

## **Asian Countries Dominate When It Comes to Passport Power in 2019**

**For immediate release: London, 8 January 2019**

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Japan goes into the new year holding 1<sup>st</sup> place on the [Henley Passport Index](#), with citizens enjoying visa-free/visa-on-arrival access to 190 destinations. In a further display of Asian passport power, Singapore and South Korea now sit in joint 2<sup>nd</sup> place, with access to 189 destinations around the globe. This marks a new high for South Korea, which moved up the ranking following a recent visa-on-arrival agreement with India. Germany and France remain in 3<sup>rd</sup> place going into 2019, with a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of 188.

The US and the UK continue to drop down the [Henley Passport Index](#) — which is based on authoritative data from the [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#) — and now sit in joint 6<sup>th</sup> place, with access to 185 destinations. This is a significant fall from the 1<sup>st</sup> place position that these countries held in 2015. Denmark, Finland, Italy, and Sweden now hold joint 4<sup>th</sup> place, while Spain and Luxembourg are in 5<sup>th</sup>. As they have done for much of the index's 14-year history, Iraq and Afghanistan remain at the bottom of the ranking, with access to just 30 visa-free destinations.

Turkey's recent introduction of an online e-Visa service has resulted in some interesting changes to the overall rankings. As of October 2018, citizens of over 100 countries (including Canada, the UK, Norway, and the US) must apply for an e-Visa before they travel to Turkey, instead of being able to do so on arrival. While this specific change means that a number of countries have dropped slightly in the rankings, it does not alter the overwhelmingly positive effect of the wider global tendency towards visa-openness and mutually beneficial agreements. Historical data from the [Henley Passport Index](#) shows that in 2006, a citizen, on average, could travel to 58 destinations without needing a visa from the host nation; by the end of 2018, this number had nearly doubled to 107.

[Dr. Christian H. Kälin](#), Group Chairman of [Henley & Partners](#) and the inventor of the Passport Index concept, says this latest ranking shows that despite rising isolationist sentiment in some parts of the world, many countries remain committed to collaboration. “The general spread of open-door policies has the potential to contribute billions to the global economy, as well as create significant employment opportunities around the world. South Korea and the United Arab Emirates' recent ascent in the rankings are further examples of what happens when countries take a proactive foreign affairs approach, an attitude which significantly benefits their citizens as well as the international community.”

## **Countries Continue to Embrace Mutually Beneficial Migration**

Asian countries' continued dominance of the [Henley Passport Index](#) reflects the extraordinary effect that international mobility and migration has had on the region. The full scope of this impact is explored in the recently launched 2019 edition of the [Henley Passport Index and Global Mobility Report](#) – a unique publication that offers cutting-edge analysis and commentary from leading scholars and professional experts on the latest trends shaping international and regional mobility patterns today.

Commenting in the report, [Dr. Parag Khanna](#), the Founder and Managing Partner of FutureMap in Singapore, notes: “China’s Thousand Talents scheme, Thailand’s entrepreneur visa, and similar initiatives from the UAE to Singapore show many states sustaining a high comfort level with mutually beneficial economic migration.”

China’s steady ascent up the rankings over the past few years is a clear demonstration of this. In 2017, the country was ranked 85<sup>th</sup>, with citizens able to access just 51 destinations. Going into 2019, China sits in 69<sup>th</sup> place, with its nationals now able to access 74 countries and territories around the world. Commenting in the report, [Froilan Malit](#), an Associate at the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) program and a Fellow at Centre International de Formation des Autorités et Leaders (CIFAL), says: “Overall, international migration has not only helped stabilize economic growth in Asia Pacific but enabled many labor-sending South and Southeast Asian countries to sustain strong economic growth, even in times of crisis.”

As is clear from the United Arab Emirates’ continued upward trajectory, the Middle Eastern powerhouse has taken a similar approach to Asian high performers. Now holding top spot in the region at 22<sup>nd</sup> place globally on the [Henley-IATA index](#), with its citizens able to access 164 destinations around the globe, the nation recently signed agreements with a number of countries, including Mexico, Japan, and Sierra Leone. Commenting on the UAE’s recent partnerships with African nations, [Ryan Cummings](#), Director of Signal Risk, says: “The United Arab Emirates has demonstrated a penchant for reciprocating visa deregulation as the country aims to attract diverse skill-sets and increase the power of its own passport.”

Cummings suggests that the African continent would also benefit from this more expansive approach: “Africa continues to lag behind the rest of the world. That said, it is certainly moving in the right direction in terms of enhancing visa openness. Over the past year, several African countries – notably Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia and Senegal – relaxed visa requirements, with the intention of enhancing trade, co-operation, and security.”

## **Looking ahead: Brexit, the US, and changing alliances**

The [2019 Henley Passport Index and Global Mobility Report](#) offers fascinating insight into what the coming year might hold in terms of visa freedom and travel access. Experts anticipate that neither the US nor EU member states are in line to substantially revise their current visa policies, whereas countries in other parts of Europe (such as citizenship-by-investment newcomers

[Moldova](#) and [Montenegro](#)), as well as those in Asia and the Middle East, look set to continue seeking visa-waiver agreements with diplomatic allies.

A question mark remains over the ultimate impact of Brexit. While the deal hangs in the balance, it is difficult to anticipate what the ultimate ramifications will be for EU and UK citizens, as well as for EU and UK trade and co-operation. Commenting in the report on the potential impact of Britain's changing relationship with the EU, Prof. [Simone Bertoli](#), Professor of Economics at Université Clermont Auvergne (CERDI) in France and a Research Fellow at the Institute of Labor Economics in Germany, says: "London's finance sector could lose a substantial part of its appeal, and other European countries (notably, France, Germany, and Ireland) could decide to strengthen policy measures to attract financial sector workers."

