

Immigration Tourism Update

March 2026

Overview

- Immigration is crucial to the Government’s economic growth agenda and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) is committed to ensuring that visa processing is not a barrier to New Zealand getting the visitors we need to grow the economy.
- INZ aims to provide a trusted and effective immigration service and is committed to processing all visa applications as quickly as possible.
- In 2025, INZ issued more than 1.6 million NZeTA (New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority) requests, including more than 31,000 eligible China and Pacific nationals able to travel from Australia with an NZeTA. We also approved over 420,000 visitor visas for over 560,000 people.
- INZ facilitated more than 13.4 million movements at the New Zealand border. Visitor visa processing times continued to improve, and applications were decided in an average of five working days in 2025, compared to seven days in 2024.
- Working holiday schemes continued to provide a valuable boost to the tourism industry, with many Working Holiday Visa holders getting jobs in the tourism or hospitality industry while they are here exploring the country.
- New Zealand has working holiday schemes with more than 40 countries, and in 2025 we decided more than 45,000 working holiday applications, with 98% approved. We also approved 3,296 working holiday extensions. The average processing time for a working holiday visa was two working days.
- The top five most popular working holiday schemes for the 2025 year were:
 - Great Britain – 7,995 approved applications
 - France – 7,294 approved applications
 - Germany – 5,384 approved applications
 - Japan – 3,813 approved applications
 - United States of America – 2,783 approved applications

Total Visitor Visas applications from all nationalities (01 Jan – 31 Dec 2025)

	Submitted	Decided	Approved	Declined	Average processing time (working days)
Total	476,968	473,933	421,519	47,965	5

Total Visitor Visas applications from all nationalities (01 Jan – 28 Feb 2026)

	Submitted	Decided	Approved	Declined	Average processing time (working days)
Total	72,322	79,200	70,099	8,318	6

Visitor Visas applications – Top 5 nationalities approved & declined (01 Jan – 31 Dec 2025)

Nationality	Approved	Average processing time (working days)	Nationality	Declined	Average processing time (working days)
China	204,045	5	India	13,156	6
India	63,523	6	China	6,796	5
Philippines	25,745	5	Pakistan	4,391	12
Fiji	17,243	7	Fiji	2,401	7
Thailand	14,746	4	Tonga	2,163	10

Visitor Visas applications – Top 5 nationalities approved & declined (01 Jan – 28 Feb 2026)

Nationality	Approved	Average processing time (working days)	Nationality	Declined	Average processing time (working days)
China	32,135	4	India	1,955	7
India	11,468	7	Pakistan	1,123	19
Philippines	4,382	7	China	1,070	9
Thailand	3,369	5	Nigeria	468	17
Fiji	2,594	7	Russia	399	12

Middle East situation

- We recognise the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is disrupting international travel and creating uncertainty for airlines, tourism operators, and New Zealand's visitor economy.
- New Zealand's border and INZ's operations are functioning as normal, with no changes to immigration settings, and well-tested processes in place should conditions change.
- While some flight routes and transit hubs are affected, INZ is focused on maintaining a stable border system that provides clarity and confidence for travellers and the tourism sector.
- We encourage anyone affected by travel disruptions linked to the Middle East situation to check the clear and up to date guidance on the INZ website, which sets out what people need to do depending on their circumstances: [Middle East: advice for temporary visa holders in New Zealand affected by travel disruptions: Immigration New Zealand](#).

- INZ is working closely with other border agencies, airline partners and airports to support consistent passenger outcomes, particularly where flights are cancelled or required to return to New Zealand. We have developed a handout for our border staff to distribute to airline carriers to support them with traveller information.
- We have established an INZ response page for Iran, which will be updated weekly with refreshed data on the number of Iranian temporary visa holders both onshore, and those with valid temporary visas that are still offshore. Please visit here for more information: [Immigration New Zealand's response to the situation in Iran :: Immigration New Zealand](#)

