

Visas in China

In the People's Republic of China, there are a variety of different visas. This guide will take you through the legal working (Z) visa as well as the methods for obtaining a visa. It is critical that you are on the right type of visa to live and work in China legally.

Required Documents for a Z Visa

In order to begin the process of obtaining a Z visa, you first need to have signed a contract of employment with an employer in China. Your employer then obtains two pieces of documentation. The first of these is the “**Work Permit**,” and the other is the “**Invitation Letter**.” Your employer requires *your CV, a reference letter, copies of your University degree, teaching certificates and a copy of your passport* to obtain these documents. Only schools that are legally allowed to hire foreigners are able to provide these documents. Furthermore, you will likely need to undergo a **medical check**, both/either in your home country and/or in China, and a **background check** in your home country.

Obtaining a Z Visa

Once your employer has sent you the required documents, you may then apply for a Z visa. Along with your passport, you will need to submit these documents to the Chinese Embassy in your home country. Alternatively, if you are legally working in a country other than your home country, you can carry out the process from the embassy or consulate either in HK or at your home country. Depending on processing time, in a few days or a week you will get your passport back in mail with a temporary “Z visa” inside. This temporary visa is good for 30 days and is designed for you to enter China.

Finishing the Process

Once you're in China, your school will assist you in converting your temporary visa into a “**Foreign Expert Certification**” or “**Alien Employment Permit**” along with a “**Residence Permit**”. This process could take around a month. In the meantime, the government requires you to have physical exam done. If you have already done one in overseas, you would likely have to do it again once in China.

New Visa Policy

The government of Shanghai issued a new policy in 2015 for expats already in China, applying for Z visas in Shanghai. If you are travelling in Shanghai and then happen to find a job, your employer needs to apply for your “Work Permit” as usual. But there is *no need* to apply for the “Invitation



Letter” and the Z visa. You can move on directly to the “Foreign Expert Certification” or “Alien Employment Permit” along with your “Residence Permit”.

Registering with the Police

Before and after your school applies for the “Foreign Expert Certification” or “Alien Employment Permit” along with your “Residence Permit”, you will **need to register with your local police station in China**. You will need your passport for this, and a copy of your lease if necessary. They will provide you with a “Registration Form of Temporary Residence.” Failure to obtain this document may result in steep fines. If you are residing in a hotel or hostel, the hotel staff can usually do this for you on the spot.