



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 72

January 2014

Shanghai Facilitates Expat Visa Renewals

From Matt Hodges and Shi Jing in Shanghai (China Daily), 01-01-2014

Leaving China?

Did you know that you can end your enrollment with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) by visiting the step.state.gov site? If you previously submitted a paper enrollment form to the U.S. consulate, you may end your enrollment by sending an email request to: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Wait time to get passports back for residence permits cut to one hour. New visa procedures due to take effect on Thursday mean expatriates living in Shanghai will no longer have to forfeit their passports for a week when renewing their residence permits online. Foreigners who had their applications approved online in the past had to leave their passport at one of the offices of the Exit-Entry Bureau for seven days. This meant they could not leave the country, travel freely or open a bank account during that period. The amended procedure truncates the waiting time to about an hour, provided the applicant takes all of the required documents to the bureau's office in Pudong on the specified date.

"This is mostly aimed at foreign executives who need to travel often in China or internationally to do business," said Li Feng, a spokesman for the administration. He said Shanghai is one of the first cities in China to roll out such a measure. However, there is still a wait involved as it takes up to a week for the bureau to approve the visa-renewal application and provide a date on which expats can get their passport stamped, according to Li. Other expats complained about the operating speed of the administration's website, which remains slow to respond despite recent efforts to spruce it up. The homepage now vaguely resembles the touchscreen display seen on PCs and tablets running Windows 8.

The new visa measure is one of several implemented recently to make life abroad more convenient for those who choose to work in Shanghai. More expat registration offices are expected to open across the city in 2014. In August, green card rules were amended for those who wish to reside long-term in China. Among other benefits, holders can now enjoy the full benefits of the country's social security system. Meanwhile, a new set of visa laws targeting foreigners that were introduced on July 1 include heavier punishments for illegal aliens and those who overstay their visas. In addition to having to submit fingerprint and biometric data when applying for visas, foreign workers cannot leave the country if they owe their employers money. [READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

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Thailand Travel Alert

The U.S. Department of State alerts U.S. citizens of the potential risks of travel to Thailand, particularly Bangkok, due to ongoing political and social unrest ahead of Thai parliamentary elections, scheduled to take place nationwide on February 2, 2014. The situation is unpredictable, and ongoing demonstration activity, primarily in the greater Bangkok area and occasionally elsewhere in Thailand, is expected to continue. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid all protests, demonstrations, and large gatherings. Some protest sites are located near tourist attractions and popular shopping malls, which at times have closed or shortened hours unexpectedly. Protests may occur in other areas with little or no prior notice. You should allow extra time when travelling throughout the city or to/from airports. Consider using public transportation. Although many protest activities have been peaceful, increasingly violent incidents have occurred at or near protest sites. [READ THE FULL ALERT HERE](#)

China's Shenyang, Dalian Offer 72-hour Visa-free Stays

From English.news.cn, 01-01-2014

SHENYANG, Jan. 1 (Xinhua) -- Shenyang and Dalian, capital and port city of northeast China's Liaoning Province, respectively, launched 72-hour visa-free stays for foreigners starting on Jan. 1, authorities said Wednesday. To enjoy the policy, travelers should hold a valid passport, third country visas and plane tickets leaving for a third

country or region within 72 hours, according to the public security bureaus of both cities.

The 51 countries include the United States, Australia, Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, France, Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom, which are among the most common origin countries for inbound tourist arrivals to China.

Foreigners who enjoy the visa-free policy can stay within the two cities after arriving at the Shenyang Taoyuan International Airport or Dalian Zhoushuizi International Airport.

However, foreigners should also apply for a Chinese visa if they are faced with unexpected circumstances or special events causing them to stay in the two cities for over 72 hours.

Shanghai Makes Plan Against Pollution Clearer

From Wang Zhenghua in Shanghai (China Daily), 1-16-2014

Shanghai has fine-tuned its emergency air pollution plan, vowing to release a timely warning against smoggy weather and intensify mandatory measures to help reduce pollution. At a news conference on Wednesday, the city's environmental protection bureau released the updated emergency air pollution plan that has been approved by the municipal government.

