

Immigration alert: UAE Five-Year Multi-Entry Visas and KSA's introduction of citizenship for 'Outstanding' foreign nationals

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In brief

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have announced significant initiatives for multinational companies and their overseas employees, and 'outstanding' expatriates, respectively.

A Five-Year Multi-Entry Visa announced in the UAE, will allow employees of international businesses that are in the process of establishing themselves in Dubai, the ability to re-enter and work during their trips to the Emirate over the validity of their visa.

In a landmark move, Saudi Arabia has introduced citizenship for foreign nationals with specialised skills, in certain fields, and signals the Kingdom's intention and commitment to retain overseas talent.

The detail

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Five-Year Multi-Entry Visas for Businesses

Following the introduction of a Five-Year Tourist Visa for visitors to the UAE, a Five-Year Multi-Entry Visa category is now available to employees of international companies that are in the process of establishing a presence in Dubai.

The news was announced by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and the introduction of this Five-Year Multi-Entry visa is a joint initiative between the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai (GDRFA) and Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).

The Dubai Tourism website states "[W]e have launched a programme to help you bring your global business personnel to Dubai. This will allow them to conveniently access and work from your Dubai office, or attend to regional business, if you are in the process of establishing your presence here". This new category will enable employees of multinational organisations to participate in events, conferences, attend exhibitions and other activities, but we await further details as to exact permissible work activities whilst under a Five-Year Multi-Entry visa.

Companies will be required to register via an online application form, before individual visas can be applied for. Companies will be asked to provide information in order to register, including but not limited to:

- How long the company has been in business
- Countries where the company's branches are located

- Number of services the company offers in Dubai
- Number of employees
- Average annual revenue
- Number of board members

Once a company is registered, individuals who have secured a Five-Year Multi-Entry visa will be permitted multiple entries to Dubai, and stay for up to 90 days with the option of extending for a further 90 days.

This significant initiative is part of Dubai's aim to continue attracting investors and overseas talent, drive business growth and as stated by Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) "make the city even more attractive to people around the world and easing barriers to entry for business and leisure travellers".

Saudi Arabia

Introduction of citizenship for 'Outstanding' foreign nationals

In a significant and landmark move, Saudi Arabia has announced that foreign nationals with specialised skills will be eligible for citizenship under a naturalisation programme. 'Outstanding', highly skilled professionals working in the legal, scientific and medical, technical, sports and cultural fields, will be able to naturalise as a Saudi citizen according to a royal decree. Those who contribute to the growth of the Kingdom will be considered for citizenship, and the announcement signals the country's aim to attract and retain expatriates with exceptional skills and talent.

The ability of individuals to work and reside in Saudi Arabia has traditionally been tied to the traditional concept of employment and sponsorship. We await further details as to the exact eligibility criteria, and will report on developments once more information has been made available by the Kingdom.



Let's talk

For a deeper discussion of how these issues might affect your business, please contact:

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We will continue to monitor these changes and keep you up to date on any developments.

