

Henley Index: Japan tops 2020 list of world's most powerful passports

Maureen O'Hare, CNN • Updated 7th July 2020



World's most powerful passports: Global citizenship and residence advisory firm Henley & Partners has released its quarterly report on the world's most desirable passports. Click on to find out which passport offers the most access in 2020.

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(CNN) — Before Covid-19 struck, the world was enjoying greater freedom of movement than at any time in history.

Air traffic had been rising steadily for decades and the average passport-holder worldwide was enjoying visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 107 global destinations.

And then came the travel bans.

The [Henley Passport Index](#), which periodically measures the world's most travel-friendly passports, has just released its third report of the new decade.

Asian citizens continue to have the travel documents that open the most doors. Japan is top of the leaderboard, offering visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 191 destinations around the world.

Singapore is in second place (with a score of 190) and South Korea ties with Germany in third place (with a score of 189).

The standard ranking, however does not take temporary bans into account -- and that, says Henley & Partners in a release, is where the juiciest details lie: "It is eye-opening to consider what travel freedom currently looks like for the holders of once-prestigious passports."

Last week, the [EU released its list](#) of the 14 countries whose residents would be allowed entry into bloc from July 1, months after it shut its external borders in response to the outbreak of Covid-19.

Japan and South Korea made the grade when it came to the EU's coronavirus-related health and safety criteria, as did Australia and Canada (in joint ninth place on the Henley Passport Index).

However, notes Henley & Partner's, "in a move perceived as a stinging rebuke for its poor handling of the pandemic," the United States was a notable exclusion, alongside Brazil and Russia.

The United States is currently placed seventh in official index, but under the current EU ban, Americans have around the same level of travel freedom as citizens of Mexico (No. 25 on Henley Passport Index, with a score of 159) and Uruguay (No. 28, with a score of 153).

Likewise, Brazil's absence from the list of countries welcomed by the European Union means that, while its official Henley ranking is No. 19, the current reality is that it ranks somewhere closer to Paraguay (36th on the index, with a score of 142).

Singapore, meanwhile, is at No. 2 on the Henley Passport Index but its exclusion from the EU list means that its passport-holders currently have much less travel freedom than the other countries on the top podium: Japan, South Korea and Germany.

Christian H. Kaelin, chair of Henley & Partners and the inventor of the passport index concept, says the impact of the EU's recent decision will be far-reaching. "As we have already seen, the pandemic's impact on travel freedom has been more drastic and long-lasting than initially anticipated. This latest decision by the EU indicates that there is more upheaval to come."



The best passports to hold in 2020 are:

1. Japan (191 destinations)
2. Singapore (190)
3. South Korea, Germany (189)
4. Italy, Finland, Spain, Luxembourg (188)
5. Denmark, Austria (187)
6. Sweden, France, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland (186)
7. Switzerland, United States, United Kingdom, Norway, Belgium (185)
8. Greece, New Zealand, Malta, Czech Republic (184)
9. Canada, Australia (183)
10. Hungary (181)

The worst passports to hold

Several countries around the world have visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to fewer than 40 countries. These include:

103. North Korea (39 destinations)

104. Libya, Nepal, Palestinian Territory (38)

105. Somalia, Yemen (33)

106. Pakistan (32)

107. Syria (29)

108. Iraq (28)

109. Afghanistan (26)

Other indexes

Henley & Partner's list is one of several indexes created by financial firms to rank global passports according to the access they provide to their citizens.

The Henley Passport Index is based on data provided by the International Air Transport Authority (IATA) and covers 199 passports and 227 travel destinations. It is updated in real time throughout the year, as and when visa policy changes come into effect.

Arton Capital's Passport Index takes into consideration the passports of 193 United Nations member countries and six territories -- ROC Taiwan, Macau (SAR China), Hong Kong (SAR China), Kosovo, Palestinian Territory and the Vatican. Territories annexed to other countries are excluded.

Its 2020 index puts Japan and New Zealand at the top, with a visa-free score of 118.