

Business Travel to Greater China

Current travel information to Alberta companies that are interested in doing, or are already doing, business in China

Recommendation

Albertans who plan to visit China should proceed with caution, and fully respect Chinese laws and customs. Albertans should follow the recommendations of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and refer to their travel advisories (see below) prior to travelling.

The GAC risk level for China is “exercise a high degree of caution.” On January 14, 2019, GAC added an explanation about this warning that notes it is “due to the risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws”.

Travel to Hong Kong remains low risk. The GAC travel advisory for Hong Kong is at the lowest level (‘take normal security precautions’). The same low level of caution applies to travel to Taiwan.

Analysis

Since the arrest of Huawei’s Chief Financial Officer by Canadian authorities in Vancouver on December 1, 2018, relations between Canada and China have been strained. Alberta continues to align with the approach of GAC that Canadians continue to engage with China, while taking added precautions.

Officials from the Government of Alberta will continue to closely monitor the development of this matter and communicate with stakeholders as appropriate. However, making a decision on whether to travel to China is the sole responsibility of Albertans contemplating such travel.

It is strongly recommended that Albertans refer to, and follow, all travel advice and advisories of the Government of Canada to help ensure their safety and security.

Visas

It is strongly recommended that business visas are attained for business travel in China. An invitation letter is needed for a business visa, and companies should connect with partners in China in order to attain letters of this nature.

As of January 1, 2019, in accordance with Chinese law, the Chinese Embassy as well as the Consulates-General in Canada will entrust the Chinese Visa Application Service Centers to collect the fingerprints of all visa applicants including Canadian citizens and issue biometrics visas.

Applicants are still required to fill in the electronic application forms and make an appointment online in advance. After the appointment, the processing time is a minimum of four business days. Please allow roughly three to four weeks for the visa application process.

Cannabis

The Government of Canada has provided information on international travel in relation to Canada's legalization of cannabis (see relevant websites). Taking cannabis or any product containing cannabis across Canada's international borders is illegal and can result in serious criminal penalties both at home and abroad. Cannabis is illegal in most countries. Previous use of cannabis, or any other substance prohibited by local law, could result in a traveler being denied entry to his or her destination country. China, like much of Asia, has severe penalties for drug use and trafficking, and Albertans should refrain from drug use well in advance of travel to China.

Other recommended precautions

(These apply to all travel destinations, not only China.)

- Photocopy your passport and leave a copy with a relative or friend at home, in case of emergency.
- Register with GAC's Canadians Abroad website, which is a free public service that will keep you connected to Canada in case of an emergency such as an earthquake or civil unrest. See relevant websites.
- Check Canada's public health travel advisories before you travel, in relation to your travel destinations (see relevant websites).
- While travelling:
 - Make accurate declarations and declare all of your valuables.
 - Do not photograph military installations, personnel, police, etc., or anything that could show the country in a bad light.
 - Use only approved taxi services (check with hotel staff).
 - Only exchange currency at authorized outlets.
 - Obey all local laws.
- In case of emergency, contact Canada's consular service at sos@international.gc.ca; 1-613-996-8885.

Relevant websites

<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/china>
<http://ca.chineseembassy.org/eng/lsw/gzrz/>
www.visaforchina.org
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/cannabis-and-international-travel>
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety>