



Q&A: China's Travel Ban Policy and Visa Issues for Foreigners

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On March 26, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (MOFA) [announced](#) it will suspend the entry of most foreign nationals into the country from March 28, 2020. Many foreigners holding a residence permit and who work in China are now unable to return. Naturally, the most commonly asked questions are how they would be able to re-enter China and how to manage the status of their visas, work permits, and residence permits.

Travel Restrictions in China due to COVID-19

According to the MOFA announcement, from 0 a.m., March 28, 2020, foreigners who hold the following visas 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 Macao SAR; and/or
- Guangxi 15-day visa free policy for foreign tour groups of ASEAN countries.

Those who hold diplomatic, service, courtesy, or C visas will not be affected. Entry by foreign nationals with visas issued after March 28, 2020 will not be affected.

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Dezan Shira & Associates has received many such inquiries on China's travel ban policy. After checking with the National Immigration Administration and the Border and Customs departments, here we list the frequently asked questions and offer our comments.

Q: If I am holding a valid business visa, may I enter China for urgent business now?



A: The MOFA has suspended the entry into China by foreign nationals holding visas or residence permits since March 28, 2020. If your visa was issued before March 28, you will not be able to enter China with a business visa; if your visa is issued after March 28, you will be free to enter China.

If you are engaged in necessary economic, trade, scientific, and technological activities, you can apply for the [special visa](#) with the Invitation Letter issued by the Foreign Affairs Office.

Q: What is the special visa? How long is the validity period?

A: The special visa is officially called “M visa” (purpose of business visit). The visa will be valid for a minimum period of 30 days and a maximum period of 180 days.

Q: If I am stuck outside China and my work permit and residence permit are going to expire before the borders reopen, do I have to reapply for the work permit and residence permit, or do I have to start with the Z visa again?

A: If your work permit and residence permit are going to expire before the travel ban is lifted, you should [renew the work permit remotely](#).

After the travel ban is lifted, you can enter China with any type of visa. When you enter China, you can then go to the Entry and Exit Administrative Department of the Police for the residence permit extension application. There is no need to start with Z visa.

Q: What should I do if the work permit and residence permit expired before the travel ban?

A: If your work permit and residence permit already expired, your Chinese employer will need to restart the work permit application for you. Once the Chinese employer obtains the work permit license (the work permit license is not the final work permit, but for foreign employees outside China to apply for Z visa), you can apply for Z visa in the Chinese Embassy of the country to enter China. After you enter China, your Chinese employer can then continue the work permit application and transfer your Z visa to your residence permit.



Q: If I was terminated by the Chinese employer, but my work permit and residence permit are still valid, may I enter China with the valid residence permit after the travel ban is lifted?

A: No. The company is responsible to cancel the residence permit of the employee after canceling their work permit. If the company did not cancel the residence permit and the foreigner enters China with the residence permit, both the company and the foreigner will be punished for breaking the *Rules for the Administration of Employment of Foreigners in China*. It will also affect the parties' other visa and residence permit applications in China.

Q: If I am a foreigner but holding a permanent resident ID card of China, may I enter China under the travel ban?

A: Yes, foreigners who hold permanent residence ID cards can enter China normally.

Q: Do I need to observe a compulsory quarantine of 14 days when landing in China?

A: Yes. Chinese provinces and cities are adopting similar but differentiated [quarantine measures](#) to inbound travelers from overseas (the number of days of quarantine varies from region to region, and the quarantine can be carried out at designated places or homes). Besides, nucleic acid tests are compulsory for all overseas passengers entering China by air, sea, or land. For example, when you land or transfer in Shanghai from overseas, you will be subject to a centralized quarantine of 14 days as well as a nucleic acid test. All the related fees will be at your own expense.

Q: Which department will be responsible for announcing new regulations and how can companies find the relevant information easily?

A: New regulations and policies will be published on official WeChat accounts and websites of government departments. You can follow the WeChat account “国家移民管理局” (National Immigration Administration) or visit the NIA’s official website to get information on the latest policies and regulations. Also, you can follow WeChat accounts or websites of the local foreign affairs office to get the information.



For more information or [special visa application](#) assistance in China, you are welcome to contact us at china@dezshira.com.

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