

Immigration Tourism Update

January 2026

Overview and 2025 highlights

- 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 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 January – 31 December 2025)

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

Visitor Visas applications – Top 5 nationalities approved & declined (01 January – 31 December 2025)

Nationality	Approved	Average processing time (working days)
China	204,045	5
India	63,523	6
Philippines	25,745	5
Fiji	17,243	7
Thailand	14,746	4

Nationality	Declined	Average processing time (working days)
India	13,156	6
China	6,796	5
Pakistan	4,391	12
Fiji	2,401	7
Tonga	2,163	10

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.
- 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 31 January 2026, we received more than 47,000 NZeTA requests from Chinese and Pacific nationals travelling to New Zealand from Australia. Of these requests, more than 28,500 people have already travelled to New Zealand.
- We also recently carried out a survey to gather insights into how the visa-free travel is going. Results showed that 96% of respondents were satisfied with the application experience overall.
- In addition, an overwhelming 85% of respondents, including 85% of Chinese travellers and 82% of visitors from Pacific Island Forum countries said they travelled to New Zealand specifically because the NZeTA option became available.
- 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.

Breakdown of China and Pacific Island Forum NZeTA requests

As at 31 January 2026	NZeTA requests submitted	NZeTA requests approved	NZeTA requests in progress	NZeTA requests refused	Travellers arrived on an NZeTA
Chinese nationals	45,777	45,341	1	60	27,951
Pacific nationals	1,316	1,262	0	43	652
Total	47,093	46,603	1	103	28,603

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, as at 31 January 2026 we have received more than 3,600 requests for a transit NZeTA from Chinese nationals, and more than 2,100 of these have transited through New Zealand.

Transit NZeTA requests by Chinese nationals (as at 31 January 2026)

Submitted	Approved	Chinese travellers transited through New Zealand
3,695	3,667	2,174

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.
- The agreement also includes study tours and allows ADS travellers to participate in events, meetings, or incentive trips as part of their tour itineraries, offering greater flexibility and alignment with evolving travel preferences.
- This reflects New Zealand's strong tourism partnership with China and supports faster, more responsive visa processing.

China Visitor Visas (01 January – 31 December 2025)

Category	Submitted (applications)	Decided (applications)	Approved (applications)	Approval rate	Arrivals (person)
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

China – All Visitor Visas (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	17,253	14,480	21,363	18,114	14,667	16,746	18,773	16,639	17,642	16,797	18,606	17,908
Decided	21,992	13,720	20,418	18,166	16,946	15,670	20,088	15,879	17,051	15,826	19,081	15,977
Approved	21,212	12,975	19,591	17,540	16,310	15,205	19,495	15,298	16,507	15,275	18,538	15,465
Approval rate	96%	95%	96%	97%	96%	97%	97%	96%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Average Processing time (working days)	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Arrivals	30,682	15,232	16,895	19,227	13,397	8,326	17,147	16,643	17,153	14,322	18,145	16,044

China – General Visitor Visa (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	8,354	7,963	11,849	9,482	9,193	10,372	10,232	9,836	9,228	8,430	9,995	11,285
Decided	12,059	7,409	11,553	9,639	9,643	9,518	11,505	8,964	9,713	8,249	9,363	9,816
Approved	11,371	6,755	10,780	9,049	9,068	9,110	10,983	8,437	9,217	7,772	8,873	9,366
Approval rate	94%	91%	93%	94%	94%	96%	95%	94%	95%	94%	95%	95%
Average Processing time (working days)	8	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	6
Arrivals	30,682	10,879	10,078	12,237	8,908	6,143	13,436	11,906	12,416	8,753	10,785	11,314

China – Business Visitor Visa (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	4,561	3,359	4,293	4,636	3,306	4,446	5,456	4,209	4,176	4,210	3,960	3,427
Decided	5,224	3,243	3,930	4,019	4,601	4,272	5,537	4,322	3,586	3,592	5,093	2,925
Approved	5,169	3,205	3,900	3,984	4,566	4,236	5,498	4,295	3,569	3,555	5,070	2,905
Approval rate	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	100%	99%	100%	99%
Average Processing time (working days)	5	6	4	5	5	4	4	2	3	4	4	4

Arrivals	381	408	622	582	679	529	456	672	695	588	1,241	449
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China – Group Visitor Visa (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	4,048	2,870	4,788	4,023	1,819	1,632	2,793	2,393	3,924	3,662	4,120	2,688
Decided	4,326	2,740	4,514	4,508	2,309	1,558	2,719	2,340	3,505	3,610	4,259	2,789
Approved	4,326	2,726	4,508	4,507	2,308	1,557	2,713	2,337	3,499	3,605	4,253	2,776
Approval rate	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average Processing time (working days)	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	3
Arrivals	6,032	3,624	5,909	6,132	3,612	1,421	2,874	3,829	3,818	4,736	5,838	3,951

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 (person)
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 – All Visitor Visas (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	6,149	5,887	6,763	5,782	5,433	5,228	6,524	6,978	7,589	8,085	7,597	6,270

Decided	6,442	6,014	7,727	5,879	5,813	5,128	6,590	6,348	7,396	7,616	7,013	5,803
Approved	5,190	4,996	6,218	4,721	4,679	4,010	5,246	5,134	6,221	6,432	5,974	4,772
Approval rate	81%	83%	80%	80%	80%	78%	80%	81%	84%	84%	85%	82%
Average Processing time (working days)	12	12	8	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	6	6
Arrivals	4,052	6,092	7,539	6,566	7,812	5,104	3,655	4,760	5,767	6,159	8,752	10,885

India – General Visitor Visa (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	5,162	4,824	5,225	4,672	4,388	4,076	5,400	5,669	6,304	6,645	6,365	5,304
Decided	5,613	5,052	6,194	4,915	4,701	3,944	5,460	5,240	6,324	6,327	6,068	4,989
Approved	5,188	4,996	4,821	3,884	3,709	2,977	4,273	4,142	5,285	5,305	5,123	4,067
Approval rate	81%	83%	78%	79%	79%	75%	78%	79%	84%	84%	84%	82%
Average Processing time (working days)	12	11	7	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	6	6
Arrivals	3,627	5,301	6,360	5,626	6,860	4,252	2,891	3,642	4,783	5,381	7,319	10,081

India – Business Visitor Visa (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	281	303	347	367	280	316	387	312	424	404	240	205
Decided	259	309	389	359	312	308	384	305	381	388	273	180
Approved	237	293	366	335	285	283	355	281	356	354	253	168
Approval rate	92%	95%	94%	93%	91%	92%	92%	92%	93%	91%	93%	93%
Average Processing time (working days)	11	10	6	4	4	3	3	5	3	5	6	6
Arrivals	90	176	206	201	223	156	207	261	242	263	339	89

India – Group Visitor Visa (2025)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Submitted	32	44	105	36	81	182	16	335	153	271	240	94
Decided	35	34	93	43	91	173	32	167	102	276	273	90
Approved	22	15	84	34	82	164	25	156	91	259	253	74
Approval rate	63%	44%	90%	79%	90%	95%	78%	93%	89%	94%	93%	82%
Avg Processing time (working days)	8	5	4	5	6	4	4	5	4	5	6	4
Arrivals	36	38	12	146	46	60	63	207	201	52	419	132

**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.*