

EUROPE RELAXING VISA RULES TO ATTRACT CHINESE TRAVELLERS



Relationships between Europe and China have been improving in recent times and European embassies are looking to build upon new political relations by opening the door a little wider and being more inviting to students, tourists and other Chinese travellers requiring a European visa. It is also believed that Chinese travellers are more welcome now because there is less fear of illegal immigration - mainly due to the growing wealth and disposable income of the average traveller - and this is reflected in the fact that the visa refusal rate was just 3.9% for Chinese travellers compared to 5% of UK applicants and 6.2% of Indians. In 2013 there were 1.5 million Chinese applicants wanting visas for European travel, putting them third in the list of applicant for Schengen nations behind Russia and Ukraine; with these new attitudes and new visa rules being announced, this figure is sure to rise .

Visa rules fo Chinese tourists wanting Schengen visas have been relaxed.

This year, embassies are looking to make the process of visa applications even easier by shortening processing times, extending the window between submission and travel from three months to six, eliminating the need for mandatory travel medical insurance and introducing a new, one year tourist visa in the Schengen countries to encourage more students and researchers. It is no surprise that these new measures has been well received but the influx in interest and applications has been fast and sharp. Shortly after the French embassy implemented their plans for 48 hour processing, the daily rate of applications in their Beijing centre tripled from 300 to 900. The system seems to be working and there are clearly a lot of Chinese tourists keen to enjoy these benefits while they can but the even better news is that these wider windows and faster processes are not temporary and there are more benefits around the corner.

New proposals for 2015 are set to change the visa system for Chinese visitors to Europe even further.

From May of next year, Chinese tourists looking for a visa in Europe will be part of a new system that it set to reform the way that the Schengen visa scheme currently works and make the process even more beneficial for these applicants. The VIS system of recording and collecting data for visa applications, which includes the recording of fingerprints, is already is use in some areas but it will be rolled out across these 26 countries in 2015 so that embassies can keep a better eye on the data and history of travellers. This will open up the possibility of multiple-entry visas of three to five years in length to make secondary applications much easier and potentially reward travellers with a good, clean record with greater rewards and even faster processing.

In the end, these proposals, both in the short term and long term situations, should be beneficial for all concerned; Chinese applicants get the benefit of faster processes and more opportunities for European travel and Europe get to implement a beneficial reform to their current system while welcoming a key new market.

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