Pacific visitor visa fees

- Recently, the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced a temporary reduction in visitor visa fees for eligible Pacific nationals.
- These changes take effect from 1 June 2026 for 12 months, with the cost being reduced to NZD \$161 from NZD \$216 (this includes the standard immigration levy of \$41).
- The fee reduction only applies to individuals who are applying outside of New Zealand and excludes applicants under the Parent Boost Visitor Visa and Group Visitor Visas.
- Pacific nationals already pay lower fees than visitors from other countries, and this change further solidifies New Zealand's commitment to supporting our Pacific neighbours.
- This temporary reduction will make travel more accessible while ensuring immigration settings remain financially sustainable.
- The full list of Pacific countries included in this temporary fee reduction is:
 - American Samoa
 - the Federated States of Micronesia
 - Fiji
 - Kiribati
 - Nauru
 - Palau
 - Papua New Guinea
 - Republic of the Marshall Islands
 - Samoa, Solomon Islands
 - Tonga
 - Tuvalu
 - Vanuatu
- More information is available on our website: [Visitor visa fees temporarily reduced for Pacific nationals :: Immigration New Zealand](#)

China

- China continues to be a very important market for New Zealand's tourism sector and increasing the number of visitors from China is a key focus for the New Zealand government.
- New Zealand visitor visa offerings for Chinese nationals are more generous than other groups of travellers, reflecting the importance of the relationship with China. Most Chinese visitors receive a five-year multiple entry visitor visa, making it easier for Chinese visitors to return to New Zealand.
 - For the 2025 calendar year, we received nearly 210,000 visitor visas from Chinese nationals and approved more than 204,000.
 - Processing times improved from six working days for the 2024 calendar year, to five working days in 2025.
 - The approval rate for all China visitor visas remained consistently high in 2025, with an average of 96% for the 2025 calendar year.
 - So far in 2026, (01 January – 28 February), we have approved 32,135 visitor visas from Chinese nationals. Processing times are sitting at 4 working days, and the approval rate is 96%.
- INZ also now has more support in place to help make it easier for Chinese tourists applying for a visa. This includes
 - additional contact points for the Chinese travel industry with staff based in China to support Approved Destination Status (ADS) agents, including a phone number they can call for direct support; and
 - web content in Simplified Chinese: [Visitor Visa application guide for citizens of China : Immigration New Zealand.](#)
- Multiple visits to China in 2025 by the Head of INZ and other senior leaders from INZ have deepened our understanding of customer and stakeholder expectations in this market.
- We have also appointed local engagement advisors in China to work with tourism and education sectors to deepen our understanding of these areas.
- These engagements confirmed that Chinese stakeholders respond well to strong, consistent branding and place high value on fast, reliable communication. While language barriers are increasingly mitigated by translation tools, the demand for timely and accurate content remains high. INZ remains committed to delivering responsive, user-focused services that support the needs of this important market.
- Feedback on immigration policy changes, and INZ's response to market insights from previous visits to China was positive, and improvements to the timeliness of visitor visa processing have been well received.

Visa-free travel trial from Australia

- Eligible travellers from China and Pacific Islands Forum countries can now visit New Zealand from Australia for up to three months using an NZeTA, if they hold a valid eligible Australian visa. This is a 12-month trial. The full list of eligible Australian visas can be found on the INZ website: [Easier travel from Australia to New Zealand for Chinese visitors: Immigration New Zealand](#)
 - From 3 November 2025 to 28 February 2026, we received more than 59,000 NZeTA requests from Chinese and Pacific nationals travelling to New Zealand from Australia. Of these requests, more than 47,000 people have already travelled to New Zealand.

- For the month of February 2026, we have received and approved more than 12,000 NZeTA requests from Chinese and Pacific nationals travelling to New Zealand from Australia.
- The South Island remains extremely popular, with 32 percent of Chinese and Pacific visitors travelling on this pathway arriving in Christchurch and 21 percent in Queenstown.
- Analysis of the first four months suggests these changes have resulted in an estimated 30 percent net increase in visitor arrivals among Chinese nationals.
- We also recently carried out a further survey of China and Pacific nationals who travelled on an NZeTA to gather insights into how the visa-free travel is going. Results showed that satisfaction remains high - 96% of respondents were satisfied with the application experience overall.
- Of the people who had applied for a visa before, 94% of people found the NZeTA process better.
- In addition, more than 80% of respondents, including 82% of Chinese travellers and 87% of visitors from Pacific Island Forum countries, said they travelled to New Zealand specifically because the NZeTA option became available.
- 85% applicants reported their expectations of the processing time for their NZeTA were met or exceeded
- The simplicity and speed of the process meant they could plan trips more spontaneously and confidently with only minor opportunities for improvement identified, mainly around photo submission which we are looking to refine our guidance to improve this further.
- A breakdown of the China and Pacific NZeTA stats is now available on our website and will be updated monthly. They can be found here: [Background on the NZeTA: Why it was introduced and key statistics :: Immigration New Zealand](#)

