

Tax Refund Policy for Tourists Optimized

Policy Express

By LIANG Yilian

To further tap into the potential of inbound tourism, China unveiled new measures on April 27, optimizing the departure tax refund policy and encouraging spending by overseas travelers.

The initiative aims to expand the number and coverage of tax refund stores. Local authorities are encouraged to establish more tax refund outlets in major commercial centers, pedestrian streets, tourist attractions, resorts, cultural venues, airports, ports, and hotels. Notably, international brands, trendy domestic products, time-honored stores, cultural and creative shops, souvenir outlets, gift shops, and specialty stores will be guided to participate. Regions with the necessary conditions are encouraged to develop distinctive tax refund shopping districts.

China will also relax the registration requirements for tax refund stores. Besides businesses with tax credit ratings of A and B, the eligibility will be extended to include those with M. New stores that meet relevant regulations can now quickly register by filing with the tax authorities, who must complete



Foreign travelers line up to complete tax refund verification at Pudong International Airport in Shanghai on April 11, 2025. (PHOTO: VCG)

the process within five working days. Additionally, a withdrawal mechanism will be introduced to strengthen the regulation and punishment for violations.

To extend tax refunds, the minimum purchase amount eligible for a refund will be lowered to 200 RMB (approximately 28 USD) per store per day. Stores are urged to expand the range of

eligible products, including renowned Chinese brands, smart products, intangible cultural heritage items, artisanal crafts, geographically indicated products, cultural creative goods, specialty products, and sports equipment.

Service improvements are a core focus. China will upgrade its tax refund management system, automate invoice information entry, and enhance

verification procedures. The popular "immediate refund at purchase" model will be expanded nationwide, with designated refund service points set up in areas thronged by international tourists. Some regions will introduce product sealing to streamline customs inspections.

Tax refund agencies will also see reforms, with adjusted service fee rates, stricter performance evaluations, and encouragement of cross-regional and cross-institutional collaboration. Partnerships between refund agencies and airport services like currency exchanges are encouraged for greater convenience for travelers.

Payment options for tax refunds will be diversified, raising the cash refund limit to 20,000 RMB and allowing refunds via mobile payments, bank cards, and cash.

Finally, a national tax refund information service platform will be developed, offering travelers easy access to refund store locations, policy guidance, and real-time consultations, while reinforcing efforts to combat fraud and illegal sales.

These comprehensive measures reflect China's commitment to creating a more welcoming and shopper-friendly environment for global visitors.



New Guideline to Boost Pilot FTZs

By Staff Reporters

As part of broader efforts to promote high-level openness and high-quality development, advancing China's role in global trade and innovation, a new guideline outlines a strategic plan to elevate pilot free trade zones (FTZs) over the next five years.

Issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, the guideline focuses on improving institutional openness, the effective-

iveness of systematic reforms, and the quality of China's open economy.

The key areas for development include facilitating free flow of trade, investment, capital, transportation, personnel, and data, alongside ensuring data security and order.

The aim is to deepen the integration of technological and industrial innovation, foster the growth of modern industrial clusters, and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces.

The policy highlights the need to boost China's foreign trade competitiveness. Among the initiatives is the optimization of merchandise trade, the revitalization of service trade, and the promotion of digital trade innovation.

For instance, companies in the FTZs will be allowed to conduct mineral ore blending under different tax codes through bonded logistics. Additionally, the introduction of a "white list" for biopharmaceuticals will streamline import processes for research materials and a similar system will be explored for food and drug substances.

Moreover, the guideline is designed to promote investment liberalization and market openness, creating a first-class business environment. It aims to attract more foreign investment by allowing foreign enterprises to engage in movie post-production services within FTZs. It will also support the establishment of international arbitration institutions and business mediation organizations.

Another major focus is the creation of a high-level technological innovation

ecosystem. The policy encourages the integration of innovation chains with industrial chains, with a strong emphasis on international collaboration in science and technology. The FTZs are to play a key role in advancing modern industrial systems and fostering advanced industrial clusters.

In line with this, the policy calls for the construction of open and efficient channels for data and goods. Key measures include enhancing the efficiency of cross-border data flow, improving shipping services, and expanding the financial sector's opening, such as the trial expansion of cross-border currency pools for multinational companies and the liberalization of certain futures markets.

The guideline also underscores the importance of talent innovation, aiming to create a more convenient environment for personnel exchanges, and to implement open and effective talent policies to boost innovation.



A view of the Lingang New Area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone in Shanghai. (PHOTO:XINHUA)

Forging a Resilient Economy with Sci-tech Power

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By 2024, it boasted 13 data center enterprises, established eight data center industrial parks, and the country's first intelligent computing base with over 10,000 accelerator cards.

Stable industrial chain

Lithium batteries are critical to many products in our daily life, such as digital devices, electric vehicles and energy storage devices.

Dubbed Asia's "lithium capital," Yichun city in Jiangxi province, east China, has both upstream and downstream enterprises in the lithium industry, creating a complete industrial chain of lithium mines, materials, batteries and recycling with a value of one trillion RMB level.

In Yichun's economic and technological zone, a large lithium battery project is under construction. It will create a lithium battery and battery pack base with an annual output of 30 GW and a value of 16 billion RMB, according to Yan Jingguang, manager of

the infrastructure department of Yichun Gotion Battery Company.

In 2024, Yichun ranked first domestically in its output of lithium carbonate. The city has been striving to build a mechanism of leading enterprises driving industrial advancement, related supporting policies following, and developing industry cluster, which effectively guarantees the safety and stability of the national lithium battery and the new energy industrial chain and supply chain, according to Yan Yun, secretary of the CPC Yichun Municipal Committee.

