

The United States and China Agree to Extending Visas for Short-term Business Travelers, Tourists, and Students

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the benefits of the visa validity extension?

U.S. and Chinese citizens who regularly travel back and forth between the U.S. and China will benefit from the longer validity by not having to apply and pay the application fee every year. Businesses in both countries, including the tourism industry, will benefit from increased travel, investment, and business development opportunities between the two countries. Longer visa validity will allow students and exchange visitors to return to their home countries during school and work holidays more easily.

Q: Will these changes in visa validity affect fees?

There will be no change in visa application fees. The basic visa fee of 160 USD includes appointment scheduling and passport delivery services. Visa information is available free both online at www.ustraveldocs.com and through the Call Center. Fees can be paid by debit card online, at any CITIC ATM, or in cash at a CITIC branch. Applicants can pick up their passports at any of 800 CITIC bank branches.

Q: Will these changes affect processing times?

We expect that these changes in visa validity will be very popular among Chinese travelers. The U.S. Mission in China is taking steps to handle a potential increase in visa workload and intends to keep visa processing times as short as they have been over the past several years.

Q: Will changes in visa validity have any effect on visa eligibility?

The same standards of eligibility for a U.S. visa will apply as before this extension in validity.

Q: Will applicants with previous visas still be eligible to apply for visa renewal via the Interview Waiver Program?

The Interview Waiver Program (IWP) remains a valuable tool to many visa holders who wish to renew visas. A great majority of current tourist, business visitor, student, and exchange visitor nonimmigrant visa holders will remain eligible for IWP processing. More information on IWP processing can be found at www.ustraveldocs.com.

Q: Will these changes in visa validity affect visa applications subject to administrative processing?

Changes in visa validity will not change the requirement that some applications will need additional administrative processing. As is true in all visa cases, when administrative processing is required, visa validity may vary based on individual circumstances of each case. Visa applicants are reminded to apply early for their visa, well in advance of the anticipated travel date.

Q: Will the increased visa validity allow me to stay longer in the United States?

It is important to note that visa validity is NOT the same as the allowed duration of stay. A visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port of entry where a Customs and Border Protection officer will grant admission to valid travelers. In doing so, the officer will inform the traveler of the permitted length of stay. The current change in visa validity does NOT change the permitted duration of stay for any visa class. Remaining in the United States beyond your allowed duration of stay can result in a violation of U.S. immigration laws and may cause you to be ineligible for travel to the United States in the future.

Q: When is the right time to apply for this longer-validity visa?

The up-to ten-year validity visa is not a temporary offer, but represents a long-term reciprocal commitment. While an applicant should generally apply well in advance of their anticipated travel date, an individual with a currently valid visa or with no current travel plan should not rush to apply.

Q: If the visa currently in my passport has one year validity, does it now have a longer validity?

Existing visas will be valid only until the expiration date printed on the current visa. This extension does NOT increase the validity of visas already issued. To obtain a visa with extended validity, holders of valid or recently-expired visas will need to apply again. Please note that many visa applicants are eligible for the Interview Waiver Program under which an interview may not be required; more information on IWP processing can be found at www.ustraveldocs.com.

Q: Will U.S. citizens receive ten-year tourism and business visitor visas in China?

Because this is a reciprocal arrangement, the Chinese government is committed to issuing visas valid for up to the same duration.

Q: What happens if U.S. citizens aren't issued ten-year tourist visas? Will anything change for Chinese nationals?

The arrangement is based on reciprocity. Chinese nationals will be afforded the same maximum validity for B-category visas as U.S. citizens are afforded when applying for an equivalent visa category.

Q: When will other classifications of visas have longer validity? Why don't other classifications of visas have long validity?

The United States and China continue to discuss visa validity for other classes of visas. All such decisions are made on a reciprocal basis. At the same time, it is important to note that in FY2014, business, tourist, student, and exchange visitor visas represented 97 percent of all nonimmigrant visa applications processed in China for Chinese citizens.

Q: Will dependent family members of students and exchange visitors also be eligible for these increases in visa validity?

Yes, all qualified dependent family members of students and exchange visitors will be eligible for these same increases in visa validity.

Q: Can I apply for a ten-year visa if I am a Chinese national living in a country other than China?

Yes, maximum visa validity is determined by the reciprocity arrangement with the country that issued your passport and not the country in which you apply.