Breakdown of China and Pacific NZeTA requests (3 November 2025 – 28 February 2026)

Nationality	NZeTA requests submitted	NZeTA requests approved	NZeTA requests in progress	NZeTA requests refused	Travellers arrived on an NZeTA
Chinese nationals	57,587	57,168	6	66	46,724
Pacific nationals	1,552	1,498	443	51	758
Total	59,139	58,666	449	117	47,482

Breakdown of China NZeTA requests submitted and approved by month

	NZeTA requests submitted	NZeTA requests approved
2025		
October	4,569	4,374
November	14,543	14,055
December	11,803	12,309
2026		
January	14,862	14,603
February	11,810	11,827
Total	57,587	57,168

Breakdown of Pacific NZeTA requests submitted and approved by month

	NZeTA requests submitted	NZeTA requests approved
2025		
October	79	69
November	554	519
December	411	410
2026		
January	272	264
February	236	236
Total	1,552	1,498

Chinese national visitor arrivals by month (as at 28 February 2026)

	Total visitor arrivals (global)	Total visitor arrivals (From Australia)	Total arrivals with NZeTA (from Aus under pilot policy beginning 3 Nov 2025)
2024			
November	21,792	5,521	-
December	22,553	5,149	-
2025			
January	34,787	7,302	-
February	18,400	4,408	-
March	20,492	4,806	-
April	22,653	6,348	-
May	16,714	4,278	-
June	11,488	3,213	-
July	21,366	4,642	-
August	20,749	3,715	-
September	20,884	4,709	-
October	17,459	4,373	-
November	32,069	12,954	9,537
December	32,078	12,559	10,439
2026			
January	25,819	9,627	8,018
February	61,306	23,193	18,744

Total visitor arrivals (global) and total visitor arrivals (Australian ports) include Chinese nationals travelling on NZeTAs as crew, cruise or cargo passengers.

Pacific national visitor arrivals by month (as at 28 February 2026)

	Total visitor arrivals (global)	Total visitor arrivals (From Australia)	Total arrivals with NZeTA (from Australia under the pilot policy beginning 3 November 2025)
2024			
November	6,344	389	-
December	13,263	448	-
2025			
January	4,021	324	-
February	4,151	321	-
March	4,927	322	-
April	5,151	403	-
May	5,327	293	-
June	4,385	312	-
July	3,903	288	-
August	4,896	378	-
September	4,687	310	-
October	5,009	302	-
November	6,900	551	150
December	14,581	691	265
2026			
January	5,562	626	236
February	4,742	380	107

Total visitor arrivals (global) and total visitor arrivals (from Australia) include Pacific nationals travelling on NZeTAs as crew, cruise or cargo passengers

Transit update for Chinese nationals

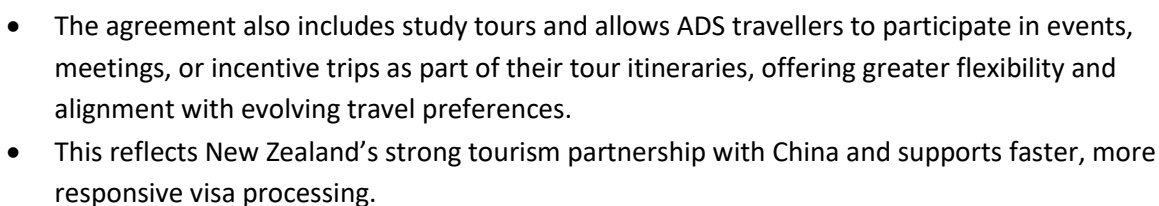
- Chinese nationals can now transit through Auckland International Airport on an NZeTA, removing the need for a Transit Visa.
- Since these changes came into effect on 27 October 2025, as at 28 February 2026 we have received more than 4,500 requests for a transit NZeTA from Chinese nationals, and more than 4,000 of these have transited through New Zealand.

