

Mobility: Immigration alert

December 2021



South Korea

Quarantine exemptions temporarily suspended for certain travelers; new restrictions announced for travelers from nine African countries

Executive summary

The South Korean Government announced that quarantine exemptions are suspended, and new quarantine exemptions will not be issued, from 3 December 2021 to 16 December 2021, for travelers entering the country for purposes other than work or business. In addition, the Government implemented new restrictions on travelers from nine African countries, following the discovery of the COVID-19 omicron variant.

Suspension of quarantine exemption certificates

The South Korean Government recently announced that holders of valid quarantine exemption certificates who have not yet entered South Korea and are seeking to enter the country between 3 December 2021 and 16 December 2021, may not use their exemption certificate during this period, irrespective of their nationality and immigration status in South Korea, unless they obtained a quarantine exemption certificate in connection with an upcoming work or business trip to South Korea. In addition, new quarantine exemption certificates will not be issued to individuals who are seeking to enter South Korea between 3 December 2021 and 16 December 2021 for reasons other than work or business. This measure may be extended beyond 16 December 2021.

Individuals who are seeking to enter South Korea between 3 December 2021 and 16 December 2021 for work or business and hold a valid quarantine exemption certificate, may use

their certificate. In addition, individuals seeking to travel to South Korea for business or work who do not already hold a quarantine exemption certificate may apply to obtain one.

South Korean citizens and long-term visa holders who are required to quarantine on arrival may do so in their homes or another suitable private residence. Travelers who do not hold South Korean passports or long-term visas and are required to quarantine on arrival must do so at a government facility.

COVID-19 testing requirements remain unchanged until 16 December 2021. All travelers, including South Korean citizens, must take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 test no more than 72 hours prior to their travel, and test negative, to be admitted. In addition, all inbound travelers, including South Korean citizens, must get tested for COVID-19 on arrival. Inbound travelers who are required to quarantine for 10 days on arrival must take another PCR COVID-19 test during their 10-day quarantine period and test negative before ending their quarantine. Inbound travelers who are not required to quarantine for 10 days on arrival are still required to isolate until they receive a negative result for the PCR COVID-19 test taken on arrival. This latter group must also take another PCR COVID-19 test on their sixth or seventh day in the country and submit their test result to the government authorities no later than their eighth day in the country.

New restrictions on travelers from nine African countries

The South Korean Government also announced that the following southern African countries are now considered "restricted" countries: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe. In general, air travel from these countries to South Korea is suspended until further notice. South Korean nationals and long-term visa holders who are seeking to travel from any of these locations to South Korea, or who were recently present in any of these locations preceding their travel to South Korea, may enter into the country, subject to COVID-19 testing and quarantine requirements. Holders of short-term South Korean visas who are seeking to travel to South Korea from any of the nine restricted countries in southern Africa, or who were recently present in any of these nine countries, are inadmissible until further notice.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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EYG no. 010504-21Gb1

2101-3682263
ED None

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