

Immigration Guide

Japan



Landing Permission/Entry Visa

Business Visitor

Work Visa

Application Process

Status of Residence to Work

Accompanying Family Members

Application Process Overview

Timeline

Alternative Immigration Options

Non-compliance

Contact

Landing Permission/Entry Visa

Nationals from countries classified within the Visa Exemption Arrangement with Japan can apply for landing permission upon arrival at the immigration checkpoint. Temporary Visitor status is typically granted for 90 days. However, this may vary according to nationality.

Landing permission is granted at the Japan immigration checkpoint and differs from a visa. The landing permission authorises entry to Japan. A visa does not guarantee permission to enter Japan, but is one of the conditions for an application to enter Japanese territory from the airport upon arrival.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website provides a list of countries with visa exemption arrangements.

Business Visitor

Foreigners can enter Japan as a Temporary Visitor provided the scope of their business activities are limited to:

- Meetings
- Negotiations
- Discussions
- Fact finding missions
- Exploring business opportunities

The Immigration Authorities may question the purpose of entry and stay in Japan of a foreigner who frequently travels in and out of Japan on business as a Temporary Visitor. If the individual is not able to provide satisfactory reasons to support entry under the Temporary Visitor status, landing permission may not be granted.

Work Visa

Foreign nationals who stay and work in Japan either for short-term or long-term are required to obtain a Work Visa prior to commencing an assignment in Japan.

Application Process

Certificate of Eligibility and Work Visa

The applicant is required to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (CoE) through their host offices in Japan prior to applying for the Work Visa at the Consulate General of Japan generally in the home country or other foreign country of residence. The CoE is valid for three months from the date of issuance.

Landing Permission/Entry
Visa

Business Visitor

Work Visa

Application Process

**Status of Residence to
Work**

Accompanying Family
Members

Application Process
Overview

Timeline

Alternative Immigration
Options

Non-compliance

Contact

An assignee (and relevant family members) who obtains a Japan visa with the CoE is required to enter Japan within that period. The CoE must be submitted to the Japanese consulate together with the Work Visa application forms.

Alien Registration Certificate

The foreign assignee must then apply for an ARC in person at the city hall where they reside after entering Japan.

Re-Entry Permission

Following issuance of the ARC, the individual should also apply for 'Re-entry Permission' at the Immigration office to travel in and out of Japan on the same resident status. If the Re-entry Permit is not obtained or has lapsed while the person is out of the country, he will need to re-start the immigration process beginning with the application for a new CoE.

A Work Visa is normally granted for periods ranging from one to three years based on the duration of assignment and the individual's personal profile, and is subject to the discretion of the immigration authority. The period of stay can be extended by applying for an extension of period of stay as well as Re-entry permission.

When an assignment is completed, the individual is required to surrender the Alien Registration Certificate at the airport during departure. This will conclude the individual's residency in Japan.

Status of Residence to Work

All foreigners who intend to work in Japan must obtain a valid working status prior to commencing work. This is the case irrespective of where the individual is being remunerated or where their employment contract is signed. The duration of the assignment is also not a factor; therefore, strictly speaking, even if someone is coming to work for a day or two, a working status is required.

The assignee's job title and responsibilities while working in Japan would determine the appropriate working status. Examples include: 'Investor/Business Manager', 'Intra-company Transferee', and 'Specialist in Humanities/International Services'. If the assignee's spouse or parent is a Japanese national, 'Spouse or Child of Japanese National' may be an option.

Many expatriates may be willing to sponsor foreign national domestic helpers during their assignment in Japan. However, due to strict criteria, this may be approved only for limited expatriates under the current Japanese immigration rules.

Landing Permission/Entry
Visa

Business Visitor

Work Visa

Application Process

Status of Residence to
Work

**Accompanying Family
Members**

**Application Process
Overview**

Timeline

**Alternative Immigration
Options**

Non-compliance

Contact

Accompanying Family Members

A foreigner's non-working spouse or children must apply for Dependant status to enable them to reside in Japan.

If an accompanying spouse intends to work, they have the option to apply to work (up to 28 hours per week) through 'Permission to Engage in an Activity Other than that Permitted by the Status of Residence Previously Granted' (tied to the approved Dependant status) or to secure a Working Status separately through their own employer.

A common law spouse or domestic partner is not eligible for Dependent status and may need to stay in Japan under Temporary Visitor status for 90 days.

Application Process Overview

Supporting Documents

For the COE application, these include a passport-sized photo (3x4 cm), a copy of passport details page, resume, original educational certificates assignment contract/employment letter, host office information such as company registration, financial report, and company brochure. Depending on the type of Work Visa, additional documents may be required.

Original marriage and birth certificates are required for dependant family member's applications. Applications for adopted children or children from different marriages are likely to require submission of additional documents and completion of further application forms.

Timeline

The processing time for the Certificate of Eligibility application is approximately four to six weeks at the Regional Immigration Bureau, and several days for a visa application at the Japanese Consulate. The combined process takes approximately six to eight weeks including international courier delivery period.

Alternative Immigration Options

Other options available to foreigners seeking to reside in Japan may include:

- Spouse or Child of Japanese National
 - Different documentation would be required. This status of residence does not require sponsorship by an employer, as it is tied to the individual applicant. The duration granted for this status can be one or three years. Applicants who qualify under this category would not be subject to limitation on employment and work related activities.
- Permanent Residence (PR)
 - Certain categories of foreigners are eligible to apply for PR. There is no limitation on employment and work related activities.

Landing Permission/Entry
Visa

Business Visitor

Work Visa

Application Process

Status of Residence to
Work

Accompanying Family
Members

Application Process
Overview

Timeline

Alternative Immigration
Options

Non-compliance

Contact

Non-compliance

Non-compliance or falsely declaring salary, academic qualifications, or submitting forged documents with the application is an offence. Upon conviction, the individual (or in relevant cases, the company) may be liable to Revocation of Status of Residence, Deportation, a fine and/or a jail term.

Contact

This Guide is intended to provide an overview of the immigration criteria and options for foreigners seeking to reside and work in Japan. For advice or assistance relating to a specific immigration matter, please contact:

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