

## **Japan and Singapore Are the Global Leaders When It Comes to Passport Power**

**For immediate release: London, 10 July 2018**

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Japan and Singapore share 1<sup>st</sup> place on the latest [Henley Passport Index](#), enjoying visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 189 destinations. Both countries gained access to Uzbekistan earlier this year, knocking Germany off the top spot and kicking the latter into 2<sup>nd</sup> place for the first time since 2013. 2018 is the first year in the index's 13-year history that either Japan or Singapore has had the most powerful passport in the world.

The rest of the top 20 on the [Henley Passport Index](#) — which is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) — remains fairly stable as the northern hemisphere enters the big summer holiday season, with no new visa-waivers processed for the UK and the US, who both remain in 4<sup>th</sup> place. Nationals of these countries, like nationals of most EU member states, have not seen any improvement in their global access since 2017.

South Korea shares 3<sup>rd</sup> place with six EU member states: Sweden, Finland, Italy, Spain, Denmark, and France. And Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Portugal share 4<sup>th</sup> place with the US and the UK.

Russia, which opened its borders to World Cup fans this summer, has not yet gained reciprocal access to any new destinations, but it nonetheless rose one place to 46<sup>th</sup> position, benefitting from an upward climb by the Pacific island-nation of Tuvalu, which gained visa-free access to Taiwan.

The UAE has again improved and gained access to four new destinations since May, rising to 21<sup>st</sup> place globally on the [Henley Passport Index](#) and fast approaching the top 20. Despite gaining access to two new destinations, China has fallen one place to 69<sup>th</sup> on the index: improved scores for countries such as Nauru, Belarus, and Indonesia, which sit directly above China have made it difficult for the country to ascend the ranking.

[Dr. Christian H. Kälin](#), Group Chairman of [Henley & Partners](#), says that a passport is much more than a simple travel document: “It is a gateway to international opportunities or a barrier to those same opportunities. The [Henley Passport Index](#) enables individuals to assess where they lie on the spectrum of global mobility and helps governments understand the relative value and power of the passports they provide.”

### **Brexit and the EU migrant crisis create a ceiling for Europe's passport power**

According to [Prof. Dr. Florian Trauner](#), Research Professor at the Institute for European Studies at the Free University of Brussels, EU member states including the UK are unlikely to see their passport power improving so long as their own inbound travel policies remain restrictive.

“The current political climate in the EU is not conducive to more liberal admission policies. In the wake of the Brexit vote, the UK has been trying to install a stricter immigration regime vis-à-vis both EU and non-EU citizens,” says Prof. Trauner.

“The EU, similarly, has sought to strengthen its external border control in reaction to the ongoing ‘refugee crisis’. Softening visa requirements may be perceived as being lenient on immigration. In addition, EU member states have significant political reservations regarding the processing of the three remaining candidates for EU visa liberalization: Kosovo, Turkey, and Russia.”

### **The US remains the regional leader despite Trump**

The US and Canada are in the top five globally, but Latin American nations Chile, Argentina, and Brazil are not too far behind, in 13<sup>th</sup> place (Chile) and 15<sup>th</sup> place (Argentina and Brazil). These countries have jumped as many as ten places since 2008, while the US and Canada have fallen slightly over time.

[Dr. Parag Khanna](#), Managing Partner of FutureMap, says, “It’s good to see South American nations climbing the [Henley Passport Index](#), as trade and remittances are important to their economies, so there will be positive consequences that will be felt on the ground at home with their growing mobility. The driver of the shift upwards is largely the recent rise in spending power for Brazilians, which has led to them becoming more welcome worldwide.”

“As for Americans,” Dr. Khanna adds, “despite Trump’s strict anti-immigration stance, I don’t anticipate any difficulties for American passport holders, unless countries such as Venezuela and Egypt that have been placed on Trump’s travel ban list decide to implement visas for Americans, which they have not thus far done. Countries with weak economies cannot afford to close out a nationality that provides large inflows of tourists, for example. Turkey learned this lesson in 2017 when it temporarily demanded that Americans apply for visas before traveling to Turkey.”

### **The UAE consolidates its access to the Americas and approaches the top 20**

The UAE has gained access to four new destinations since Q2, all of them in the Americas region: Guyana, Canada, Brazil, and Barbados. Emiratis can now access 158 destinations worldwide and, given its current trajectory, will soon enter the global top 20 of the [Henley Passport Index](#) for the first time.

[Ryan Cummings](#), Director of Signal Risk, says that the UAE’s expansion of its Latin American and Caribbean travel links is inevitable: “The UAE’s decision to focus on the Americas region is most likely an attempt by the Gulf state to merely consolidate diplomatic relations in a zone where it has already established strong economic ties.”