Finally, insights from the report show that the ever-growing trend towards visa-openness is unlikely to slow down. Overall, 2019 looks set to hold some surprises in the travel freedom space as more countries and citizens embrace the benefits of global mobility.

### **Citizenship-by-investment countries consolidate their respective positions**

As in 2018, countries with [citizenship-by-investment \(CBI\) programs](#) continue to hold their strong positions. [Malta](#), for instance, sits in 9<sup>th</sup> spot, with access to 182 destinations around the world. [St. Kitts and Nevis](#) and [Antigua and Barbuda](#) hold 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> spot respectively, while [Moldova](#) remains in a strong position at 46<sup>th</sup> place, with citizens able to access 122 countries. A recent agreement signed between St. Kitts and Nevis and Belarus, due to come into effect in the coming months, will further strengthen the St. Kitts and Nevis passport, and enhance the travel freedom of its citizens.

[Dr. Juerg Steffen](#), the CEO of [Henley & Partners](#), says: "The enduring appeal of investment migration programs shows that more and more people are embracing alternative citizenship as the best way to access previously unimagined opportunities and improve their passport power. Additionally, it is no surprise that countries are increasingly looking to launch CBI programs, which attract talented individuals and bring enormous economic and societal benefits."

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About the 2019 Henley Passport Index**

Boasting cutting-edge expert commentary and historical data spanning 14 years, the [Henley Passport Index](#) is the original ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa. The ranking is based on exclusive data from the [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#), which maintains the world's largest and most accurate database of travel information, and it is enhanced by extensive, ongoing research by the Henley & Partners Research Department.

The [Henley Passport Index](#) is updated in real-time, as and when visa-policy changes come into effect. Along with the [Henley & Partners – Koehenov Quality of Nationality Index](#), it is considered a major reference tool for global citizens and the standard reference for governments in this field.

### **About the Henley Passport Index website**

The [Henley Passport Index website](#) provides up-to-date, printable lists of the countries you can access visa-free, with an e-visa, with a visa on arrival, or with a normal visa. It also allows you to compare the strength of passports and understand how you might improve your travel freedom with alternative citizenship. [Visit the website](#) to view and download the global ranking and find out more about the power of your passport.

### **About the 2019 Henley Passport Index and Global Mobility Report**

The [2019 Henley Passport Index and Global Mobility Report](#) is a unique publication that brings together commentary from leading scholars and professional experts on the major trends shaping global and regional mobility patterns today.

In addition, the report features fresh analysis of the latest developments on the [Henley Passport Index](#), original scholarly research into the relationship between democracy and travel freedom, and on-the-ground insights into the future of migration technology.

### **Headlines 2019 versus 2018**

- Japan holds top spot on the [Henley Passport Index](#) for the second year running, offering citizens visa-free access to a record 190 destinations.
- Singapore continues to hold 2<sup>nd</sup> place, along with South Korea, which has moved up from 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with citizens able to access 189 destinations.
- From the 2<sup>nd</sup> place it held at the beginning of 2018, Germany now drops to 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with access to 188 destinations. It shares this position with France.
- Denmark, Italy, Finland, and Sweden share joint 4<sup>th</sup> place, with access to 187 destinations around the globe.
- The UK drops from 4<sup>th</sup> place to 6<sup>th</sup> place, while the US drops from 5<sup>th</sup> place to 6<sup>th</sup> place, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 185 destinations.
- In further demonstrations of Asian passport power, China moved five places up the rankings from the beginning of 2018, from 74<sup>th</sup> to 69<sup>th</sup>, while Cambodia (84<sup>th</sup>), Laos (86<sup>th</sup>), and Myanmar (90<sup>th</sup>) have each moved up four places.
- The UAE climbed five places up the rankings, from 27<sup>th</sup> place at the beginning of 2018, to 22<sup>nd</sup> place currently.
- Afghanistan and Iraq continue to hold joint last place, with a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of just 30.

## **Headlines over the past decade**

- The UAE is the strongest individual climber over the past decade, from 61<sup>st</sup> place in 2009 to 22<sup>nd</sup> place currently.
- South Korea has moved 10 places up the rankings since 2009, when it held 12<sup>th</sup> place with a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of 144.
- The past decade has seen a marked decline in many African countries' rankings. Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Gambia, and South Africa have all dropped at least 18 places since 2009.
- There have been other significant declines, particularly in states affected by ongoing war and violence. Syria has dropped 21 places since 2009, Yemen has dropped 19 places, Somalia and Iraq have both dropped 16 places, and Afghanistan has dropped 15.
- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine have all improved their global rank by 15 or more positions since 2009.
- In 2009, there were 24 countries in the top 10 positions of the index, with 17 of those countries located in Europe, and two in Asia. At the beginning of 2019, there are 27 countries in the top 10 positions on the index, with 20 of those countries located in Europe, and three in Asia.
- In 2006, a citizen, on average, could travel to 58 destinations without needing a visa from the host nation; by 2018, this number had nearly doubled to 107.

## **About Henley & Partners**

[Henley & Partners](#) is the global leader in residence and citizenship planning. Each year, hundreds of wealthy individuals and their advisors rely on our expertise and experience in this area. The firm's highly qualified professionals work together as one team in over 30 offices worldwide.

The concept of residence and citizenship planning was created by [Henley & Partners](#) in the 1990s. As globalization has expanded, residence and citizenship have become topics of significant interest among the increasing number of internationally mobile entrepreneurs and investors whom we proudly serve every day.

The firm also runs a leading government advisory practice that has raised more than USD 8 billion in foreign direct investment. Trusted by governments, the firm has been involved in strategic consulting and in the design, set-up, and operation of the world's most successful residence and citizenship programs.

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