meanwhile, Chinese provinces and cities have rolled out different quarantine policies, such as quarantining travelers from overseas or other parts of the country for two weeks in a designated hotel or at home.

However, these policies, which are abrupt and inconsistent among regions, are bringing confusion to business travelers and increasing costs for businesses.

This article provides information on the latest travel policies in China – implemented temporarily due to COVID-19 – and meant to contain any internal spread of the coronavirus.

## International travel restrictions

From midnight (0 a.m.) of March 28, 2020, China suspended the entry of most foreign nationals, citing the temporary measure as a response to the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the world. The [announcement](#) was made by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 26, two days ahead of schedule.

According to the announcement, foreigners who hold the following visas, even valid ones, are not allowed to enter China now:

- Chinese visa;
- Residence permit;



- APEC business travel card; and/or
- Port visa.

The ban also applies on those who are planning to enter the country under the following policies:

- 24/72/144-hour visa free transit policy;
- Hainan 30-day visa free policy;
- 15-day visa free policy for foreign cruise group tours through Shanghai Port;
- Guangdong 144-hour visa free policy for foreign group tours from Hong Kong or Macau SAR; and/or
- Guangxi 15-day visa free policy for foreign tour groups of ASEAN countries.

However, those who hold the following visas will not be affected:

- Diplomatic, service, courtesy, or C visas; and
- New visa successfully applied for from Chinese embassies or consulates overseas after the announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Provincial travel restrictions

Many provinces and cities require 14-day mandatory home-based or centralized quarantine for inbound travelers either from overseas or other Chinese provinces and cities, although the policy details can differ.

## Quarantine policies for inbound travelers

Here, we've consolidated a table detailing the latest travel policies across the country for your convenience.



## Travel / Entry Policy By Province (As of 27 March 2020)

| No | Province       | Isolation of personnel from other provinces  | Isolation of overseas personnel   |
|----|----------------|--|---|
| 1  | Beijing        | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 2  | Tianjin        | If you are from Hubei, high and medium risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 3  | Hebei          | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined 14 days.  |
| 4  | Shanxi         | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 5  | Inner Mongolia | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 6  | Liaoning       | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined 14 days.  |
| 7  | Jilin          | If you are from Hubei, high and medium risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 8  | Heilongjiang   | If you are from Hubei, high and medium risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 9  | Shanghai       | If you are from high risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 10 | Jiangsu        | Different regulations in different cities. For example, Nanjing: If you are from high risk areas, must be placed under a 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 11 | Zhejiang       | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 12 | Anhui          | 7-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 13 | Fujian         | If you are from high risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 14 | Jiangxi        | If you are from Hubei, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 15 | Shandong       | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 16 | Henan          | If you are from high risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 17 | Hubei          | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 18 | Hunan          | If you are from high risk areas or QR code "sun shen ma" in red color, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 19 | Guangdong      | If you are from Hubei, or QR code "sun shen ma" in red and yellow, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 20 | Guangxi        | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | If you are from high risk areas, must be placed under a 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine for health observation. |
| 21 | Hainan         | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 22 | Chongqing      | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 23 | Sichuan        | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined 14 days.  |
| 24 | Guizhou        | If you are from Hubei, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 25 | Yunnan         | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 26 | Tibet          | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Provide health certificate when you go to Tibet.  |
| 27 | Shaanxi        | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 28 | Gansu          | If QR code "sun shen ma" – in green color, you don't need isolation.   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 29 | Qinghai        | If you are from high risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine. The rest of us must be placed under a 7-day home-based or centralized quarantine       | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 30 | Ningxia        | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 31 | Xinjiang       | If you are from high risk areas, 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine   | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |
| 32 | Hongkong       | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Implementation of mandatory recommendations.  |
| 33 | Macao          | You need to observe at the observation station for 8 hours.  | No entry for non residents.   |
| 34 | Taiwan         | 14-day home-based or centralized quarantine  | Must be quarantined in hotels 14 days.  |



For example, in Beijing, all travelers from overseas must pay for their own [14-day quarantine at designated hotels](#). Those older than 70, younger than 14, pregnant, with underlying medical conditions, or in other special situations – can apply for self-isolation at home.