He goes on: “By initiating visa-waiver agreements with several countries within the Americas and the Caribbean geopolitical zone, the UAE is helping its citizens access key business, cultural, and holiday hotspots with a greater degree of ease, while also positioning the Gulf country itself as a reciprocal commercial and tourism hub for nationals from the aforementioned region.”

## **China strengthens its travel links with key investment destinations**

China gained visa-free access to Belarus and visa-on-arrival access to Zimbabwe in June. Its visa-waiver agreement with the British Virgin Islands, signed on 29 June, is set to come into effect at the end of this month.

Dr. Khanna says this improved worldwide access speaks to China's broader investment strategy: "China has been successfully tying its investment strategy to its diplomatic and consular priorities, especially in developing countries and emerging markets. Given China's focus on Belarus as a node on the 'Belt and Road', this is an expected development. Meanwhile, the shift in government in Zimbabwe and other African countries signals an openness to foreign investment from all directions, including China." China is Zimbabwe's fourth largest trading partner.

According to the World Tourism Organization and the China National Tourism Association, Chinese citizens made 120 million trips — and spent USD 215 billion — abroad in 2017, which makes China the largest tourism market in the world.

But China is also increasingly committed to inbound tourism: it recently opened its Hainan province to nationals of 59 countries who cannot easily access other parts of the country.

[Prof. Kate Coddington](#), Assistant Professor of Geography at Durham University, says this move "is expected to attract significantly increased Japanese and Russian tourism to China". More broadly, she notes, "the increasing push to 'brand' Hainan as 'China's Hawaii' through a focus on beach tourism as well as other newly authorized activities such as horse racing, sports lotteries, and duty-free shopping not only provides an incentive for Chinese tourists to keep their spending within China but also targets investment to a province suffering from budgetary issues".

## **Africa prioritizes foreign direct investment**

In June, Ethiopia introduced a universal e-visa system for all travelers entering the country, following in the footsteps of Zimbabwe, which implemented a similar system in May.

According to [Cummings](#), these developments reflect growing efforts on the part of new African heads of state to strengthen trade partnerships and stimulate foreign direct investment. "Key to selling the idea of reform touted by the newly inaugurated administrations of Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa and Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed is publicly strengthening their ties to the international community and presenting their respective governments as adhering to international governance norms." Ethiopia in particular is easing entry requirements for foreign investors and privatizing a number of key state-owned enterprises after years of a strong nationalist agenda.

## **Citizenship-by-investment changes your passport power**

[Dr. Kälin](#) stresses that a poor-performing passport need not constrain your potential: "Far from being something we are powerless to change, citizenship is much more flexible than many people

realize. Citizenship-by-investment programs allow individuals to drastically improve the strength of their passport and, in turn, their global access.”

“In participating in these programs,” [Dr. Kälin](#) adds, “individuals are also able to make an exceptional economic contribution to often smaller nations that require foreign direct investment in order to support their populations and remain competitive and sustainable in the long-term. It is a mutually beneficial exchange, and it is also very much the direction in which the world is heading, as globalization becomes an undeniable feature of modern life.”

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## **Notes to editors**

### **About the 2018 Henley Passport Index**

Boasting cutting-edge expert commentary and historical data spanning 13 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 – Kochenov 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.

### **Headlines and trends for Q3 2018**

- Japan and Singapore share 1<sup>st</sup> place on the latest [Henley Passport Index](#) with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 189 destinations.
- Germany has fallen to 2<sup>nd</sup> place this year, for the first time since 2013.
- The UAE has gained access to four new destinations since May, rising to 21<sup>st</sup> place globally and enjoying visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 158 destinations.
- China has strengthened its travel links to key investment destinations such as Zimbabwe and Belarus, but the country falls one place on the index due to better performance by other states.

- Russia has not gained access to any new destinations since May, but it rose one place to 46<sup>th</sup> position.
- The top 20 of the Henley Passport Index remains stable in Q3, with no new visa-waivers processed for the UK, the US, or EU member states.
- Nationals of the UK, the US, and the EU have not seen any improvement in their global access since 2017.
- Global leaders Japan and Singapore both gained access to Uzbekistan this year, and their upper-hand so far remains unchallenged.
- Brexit and the EU migrant crisis are creating a ceiling for Europe's passport power.
- The US remains the regional leader despite Trump, but Latin American countries such as Chile, Argentina, and Brazil are rapidly catching up.
- Africa is prioritizing foreign direct investment and liberalizing its visa policies.

### **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 7 billion in foreign direct investment. 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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