

Apply for travel documents early to avoid summer rush

Hong Kong residents intending to travel abroad during the summer holidays are reminded to apply early for travel documents.

An Immigration Department (ImmD) spokesperson said that with effect from May 14, 2019, the ImmD has provided additional means for submitting Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport applications to further enhance service standards. Apart from the existing application means, eligible applicants can also submit applications through the ImmD Mobile Application. New Travel Document Submission Kiosks have also been put into service at Immigration Headquarters and at all six Immigration Branch Offices. Applicants can choose to submit photographs via the built-in scanner or the new self-service photo-taking function. Eligible applicants with a height of 1.25 metre or more may choose to use the photo-taking function free of charge. The kiosks also employ an Octopus payment function, providing an alternative payment option for the public.

The spokesperson said the processing time for HKSAR passport applications is normally five working days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and general holidays) after receipt of all necessary documents, the application fee and a photograph. Applications in respect of children under 11 years old not holding a Hong Kong permanent identity card normally take 10 working days. As regards applications submitted by post, via drop-in-box, online or ImmD Mobile Application, processing might take two to three more working days. Applications for a replacement passport due to loss, damage or amendment of personal data should be made in person, and the processing time may be longer.

The spokesperson emphasised that a request for urgent issue of an HKSAR passport will only be entertained in justifiable circumstances. Normally, no priority will be granted to pleasure trippers.

Applicants who wish to apply for or collect travel documents in person are encouraged to make prior appointments through the Internet (www.gov.hk/tdbooking), ImmD Mobile Application or the 24-hour hotline (2598 0888).

HKSAR passport application forms and information leaflets on application procedures and the requisite documents are available at Immigration Headquarters and Immigration branch offices. For details and application forms, please visit website (www.gov.hk/passport). Enquiries can also be made by telephone (2824 6111), fax (2877 7711) or email (enquiry@immd.gov.hk).

At present, 165 countries and territories have granted visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to HKSAR passport holders. Some places require visitors to have a passport with validity of at least six months.

Moreover, in order to allow greater travel convenience for HKSAR passport holders, the ImmD has co-operated with Korea, Singapore, Germany, Australia and Thailand, where eligible HKSAR passport holders may now use the automated immigration clearance services there. For detailed information, please visit (www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/automated_clearance.html).

Before travelling abroad, Hong Kong residents can use the Registration of Outbound Travel Information (ROTI) service to register their contact details and itinerary. The information they provide allows the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit (AHU) of the ImmD to contact and assist them in an emergency outside Hong Kong. For more information on ROTI, please visit (www.gov.hk/roti) or call (852) 183 5500. Residents who need assistance while outside Hong Kong may call the 24-hour hotline of the AHU at (852) 1868.