Similarly, from March 28, all overseas travelers arriving in Shanghai will be quarantined at designated places for 14-day medical observation (although just previously, the city had only required inbound travelers who transferred through or came from 24 countries hit hard by the virus to do so).

## Regional travel restrictions, new curbs on public gathering

While blocking the borders to curb imported cases, China is relaxing travel restrictions within its borders to boost business and consumption and revive the economy. With barely any new locally transmitted cases, on March 28, China's Wuhan city, the epicenter of the epidemic, began lifting a two-month lockdown by restarting some metro services. Wuhan's borders are provisionally set to be opened on April 8. Stores have been gradually reopening and factories are restarting across the country although not in full swing due to [limited global demand](#) as the world now fights the virus spread.

However, despite loosening some restrictions, local authorities are taking few chances. *The Guardian* reports that *Fugong fuchan* ("resuming work, resuming production"), which has been the Chinese government's mantra in the past few weeks, has been implemented gradually and with many disruptions.

In fact, just this week, Shanghai, Jinzhou in Liaoning province, and Sichuan province were among regions that abruptly suspended the operation of tourist and entertainment venues – anywhere where people congregate – even as some establishments had reopened in the last two weeks. Cinemas in China were also abruptly ordered to shut down again, though ambitious plans had been in place to showcase crowd pleasers to attract business and provide venues with complete profits.

Many fear the spread of the virus by asymptomatic people, which is why China's National Health Commission announced earlier this week that it would begin



releasing their numbers in the total tally from Wednesday. Thus, as of [reporting on April 1](#) – the total number of such cases under observation is 1,367 with 130 new asymptomatic cases recorded.

The worries also explain why Beijing's local government has now ordered its residents against making travel plans that could lead to the import of new infections. Some of the ad hoc mechanisms adopted indicate the level of anxiety within the country – an instance reported in the Shijingshan district (Beijing municipality) to the state newspaper *Global Times*, mentioned an “intelligent doorbell” installed at the home of a resident who had just returned from Hubei province. Essentially to monitor the person's home quarantine, a community worker told the paper, “It doesn't mean we don't trust him, it is just a requirement of ensuring strict supervision.”

Meanwhile, all of China's provincial and municipal governments are adopting different quarantine policies or various restrictive measures – based on a health code scheme.

## Color-coded health scheme to monitor for COVID-19

Since the beginning of February, Chinese tech giants Tencent and Alibaba have launched health code related services in Shenzhen, Hangzhou, and other cities. The health code systems of Tencent and Alibaba are embedded in their popular messaging app WeChat and payment app Alipay. Residents will get a colored health code after reporting information, such as ID card, address, health status, contact history, and residence history in the apps.

The health code serves as a proof for citizens to enter or exit the public place, also a necessary condition to resume work or [study](#). In addition, enterprises and communities can classify different personnel based on the color of the health code to carry out correct controlling measures.

Each city's health code has a set of rules. Taking Hangzhou as an example, after the systematic analysis of personal information, the system will generate a color code to be obtained by individuals. Among them, the 'green' code can allow citizens to move around the city freely; the 'red' code and 'yellow' code may subject the code owner to 14 days and seven days of quarantine, respectively, at home or at a designated hotel.



The non-unified color-coded health systems in different regions of the country are adding layers of inconvenience to intercity travelers. We recommend that travelers check their destination's quarantine policies and brace themselves for the locally-adopted color health code system in advance to avoid any obstacles on their way.

*This article was first published by [China Briefing](#), which is produced by [Dezan Shira & Associates](#). The firm assists foreign investors throughout Asia from offices [across the world](#), including in [China](#), [Hong Kong](#), [Vietnam](#), [Singapore](#), [India](#), and [Russia](#). Readers may write to [info@dezshira.com](mailto:info@dezshira.com) for more support.*