

## **VISA TO DENMARK – Facts and myths**

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**At the Danish missions in China, we often get questions about the Danish visa procedures. Below we explain our procedures and answer some of the questions, which we most frequently are asked.**

During the past four years the Danish missions in China have experienced a 75% overall increase in the number of visas issued. The numbers speak for themselves:

2008: 11,943

2009: 11,434

2010: 14,190

2011: 18,964

2012: 20,346

2013: 20.941

Table based on numbers from 12 February 2014

In 2013, the purposes of Chinese visa applicants for visiting Denmark was as follows:

Business: 54%

Tourism: 34%

Private: 11%

Sport/Culture 1%

This is a positive trend that shows the increased links between Denmark and China in all fields, especially concerning attracting business and tourism to Denmark.

The procedure regarding visa handling is a fine balance between providing service and assessing the risk of illegal immigration, and the process might sometimes appear comprehensive. But, the goal of the Danish missions is to facilitate visas as swiftly and smoothly as possible, and often we issue the visas within 3-8 days. Special conditions apply for our Red Carpet Customers. All cases are often handled much faster than the 15 days, which is the maximum case processing time according to the Schengen cooperation.

99% of applicants get a so-called bona fide visa, which means that the embassy issues the visa without consulting the Danish Immigration Service. Furthermore, 22% of all visas issued have a validity of one or more years, so the applicant does not have to apply for a new visa every time. Also, applicants who have been to Schengen before can request permission to apply via messenger, so they do not have to apply in person. These measures allow a smooth and pragmatic case processing, which considers the needs of the individual traveller.

### **The Danish procedures compared to other Schengen countries**

The processing time and procedure for applying for a Danish Schengen visa is very much in line with the other Schengen countries. It is, however, difficult to compare the different countries' procedures directly, as some use Visa Application Centers, some ask the applicant to request an appointment before applying, some charge a fee for making an appointment to hand in the application and so on. The Danish missions are in frequent contact with our Nordic colleagues, and there is no basis for claims that Denmark's procedures are more strict.

Indicators showing that we offer more than satisfactory service, is:

- Satisfaction surveys show positive results from both key accounts, group tourists etc.
- Increase in application numbers every year
- Our processing times are well below the allowed 15 days
- There is no waiting time to hand in an application at our visa centers
- Applicants who have been to Schengen before can request to submit the application by messenger, instead of appearing in person
- Our rate of multiple entry visas, valid for one or more years is among the highest among the Schengen countries in China

### **Tourism**

Tourism to Denmark has been subject to great attention during the past four years and the procedures for tourists have greatly improved. The Danish missions in China are in frequent contact with the Scandinavian Tourism Board, VisitDenmark and the Chinese and Danish travel agencies.

The effort to attract tourists to Denmark is a joint effort and does not only rely on visa procedures. Branding and developing Denmark as a tourist destination, having Chinese speaking staff in shops, offering Chinese information on websites etc. is also necessary. In 2013, the number of group tourists as well as individual tourists who received a visa to Denmark increased by 18% compared to 2012.

### **Danish visa facilities in China**

So far, Denmark has Visa Centers in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing. The latest visa center was opened in Chongqing in 2013. The cases from Chongqing are handled by the Embassy in Beijing, as we do not have visa handling staff at the Consulate General in Chongqing.

The Chinese regulations today do not allow us to open more visa centers in China, as they can only be set up in cities, where we have a diplomatic representation. If such a permission to open in more places is granted in the future, we will consider opening more visa centers in China.

### **Visa Application Centers**

In order to meet the increasing demand for visa and to minimize the inconvenience for the applicant, Danish Visa Application Centers were introduced in June 2010. The purpose was to eliminate the waiting period for the applicant as there are no queues at the Visa Application Centers. By outsourcing the first step of the application procedure, the staff at the Danish missions have better time to process the cases and issue the visas.

If the Danish missions were to handle the ever increasing number of cases from receipt to delivery to the applicant, the processing time would be much higher than it is now. However, it is still the Danish missions who issue the visas, and we are still the ones who make the decisions.

Other Schengen countries have now realised the advantages of Visa Application Centers and have opened their own centers.

### **Schengen harmonization**

Harmonising the requirements for supporting documents for visa applications is a condition specified in the Visa Code adopted at EU level and applies to all countries with Schengen missions.

The harmonised lists for China were adopted at EU level in August 2011 and all Schengen countries in China were requested to introduce them without delay in order to ensure that all countries ask for the same supporting documents. The introduction of the harmonised checklists is, therefore, meant as a streamlining of the Schengen procedures in China.

The lists will be revised when relevant and in 2014 a new revision process has started, aiming to eliminate some documents and thereby making it simpler for the applicant. If new lists are adopted, they will replace the current ones on our website.

It is important to notice that the checklists are meant as a guideline in order to ensure that the Danish mission does not have to ask for further information after the handing in of the application. Each case will always be assessed individually and, for instance, if you have travelled to Denmark many times before, we may be able to process your visa without some of the supporting documents from the check lists.

### **Communication is key**

Communication is essential in the application process and the missions and the Visa Centers do their very best to coordinate procedures and to inform applicants and other stakeholders about the application procedures and any changes which take place. Information is available at both the missions' and the Visa Centers' websites and calls and e-mails are answered by both the missions and the Visa Centers.

In some cases, more stakeholders are involved in a case, as the inviting party in Denmark or others may also enquire about the case. Firstly, the Danish missions prefer to be in contact with the applicant directly in order to ensure direct communication lines. Secondly, it is the experience of the Danish missions that the more stakeholders are involved, the more miscommunication can occur.

Should you have further questions about the visa procedures, the Danish missions are always happy to clarify and you will be able to find answers to the most frequently asked questions [here](#).