

Hainan Company Registration Checklist 2026

The Foreign Founder's Step-by-Step Checklist for Setting Up a WFOE in Hainan Free Trade Port

Compiled from the Hainan Setup blog library — every step below reflects policy as of August 2026. Print it, tick the boxes, and you'll always know what's next.

How to Use This Checklist

Registering a company in China used to mean 4–8 weeks of paperwork and at least one flight. In Hainan Free Trade Port, the business license itself can now be issued in as few as **3 working days**, and — since Hainan's April 2026 foreign-services action plan — the entire registry stage can be completed **fully remotely** with online passport identity verification and a bilingual e-Registration interface.

But the license is only one milestone. Banking, tax onboarding, and compliance are what turn a license into an operating company. This checklist walks you through all of it, in order:

- **Phase 1 — Before You Register:** the decisions that determine your tax rate
- **Phase 2 — Documents & Preparation:** the file you'll assemble from overseas
- **Phase 3 — Registration in Progress:** from name approval to company chops
- **Phase 4 — After the License:** banking, tax, invoicing, social insurance
- **Phase 5 — Your First Year:** the compliance calendar you cannot miss
- **Bonus — The Founder's Personal Checklist:** visa, residency, and the 15% personal tax cap

Realistic total timeline: **4–8 weeks from decision to operating company**, with the bank account usually the pacing item.

Phase 1 — Before You Register (The Decisions That Matter Most)

Getting these right upfront is what separates a smooth 15% tax setup from an expensive fix later.

- ☐ **Confirm your industry is on the Hainan FTP Encouraged Industries Catalogue.** This is the gateway to the 15% corporate income tax rate (vs. the 25% national standard). Tourism, modern services, high technology, healthcare, aviation, marine industries, digital trade, tropical agriculture, and most consulting/tech sectors are covered.
- ☐ **Check your sector against the negative lists.** Market access is governed by the national negative list plus Hainan's shorter FTP-specific list. Most sectors allow 100% foreign ownership — verify yours before anything else.
- ☐ **Run the 60% revenue test honestly.** To keep the 15% rate, income from your encouraged main business must generally be **at least 60% of total revenue**. If your model can't clear that, a Hainan company still works — just at 25%, like anywhere else in China.
- ☐ **Plan for the substantive-operations test.** The 15% rate requires real premises, real staff, and real decision-making in Hainan — not a mailbox. Tax bureaus verify with payroll, lease, and social-insurance records.
- ☐ **Choose your structure: WFOE for most founders.** A Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise gives you 100% control, the right to invoice (fapiao), and the right to hire. (Alternatives: Joint Venture for restricted sectors; Representative Office for research only — it cannot earn revenue; Foreign-Invested Partnership for fund structures.)
- ☐ **Decide whether to go remote or in-person.** Since April 2026, foreign individual investors can complete passport-based identity verification online, file through the bilingual "Hainan e-Registration 2.0" system, and eligible cases can use the

"recommendation letter + commitment" model. Investors routing through Hong Kong can use entrusted notaries there for filing and identity authentication.

- ☐ **Set a sensible registered capital figure.** No statutory minimum for most industries, and contributions can be spread over **up to 5 years** — but the number you declare is your legal liability ceiling. For most consulting and service WFOEs, **USD 50,000–100,000** is the credible, low-risk zone. Don't declare \$1M to look impressive.
 - ☐ **Line up a real registered address.** Hainan industrial parks offer compliant park-based addresses, and a workstation or serviced office (e.g., in Sanya's Yazhou Bay Science & Technology City) doubles as evidence of substantive operations. Avoid free or ultra-cheap addresses shared by hundreds of shell companies — tax bureaus flag them in batches.
 - ☐ **Note the policy window.** The 15% corporate rate and 15% personal income tax cap are legislated through **December 31, 2027**. Earlier phases were renewed and extended, and the policy direction points to continuation — but model your case at both 15% and 25% so it survives the conservative scenario.
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Phase 2 — Documents & Preparation (Assemble From Overseas)

Document legalization in your home country is usually the longest item — start it first. Budget **1–2 weeks** (it varies by country), and note that Hainan is actively simplifying notarization and apostille requirements for eligible investors.

