

Visas and Work Permits

Any foreign national wishing to enter Japan to undertake work must have a valid visa obtained in advance.

An individual's permission to work in Japan depends on the status of residence assigned to him or her. There are several categories of status of residence that may be applied for.

Application Process

The application process for obtaining a visa is as follows:

1. Foreign national applies for a certificate of eligibility at a regional immigration bureau in Japan. This generally takes two to three months;
2. Once certificate of eligibility is received, individual applies for a visa to enter Japan at home country consulate;
3. Upon arrival in Japan, there is a landing examination at the port of entry and landing permission is issued. This determines the status of residence;
4. Report to local authorities to receive a Certificate of Alien Registration;
5. Before any departure from Japan, the applicant must apply for re-entry permission;

The visa status of residence determines the type of activities the applicant can undertake in Japan. The most common for foreign businesses are:

- Business manager;
- Legal or accounting;
- Engineer;
- Specialist in humanities/international services;
- Intra-company transferee;
- Skilled labor.

If the employee wants to undertake activities of a different class than the Status of Residence assigned to him, he must apply for a permit.

Alien Registration

Foreign nationals intending to stay more than 90 days must register as an alien with their local government ward office within 90 days of their arrival.

Dependents

Spouses and dependent children may be granted a "Dependent" status of residence. The application for this may be submitted at the same time or after the application for the working spouse.

Temporary Visitor Visa

Business travelers from 61 countries may enter Japan under a Temporary Business Visitor program. These short stay visas are issued for either 15, 30 or 90 days.

While visiting Japan under this program, the individual is not permitted to undertake work activities. They may however:

- Undertake inspections or field trips;
- Attend short courses or briefings;
- Participate in conferences;
- Undertake short term business activities (e.g. preparatory market research for starting business activities, liaison, contract signing, negotiations, etc.).