Experts said Shanghai took the lead in the country by setting an example and putting forward a practical and detailed emergency plan. Under the plan, Shanghai set up a four-tier warning system for polluted weather, with red being the most serious, followed by orange, yellow and blue. A blue alert will be released when the city's air quality index reading is forecast between 201 and 300 for 24 hours, a yellow alert for AQI of 201-300 for 48 hours, an orange for AQI of 301-450 for 24 hours, and a red for AQI of 451 and above for 24 hours. In line with the four-tier warnings, the authority also set up a four-level response system, and made clear compulsory measures to be taken on polluted days. For example, when a red alert is raised, the government will take 50 percent of government vehicles off roads, ban activities involving large crowds, suspend classes at kindergartens, primary and middle schools, and halt work at high-polluting enterprises and at most construction sites. The original plan, which took effect in April, generated a public outcry as residents said the warnings came too late. The old version was also vague on whether the measures to be taken on polluted days are compulsory or advised.

Qian Hua, former director of the atmospheric environment research institute under the Shanghai Academy of Environmental Sciences, said on Wednesday that Shanghai has made progress against air pollution. "The updated plan is more detailed, makes improvements in timeliness and is more practical," he said. "The environmental workers are not gods. They need to learn knowledge about weather and come up with a practical emergency plan. But Shanghai leads other areas in the country with such a plan and it has been quick to make adjustments when it found defects in the original one."

Some residents welcomed the improved plan. "In the past, we were always told about a heavily polluted day - on which children should stay at home - when we had already sent my child to kindergarten," said Yan Xuwei, a father. "We need a warning about the smog well ahead of the time it is happening to make a correct decision about our life," he added.

Shanghai also vowed to work closer with its neighbors to fight and control air pollution. Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui, as well as eight ministry-level agencies, launched a coordinated mechanism to fight and control air pollution in the Yangtze River Delta region last week. Under the framework, the four regions will work together to push forward the nation's policies on air pollution control, study the challenges the region faces and report to each other on air quality and the progress they make in their own areas.

Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Warnings** for the following countries:

Philippines	01/10/2014
Mexico	01/09/2014
Nigeria	01/08/2014
Republic of South Sudan	01/03/2014

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained

due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Alerts**:

Thailand	01/19/2014
South Pacific Cyclone Season	01/15/2014
Russian Federation	01/10/2014
Egypt	01/06/2014

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural

disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and **prohibited items** on flights can be viewed online at www.tsa.gov.

For additional information, please visit "**Americans Traveling Abroad**" on the website of the U.S. Department of State http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html.

Upcoming Holidays & Other Closures

A full list of all of our closures is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>. The ACS Unit will be **CLOSED** to the public on:

<u>January 30, 2014, Thursday</u>	Administrative Closure	行政管理日	Xíngzhèng Guǎnlǐ Rì
<u>Jan. 31 - Feb. 4, 2014, Fri. - Tues.</u>	Chinese (Lunar) New Year	中国农历新年	Zhōngguó Nónglì Xīnnián
<u>February 14, 2014, Friday</u>	Administrative Closure	行政管理日	Xíngzhèng Guǎnlǐ Rì
<u>February 17, 2014, Monday</u>	Presidents' Day	总统日	Zǒngtǒng Rì
<u>February 20, 2014, Monday</u>	Administrative Closure	行政管理日	Xíngzhèng Guǎnlǐ Rì

American Citizen Services (ACS) Contact Information

U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai, China, 1038 West Nanjing Road, 8/F
Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场 (Méi Lóng Zhèn Guǎng Chǎng)

To Make Or Cancel An Appointment:

<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=SHG&appcode=1>

Mon - Fri *Closed on Wednesday afternoons, weekends, and holidays.

After Hours Emergencies: (86-21) 3217-4650

Homepage: shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html