Coordinated regional industry development

The clusters of emerging industries are growing rapidly, creating a three-dimensional mechanism of independent technological innovation, industrial transformation and cultivation of regional ecology.

New energy and intelligent connected vehicles are one of the six key industrial chains coordinatedly cultivated in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region. In

April 2024, the Jingjintang Expressway, the first domestic cross-province expressway connecting Beijing and its neighboring city Tianjin, became the first expressway where cross-province tests for cooperative vehicle-infrastructure autonomous driving are carried out.

In 2025, Sinotrans Limited and Pony.ai developed an autonomous driving truck that by March had driven over 1.5 million km cumulatively at night. This is a key step for intelligent connected vehicles to reach industrialization from the laboratory, said Liu Zhizhou, chief of the equipment industry division of Industry and Information Technology Department of Hebei province.

Liu said cross-province test scenarios not only prove the reliability of cooperative vehicle-infrastructure technologies, but also explore a new approach to integrating expressway passages with business modes. This provides upstream and downstream enterprises with real training ground and accelerates the iteration of technologies and

their commercialization.

Other regions are also spurring coordinated industrial development. For example, the G60 Science and Innovation Corridor in the Yangtze River Delta Region is fostering innovation and economic growth by connecting nine cities along the G60 highway.

The nine cities have strategic cooperation with the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China, Ltd. (COMAC), jointly tackling key technological barriers and promoting the integration of industries, academia, research and application. This is enhancing the innovation capability of the entire industrial chain of the large aircraft industry, according to Ye Wei, deputy director of the Science and Technology Committee of COMAC.

With a large market scale, comprehensive industrial chains and continuous policy support, China's emerging industries and future industries are advancing with new application scenarios, becoming key engines of economic growth.

International Space Cooperation Initiatives Released

By Staff Reporters

During the launch ceremony of the 2025 Space Day of China on April 24, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced several international cooperation initiatives.

The CNSA released the list of international organizations whose applications to borrow lunar samples from China's Chang'e-5 mission have been accepted. The CNSA had organized an evaluation of international applications for lunar scientific samples.

The Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris in France, the University of Cologne in Germany, Osaka University in Japan, and four other institutions passed the review and will receive lunar samples brought by the Chang'e-5 mission for research. The CNSA has signed the Chang'e-5 Lunar Sample Loan Agreement with five of these institutions.

The CNSA also announced the cooperation projects selected for the Chang'e-8 mission under the fourth phase of China's lunar exploration program. Ten projects from 11 countries and regions as well as an international organization have been selected. They include the lunar surface multi-functional robotic system and mobile charging

station jointly developed by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University; the Pakistani lunar rover jointly proposed by the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission of Pakistan and the International Society for Terrain-Vehicle Systems; and an intelligent exploration robot for challenging environments by Türkiye's Middle East Technical University.

The Chang'e-8 mission, scheduled for launch around 2029 and will head for the Leibnitz-Beta Plateau near the lunar south pole region. Together with the earlier Chang'e-7 mission, it will conduct scientific exploration and resource utilization experiments to lay the foundation for the International Lunar Research Station.

China is also offering 20 kg of payload capacity on the Tianwen-3 probe for international partners to jointly conduct Mars exploration and research. As an important part of China's planetary exploration program, the Tianwen-3 mission is planned for launch around 2028 to achieve Mars landing, sampling and return on a single mission.

The CNSA welcomed international partners to participate in the Tianwen-3 mission to jointly explore the mysteries of Mars and expand human knowledge.



The China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced a series of international collaboration initiatives on 2025 Space Day of China. (PHOTO: CNSA)

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He emphasized leveraging AI to drive paradigm transformation in scientific research and accelerate breakthroughs in technological innovation across all fields.

Pointing out that China has rich data resources, a complete industrial system, a wide range of application scenarios and huge market space, Xi stressed that an industry-academia-research-application collaborative innovation system led by enterprises should be built to promote the in-depth integration of AI technological innovation and industrial innovation.

He highlighted AI's roles in the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries and opening up new tracks for strategic emerging industries and future industries.

The construction of computing power infrastructure should be promoted in a coordinated manner, and the development, utilization and sharing of data resources should be deepened, Xi said.

He stressed the importance of policy support for AI, including policies concerning intellectual property rights, fiscal and taxation matters, government procurement and the opening of facilities, while he also called for advancing financial services for science and technology.

He underlined the necessity to promote AI education across all phases of schooling and general education for the

entire society, in order to continuously cultivate high-quality talents.

The mechanisms for AI scientific research support, career development and talent evaluation should be enhanced, and platforms and conditions should be created for talents to showcase their abilities, Xi added.

Xi noted that AI not only introduces unprecedented development opportunities, but also brings unprecedented risks and challenges. It is essential to grasp the trends and patterns of AI development, and to accelerate the formulation and improvement of relevant laws, regulations, policy systems, application standards and ethical guidelines. It is also crucial to establish systems for technology monitoring, early risk warning and emergency response — to ensure that AI is safe, reliable and controllable.

He emphasized that AI can serve as a global public good that benefits humanity. It is important to widely carry out international cooperation in AI, help Global South countries strengthen their technological capacity building, and to make contributions to bridging the global AI divide.

Efforts should be made to promote the alignment and coordination of development strategies, governance rules, and technical standards among all parties, and to form a global governance framework and standards with extensive consensus as early as possible, Xi said.

Source: Xinhua