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China: Documents required and security measures in place for international departures by air from Hong Kong
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Documents

The Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) provides the following departure instructions on its website:

All departing passengers must carry the following documents:

- A valid passport (some countries do not accept passports with less than six months to run); and
- A Departure Card for visitors to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong residents are required to present [a] Hong Kong Identity Card.

All non-residents complete an Arrival Card on entering Hong Kong. The bottom sheet (left in ... passport) becomes [the] Departure Card. When [leaving], fill in the date and ... flight number before [reaching] passport control. (HKIA n.d.a)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official with the Immigration Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong SAR) provided the following information on documents required for international departures by air from Hong Kong:

For [a] Hong Kong permanent resident with a valid permanent identity card (PIC) bearing [a] three asterisks symbol on the card face, the PIC would be accepted for immigration departure clearance purpose. But the passenger is reminded to bring ... his/her valid travel document for the entry immigration examination of the travel destination. In practice, we know that the passenger would be requested by the relevant airline check-in staff to present a valid travel document for checking before the passenger can proceed to the airport restricted area for immigration clearance. For all other travellers, including visitors to [Hong Kong] HK, they are requested to bring ... a valid travel document for departure immigration clearance. (Hong Kong SAR 8 June 2009)

The website of the Hong Kong SAR's Immigration Department provides immigration clearance information related to Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards (HKPICs) and Hong Kong Identity Cards (HKICs):

Holders of HKPICs issued in Hong Kong or HKICs bearing the asterisk, or 'R' code, who are aged 11 or over, can use their identity cards to travel in and out of Hong Kong without the need to present their travel documents.

However, invalidated or defaced identity cards, or the acknowledgement form of application for an identity card (form no. ROP140 and ROP140A) are not acceptable for travel. Their holders are required to produce valid travel documents at Hong Kong immigration control points.

Children under 11 years old with HKPICs should produce also their valid travel documents or Re-entry Permits bearing photographs of the holders. Children included in their parents' travel documents may use those travel documents only when they travel with the principal holder. (Hong Kong SAR n.d.a)

According to the Immigration Department website, Hong Kong residents are not required to complete arrival or departure cards if they present the following travel documents for immigration clearance:

- a. Hong Kong SAR Passport;
- b. Hong Kong SAR Re-entry Permit;
- c. Hong Kong SAR Document of Identity for Visa Purposes;
- d. Hong Kong Seaman's Identity Book;
- e. Multiple Entry Permit for Chinese residents of Taiwan who have been permitted to take up employment or residence in the Hong Kong SAR;
- f. British National (Overseas) Passport; or
- g. Travel document bearing an endorsement indicating that the holder has permission to stay in Hong Kong for residence, employment or study. (ibid.)

Furthermore, the following categories of visitors need not produce an arrival or departure card for immigration clearance in Hong Kong:

Holders of an Exit/Entry Permit to Hong Kong and Macao or a Chinese Travel Permit issued by the Mainland authorities other than cross-boundary drivers; or

Macao permanent residents holding "Macao Smart Permanent Identity Card" and "Declaration Form for holders of Macao Special Administrative Region Permanent Resident Identity Card to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region". (ibid.)

Security measures

According to both HKIA and Cathay Pacific, starting on 3 November 2008, all passengers departing from HKIA must show their boarding pass and travel documents to airport security prior to entering the restricted airport area (HKIA 17 Oct. 2008; Cathay Pacific n.d.). HKIA also states that passengers who possess a self-printed boarding pass no longer need to verify their identity at the airline check-in counter and "may proceed directly to security and immigration clearance" (17 Oct. 2008). Cathay Pacific notes that HKIA security personnel will conduct visual checks of the photos contained in the passports of passengers (n.d.). The HKIA website states that there are "enhanced security measures" in place, including restrictions on the amount of liquids, aerosols and gels (LAGs) that passengers are permitted to carry in their hand baggage (n.d.b; see also *The Standard* 12 Aug. 2006).

e-Channel

The website of the Hong Kong SAR's Immigration Department provides information on an automated passenger immigration clearance system called e-Channel (n.d.b). This system is available at various locations including at HKIA (Hong Kong SAR n.d.b). With e-Channel, Hong Kong permanent residents over the age of 11 years or Hong Kong residents with a Document of Identity for Visa Purposes "can use their smart identity cards to perform self-service immigration clearance" (ibid.). Other people who are eligible to use e-Channel are individuals "who have the right to land or are on unconditional stay in Hong Kong, and non-permanent residents who have been issued with a notification label" (ibid.). The Immigration Department states the following:

To enter the e-Channel is simple. People just have to insert their smart identity cards with the side bearing the arrow and chip into the card reader. The system will take a while to perform mutual authentication with the smart identity card key. People can enter the e-Channel when the gate doors open. After entering the e-Channel, people just need to place their thumbs flat on the centre of scanners. After fingerprint verification they can leave the e-Channel.

...

The e-Channel system deploys fingerprint verification technology for authentication of a person's identity. (ibid.)

Certain frequent visitors over the age of 18 years who have enrolled with the Immigration Department of the Hong Kong SAR can also use e-Channel:

To perform self-service immigration clearance, the visitor is required to place his travel document into the document reader of the Frequent Visitor e-Channel. When the reading process finishes, the visitor can enter the e-Channel for fingerprint verification... . After successful verification, a label containing the conditions of stay of the visitor will be printed upon arrival. (No label will be printed upon departure.) After collecting the label, the visitor can leave the e-Channel. The label is to be affixed to a blank space of the visas page of the travel document. (ibid.)

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: An official at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and a representative of Cathay Pacific were unable to provide information.

Internet sites, including: Airport International, Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Travel Information Manual, United Kingdom (UK) Home Office, United States (US) Department of State.

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