Transit NZeTA requests by Chinese nationals (as at 28 February 2026)

Submitted	Approved	Chinese travellers transited through New Zealand
4,687	4,644	4,014

Approved Destination Status Agent Memorandum of Understanding

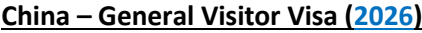
- In 2025 INZ and Tourism New Zealand signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding with selected Chinese travel agents, committing to a five-day turnaround for ADS and Free and Independent Traveller (FIT) visa applications. This is a significant improvement on the timeframe in the previous MOU which was 10 working days.



Category	Submitted (applications)	Decided (applications)	Approved (applications)	Approval rate	Arrivals
All Visitor Visas	209,774	211,508	204,044	96%	203,212
General Visitor Visa	116,469	117,831	111,109	94%	140,623
Business Visitor Visa	50,088	50,346	49,945	99%	7,304
Group Visitor Visas	38,765	39,182	39,114	100%	51,776

Category	Submitted (applications)	Decided (applications)	Approved (applications)	Approval rate	Arrivals
All Visitor Visas	28,953	33,310	32,135	96%	49,996
General Visitor Visa	15,376	18,819	17,740	94%	37,916
Business Visitor Visa	6,033	6,690	6,642	99%	1,067
Group Visitor Visas	6,706	6,931	6,923	100%	10,050

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China – Business Visitor Visa (2026)

China – Group Visitor Visa (2026)

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India

- India continues to be a very important market for New Zealand and is the second largest source of visa required visitors to New Zealand.
 - In 2025, INZ decided nearly 78,000 visitor visa applications from Indian nationals, accounting for 16% of all visitor visa applications that year.
 - Around 77,000 Indian visitors arrived in New Zealand in 2025.
 - INZ has also worked hard to inform the Indian market about visa requirements, leading to better-quality applications. Approval rates have risen from 78% in the 2024 calendar year to 82% in 2025.
 - Processing times for Indian nationals have improved significantly, reducing from an average of nine working days in the 2024 calendar year to six working days in the 2025 calendar year.
 - So far in 2026 (01 January–28 February), we have received 13,369 visitor visa applications from Indian nationals, accounting for 18% of all visitor visas received to date. Around 10,600 Indian nationals have arrived in New Zealand. Current processing times are 7 working days, and the visitor visa approval rate is 84%.
- In 2025, the Head of INZ and other senior leaders visited India and gained valuable insights into travel trends, including a growing number of people with disposable income who favour shorter, more frequent trips to multiple destinations. This means Indian travellers are booking at short notice and want certainty about being able to travel on their chosen dates.
- To reflect the importance of the Indian market and strengthen connections, INZ established a dedicated position in our New Delhi office to work directly with and support travel agents.

India Visitor Visas (01 January-31 December 2025)

Category	Submitted (applications)	Decided (applications)	Approved (applications)	Approval rate	Arrivals
All Visitor Visas	78,829	77,916	63,523	82%	78,841
General Visitor Visa	64,640	65,173	52,332	80%	66,122
Business Visitor Visa	3,869	3,863	3,577	93%	2,453
Group Visitor Visas	1,654	1,295	1,156	89%	1,412

India Visitor Visas (01 January-28 February 2026)

Category	Submitted (applications)	Decided (applications)	Approved (applications)	Approval rate	Arrivals
All Visitor Visas	13,369	13,591	11,468	84%	10,625
General Visitor Visa	10,969	11,411	9,524	83%	9,251
Business Visitor Visa	595	587	564	96%	298
Group Visitor Visas	364	343	304	89%	199



India – All Visitor Visas (2026)

[illegible]

India – General Visitor Visa (2026)

[illegible]

India – Business Visitor Visa (2026)

[illegible]

India – Group Visitor Visa (2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	143	203										
Decided	100	243										
Approved	71	233										
Approval rate	71%	96%										
Avg Processing time (working days)	4	4										
Arrivals	96	103										

Please note the arrivals data in each table for India has also been updated for January and February in this report as the arrival data in the March update was incorrect. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused.