

China extends visa-free entry for most of Europe through 2026

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Dhaka: China has announced the extension of its visa-free travel policy for a majority of European countries until the end of 2026, allowing eligible travelers to enter the country for up to 30 days without a prior visa.

The move is part of Beijing's broader effort to revive inbound tourism and international exchanges following the full reopening of borders after the COVID-19 pandemic. China was among the last major economies to lift pandemic-related travel restrictions.

According to China's National Immigration Administration, the policy is already delivering results. Visa-free foreign arrivals more than doubled in 2024 compared with 2023, exceeding 20 million visitors during the year.

The upward trend continued in 2025. During the third quarter of 2025 alone, 7.25 million foreign nationals entered China under visa-free arrangements, representing nearly a 50% increase year-on-year. Visa-free entries accounted for more than 72% of all foreign arrivals in the period.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a recent press briefing in Beijing that the extension reflects China's "high-standard opening up" and its determination to reduce administrative barriers for international visitors.

Under the extended scheme, citizens from a wide range of European countries, including France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, and the Nordic states, can enter China without a visa for short stays. In total, nationals from 46 countries are now covered by the 30-day visa-free regime.

Beyond Europe, several non-European nations also made it into the list, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand. Azerbaijan joined them after signing a mutual agreement in mid-2025.

Canada was among the most recent additions, with the visa-free arrangement announced during Prime Minister Mark Carney's official visit to China. The agreement is expected to boost tourism and business travel between the two countries.

Notably absent from the list is the United Kingdom. British passport holders are still required to obtain a visa before traveling to China. This remains unchanged even as UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer is currently on an official visit to the country, accompanied by a large business delegation.

Chinese authorities said further adjustments to entry policies may be considered as international travel demand continues to recover and global connectivity improves.