



Transit Visa Exemptions in China: 24 Hour, 72 Hour, and 144 Hour Options

By China Briefing, Dezan Shira & Associates

Word Count: 873



Foreign travelers transiting through China have several options for transit visa exemptions. These transit visa exemptions allow eligible foreign travelers a visa free visit for 24, 72, or 144 hours.

Although requirements for each transit visa exemption are different, each transit visa exemption stipulates that foreign travelers are only eligible when traveling through China between two different countries. Further, onward travel must occur within 24, 72, or 144 hours of arrival.

To obtain a transit visa exemption, travelers should review eligibility requirements, and confirm their eligibility with their local Chinese embassy. After confirmation, travelers must communicate their intention to obtain a transit visa exemption to their airline prior to travel. The airline will liaise with border control officials, who grant transit visa exemptions to travelers that meet requirements after verification.

In most cases, the transit visa exemption only allows the traveler to visit the province of their arrival. However, travelers entering China via Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing can travel within Shanghai, Zhejiang province,



and Jiangsu province, and travelers entering via Beijing, Tianjin, Shijiazhuang, and Qinhuangdao can travel within the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

The 24 hour Transit Visa Exemption

Foreign travelers transiting through China within 24 hours to reach another country of destination may be eligible for a 24 hour Transit Visa Exemption. This visa exemption is available to all foreigners, and most ports of entry in China.

The 72 hour Transit Visa Exemption

Foreign travelers transiting through China within 72 hours to reach another country of destination may be eligible for the 72 hour Transit Visa Exemption. This visa exemption is only available to citizens of participating countries traveling through participating ports of entry in China.

To obtain this visa exemption, the foreign national must have a valid passport from one of the 53 countries, which includes:

- 24 Schengen countries in Europe (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland);
- 15 other European countries (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Macedonia, Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, UK, and Ukraine);
- Six countries in North and South America (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, and US);
- Two Oceanic countries (Australia and New Zealand); and
- Six Asian countries (Brunei, Japan, Qatar, Singapore, South Korea, and UAE).

Further, eligible travelers must be transiting through one of the following 19 cities: **Beijing**, Changsha, **Chengdu**, **Chongqing**, **Dalian**, **Guangzhou**, Guilin, **Hangzhou**, **Harbin**, Kunming, **Nanjing**, **Qingdao**, **Shanghai**, Shenyang, **Shenzhen**, **Tianjin**, Wuhan, **Xiamen**, or Xi'an.

Notably, authorities continue to expand the list of cities where 72 hour Transit Visa Exemptions are applicable.

The 144 hour Transit Visa Exemption

Foreign travelers transiting through China within 144 hours to reach another country of destination may be eligible for the 144 hour Transit Visa Exemption. This visa exemption is available to citizens of countries that are eligible for the 72 hour Transit Visa Exemption; however, the number of participating cities is more limited.

To obtain this visa exemption, the foreign national must have a valid passport from one of the 53 countries that are eligible for the 72 hour Transit Visa Exemption. The 144 hour Transit Visa Exemption was first introduced to three cities in East China's Shanghai-Jiangsu-Zhejiang area: Hangzhou, Shanghai, and



Nanjing. As of December 28, 2017, the exemption was expanded to North China's Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, namely: Beijing, Shijiazhuang, Tianjin, and Qinhuangdao.

Authorities have announced that the visa exemption will be expanded to South China's Guangdong province, in the cities of Guangzhou, Jieyang, and Shenzhen.

Hainan Visa Exemption

Since May 1, 2018, visitors from 59 eligible countries can travel to South China's Hainan province visa-free for up to 30 days.

Unlike other visa exemptions in China, visitors to Hainan enjoying visa-free access do not need to be traveling to a third country. However, they must book their visits via travel agencies registered in Hainan and approved by China's National Tourism Administration.

To be eligible for visa-free travel to Hainan, visitors must hold a valid passport from one of the following countries:

- 25 Schengen countries in Europe (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland);
- 15 other European countries (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Macedonia [FYROM], Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, the United Kingdom, Ukraine);
- Six countries in North and South America (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, the United States);
- Two Oceanic countries (Australia and New Zealand); and
- 11 countries in Asia and the Middle East (Brunei, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and United Arab Emirates).

Confirm eligibility before departure

Travelers planning on visiting China with a visa exemption are advised to confirm their eligibility with the relevant port of entry in China or their local Chinese embassy/consulate before departure. The nature of the traveler's itinerary and other factors may influence eligibility to qualify for a visa exemption.

Prospective travelers may also use a tool released by China's State Council to determine their eligibility for a visa exemption based on their nationality and port of entry. The tool can be accessed [here](#).

This article was originally published on September 6, 2017 and has been updated with the latest regulatory changes.



DEZAN SHIRA & ASSOCIATES

Your Partner for Growth in Asia

This article was first published on [China Briefing](#).

Since its establishment in 1992, Dezan Shira & Associates has been guiding foreign clients through Asia's complex regulatory environment and assisting them with all aspects of legal, accounting, tax, internal control, HR, payroll, and audit matters. As a full-service consultancy with operational offices across China, Hong Kong, India, and ASEAN, we are your reliable partner for business expansion in this region and beyond.

For inquiries, please email us at china@dezshira.com. Further information about our firm can be found at: www.dezshira.com.