



News & Types: Client Advisories

Travel to Japan Update – Part 2

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Practices: Immigration

In our last post, we reported that Japan was slowly reopening with a move towards "unguided tours" where visitors could travel outside of a set tour, but were required to book their "tour" with a travel agency that would take care of all visas, certifications and the like. Reports indicate that the requirement to book through the travel agency resulted in a tripling of costs.

Apparently, in two weeks since implementation, there has been a backlash from business leaders, notably the head of JR East, and certain politicians, asserting that this slow reopening is harming tourism and as a result, the economy, noting that with the weakness in the Yen, Japan could be an attractive tourist destination if not for the restrictions.

As a result, it is being reported that Prime Minister Kishida is reviewing a plan to allow independent travelers to enter Japan as long as the traveler has had at least three vaccinations or agrees to submit to pre-arrival COVID testing. Visa requirements would be eliminated for countries that were visa exempt under the Visa Exemption Agreement, as will the requirement that travelers book travel through a travel agency. It is unclear whether the ERFs certification, use of the MySOS app or mandatory health insurance will continue to be required. In particular, elimination of the ERFs certification and visa requirement would be especially beneficial to business travelers, who were already exempt from the tour package requirement.

We will keep you updated as to further developments, but in the meantime, travelers may wish to hold off on purchasing tour packages or making travel arrangements until the official announcement is made, which is expected to be by September 16, 2022.