

Ningbo Issues First Integrated "Join in Card" for Expats

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On February 21, Dave Towey received Ningbo's very first "Join in Card".

On the afternoon of February 21, at the China Construction Bank branch in the Ningbo Municipal Government Service Center, Dave Towey, Associate Dean at the Faculty of Science and Engineering of the University of Nottingham Ningbo China, received the city's very first "Join in Card".

"This is the first 'Join in Card' issued in Ningbo—what an honor," said Towey. "With this card, I no longer need to carry my passport, my work permit, and a whole bunch of other documents. It really lightens my wallet. This one single card allows me to take public transport, shop, and access healthcare."

The name "Join in Card" comes from a Chinese

phrase meaning "gathering talents from all over the world". It marks part of an important initiative to enhance convenience for foreigners working and living in Ningbo.

Previously, foreign nationals working in China had to apply for a work permit and a social security card—two separate cards. With the current initiative, work permit information is embedded in the social security card, enabling foreigners to access a wider range of services with one single card. This streamlining effort makes working and living in China significantly more convenient.

An official from the Ningbo Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau stated that foreign residents in Ningbo can currently use their social security card for a wide range of services, including accessing government services, receiving medical treatment, purchasing medication, paying for public transportation, visiting cultural and tourism venues, and shopping at designated retailers.

The social security card can be used to navigate government services across 19 departments, including human resources, social security, education, civil affairs, and housing.

An official from the Ningbo Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs stated that the "Join in Card" symbolizes the improved integration of data from work per-

mits, residence permits, and the social security services foreigners are eligible for, streamlining the process. By replacing physical work permits with electronic certificates, processing time and costs are reduced while convenience and the overall experience for foreign residents are enhanced.

As an economic hub in the Yangtze River Delta, an open and outward-facing city, and a national transportation gateway, Ningbo continues to attract an increasing number of foreign professionals. As of 2024, the city is home to more than 7,700 permanent foreign residents.

Going forward, Ningbo's municipal bureaus for science and human resources plan to integrate more data from existing permits into these cards, expanding their functionality even further. This is expected to enhance the city's appeal to international talent, fostering a more inclusive, livable, and business-friendly environment.

"For years, I've been in love with Ningbo's unique charm as a port city and its rich culture," said Towey. "Now, with the 'Join in Card', the government has made it even easier for us to access public services—I feel like a true Ningbo local now."

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Ningbo "Join in Card" Application Guide for Foreign Talents

Application Requirements and Document Checklist

● Eligibility

Foreign nationals who have obtained the "Foreigner's Work Permit Decision Letter" issued by the Ningbo Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs.

● Required Documents

Original valid passport of the applicant.

Physical "Join in Card" Application Process

● Service Counter

China Construction Bank Counter, 1st Floor, Ningbo Municipal Government Service Center (No. 1901 Ningchuan Road, Yinzhou District)

● Application Steps

1. Document verification
2. Receive physical card
3. Activate financial account (Requires taxpayer identification number; Chinese tax residents must additionally submit proof of 183+ days residency)

Replacement Guide for Existing Work Permit Card Holders

When renewing or updating work permit information, the original physical Foreigner's Work Permit card will no longer be issued; holders with valid permits who need early replacement may apply at the China Construction Bank counter of the Municipal Government Service

Center by submitting their original valid passport (if a photo update is required, additionally provide a 1-inch color ID photo).

Contact Information

● Social Security Card Inquiries

0574-89185906

● Work Permit Services (Science and Technology Bureau)

0574-87187756

● Office Hours

Weekdays 9:00-11:30 AM; 1:30-5:00 PM

Core Functions and Usage Scenarios of the "Join in Card"

1. Government Services "One-Network Access"

● Services

Social security inquiries, housing fund withdrawals, talent housing subsidies (for those enrolled and contributing to relevant programs), and 65 administrative services across 19 departments.

● Authentication

Replaces the Foreigner's Work Permit as legal proof of employment.

2. Daily Life "One-Card Convenience"

● Healthcare

1. Direct outpatient settlement in Yangtze River Delta region; nationwide hospitalization reimbursement.
2. Access to all Ningbo medical insurance-designat-

ed institutions (including pharmacies).

● Culture & Leisure

1. Free borrowing from 64 public libraries (up to 10 books per loan).
2. Entry to 81 cultural sites (e.g., Tianyi Pavilion, Baoguo Temple) with pre-purchased tickets.

● Consumer Benefits

Exclusive discounts at 988 partnered merchants (dining, retail, hotels), including spend-and-save offers or 20% discounts.

3. Transportation "Nationwide Connectivity"

● Local

60% discount on Ningbo buses; 5% discount on metro fares.

● National

Compatible with public transit in 336 cities (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou), following local fare policies.

4. Financial Services "Secure & Efficient"

1. Supports cross-border UnionPay payments, RMB transactions, and remittances (requires activated Construction Bank account).

2. Government subsidies (e.g., talent allowances, medical reimbursements) deposited directly into the card.

• Note: Social security and housing fund functionalities require enrollment in corresponding programs.

(All terms and conditions apply based on actual eligibility and participation in relevant services.)

Source: 宁波人才