

## 《韩国对接受高等教育的中国游客发布10年签证》

South Korea will from Thursday for the first time issue 10-year multiple entry visas to Chinese tourists. But only if they are specialized professionals such as a lawyer or professor or hold a Master's degree or above, Yonhap News Agency, citing the South Korean Ministry of Justice, reported.

Application requirements for multiple entry visas will also be relaxed, with the age restriction starting from 55. Previously the restriction was set at 60 or above.

The Yonhap News Agency estimated that there will be 80 million potential applicants eligible for the new multiple entry visas. At the same time, the length of stay for each visit will be extended from 30 days to 90.

The move means that South Korea becomes the latest country to further open its door to Chinese tourists under the stimulus of the latter's strong spending power.

Chinese tourists contribute 1.6 percent of S Korean GDP in 2015

The number of Chinese tourists to South Korea was estimated to reach 6.11 million in 2015, accounting for more than 40 percent of foreign tourists, China Central Television reported.

Most importantly, Chinese tourists spend more. According to data from the Korea Tourism Organization, Chinese tourists averagely spent \$2,200 (14,469 yuan) in South Korea last year, twice the average of all foreign tourists.

The data shows more than 70 percent of Chinese tourists visit South Korea for shopping, about 20 percent for experiencing Korean Wave, or Korean popular culture, and others for plastic surgery and sightseeing.

The Korea Tourism Organization estimated that Chinese tourists generated \$22 billion of economic benefits in accommodation, transportation and shopping among other fields, which is equal to contributing 1.6 percent of the country's GDP last year.

Relax visa issuance to boost economy

Though spending highly when arriving in South Korea, more than 88 percent of Chinese tourists do not revisit, according to figures from the South Korean Ministry of Justice.

The South Korean government regards extending the validity of visas as an important part of "2016 economic policy direction" and plans to improve visa issuance step by step.

According to its plan, Chinese group tourists can apply for e-visas from March. As 2016 coincides with South

Korean tourism year, group tourists are exempt from visa fees for the whole year.

The government is expected to issue a new-type visa, Korean Wave visa, which combines the experiences of popular culture, plastic surgery and leisure. Applicants can have lower requirements on economic ability, age, education background and job, as well as enjoy onsite tax refunds in duty free shops

The UK and Australia expected to issue 10-year visas

South Korean's move follows other hot Chinese tourist destinations.

The US has issued 10-year multiple entry visas to Chinese since Nov, 2014. They bring additional benefits as they can enter 15 other countries or regions, including Mexico, the Philippines and Chile visa-free.

Canada also launched 10-year visas to Chinese, but only if an applicant's passport validity is longer than 10 years.

In Asia, Singapore issues 10-year visas to Chinese business personnel who regularly enter the country.

The list of countries issuing 10-year visas is growing. The UK has begun to issue two-year multiple entry visas to Chinese tourists and plans to issue 10-year visas in future.

Australia also pushes the 10-year multiple entry visa and is expected to issue it later this year.