From the shareholder (individual or foreign entity):

- ☐ Passport copy of each shareholder (notarized and legalized/apostilled — or ask your provider whether you qualify for Hainan's simplified recommendation-letter route, available to qualifying investors since June 2025)
- ☐ Proof of address (utility bill or bank statement)
- ☐ Bank reference letter (required by some banks later — get it while you're at your bank anyway)
- ☐ If the shareholder is a company: certificate of incorporation and good-standing documents, legalized

From the legal representative:

- ☐ Passport copy
- ☐ Resume/CV
- ☐ Contact information (a reachable phone number matters more than you'd think)

For the company itself:

- ☐ Articles of Association (AoA) drafted
 - ☐ Shareholder resolution
 - ☐ Legal representative appointment letter
 - ☐ Registered office lease agreement (or park address confirmation)
 - ☐ Business scope description — drafted to match the Encouraged Industries Catalogue language (too narrow = costly amendments later; too broad = regulatory scrutiny)
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Phase 3 — Registration in Progress (The Registry Steps)

Once your file is ready, the China-side sequence moves fast.

- ☐ **Step 1 — Name approval (1–2 business days).** Submit your proposed name to the Administration for Market Regulation (AMR) in the format: **[Location] + [Company Name] + [Industry] + Co., Ltd.** — e.g., *Hainan [Your Company] Technology Consulting Co., Ltd.*
- ☐ **Step 2 — Application submission & review (3–5 business days).** File via e-Registration 2.0. With the 2026 bilingual interface and online passport authentication, foreign individual investors can do this without an in-person identity check.

- ☐ **Step 3 — Business license issuance (1–2 business days).** This is the document that makes your company legal. In the fastest Hainan cases, the whole registry stage clears in **3 working days**.
 - ☐ **Step 4 — Company chops carved (1 day).** You need four: **company seal, financial seal, legal representative seal, and invoice (fapiao) seal**. In China these are legally binding signatures — control them carefully.
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Phase 4 — After the License (Becoming Operational)

The license gets you legal. This phase gets you paid.

- ☐ **Open the corporate bank account (3–7 business days; the usual pacing item).** Bring the business license, chops, and the legal representative's passport or power of attorney. Banks experienced with Hainan foreign entities support remote or attorney-based processes; others still ask the legal representative to appear — confirm your bank's policy **before** you assume a fully remote setup. If you plan cross-border settlement, ask about Hainan's **EF account** system (11 participating banks as of 2026).
 - ☐ **Complete tax registration (1–2 business days).** Register with the local tax bureau, choose your accounting method, and apply for **fapiao (invoice) issuance rights** — without this you cannot bill Chinese customers.
 - ☐ **Register for social insurance** if you'll hire employees (including yourself on the payroll).
 - ☐ **Set up bookkeeping from day one.** Every company in China must file taxes even with zero revenue. Skipping filings lands you on the abnormal-operation list, which blocks banking and deregistration later.
 - ☐ **Trading companies only:** map your goods against Hainan's zero-tariff regime — after island-wide customs closure (December 18, 2025), zero tariffs cover **74% of tariff lines** under a negative-list approach, and goods processed in Hainan with **≥30% value added** enter mainland China duty-free.
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Phase 5 — Your First Year (The Compliance Calendar)

Registration is the cheap part. This calendar is what keeps your license safe. (For reference: every WFOE also undergoes an annual audit by a licensed Chinese CPA firm, typically ¥3,000–5,000 — budget for it now.)

Monthly

- ☐ VAT filing
- ☐ Payroll, employee salary payments, and social insurance contributions

Quarterly

- ☐ Corporate income tax (CIT) prepayment
- ☐ Statistical reporting (if required by local authorities)

Annually

- ☐ Annual CIT settlement — due **May 31** of the following year
 - ☐ Annual financial audit by a licensed Chinese CPA firm
 - ☐ AMR annual report — due **June 30**
 - ☐ Foreign exchange annual reporting (if applicable)
 - ☐ Review your 15% qualification: catalogue fit, 60% revenue test, substantive operations evidence (payroll, lease, social insurance) — this is checked annually
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Bonus — The Founder's Personal Checklist (Visa & the 15% Personal Tax Cap)

Your company is set up. Now make your own status legal and tax-efficient.

- ☐ **Scouting trips:** citizens of **56 countries** (including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines) can enter Hainan **visa-free for up to 30 days** for business activities — but you cannot take paid employment on visa-free entry.
- ☐ **To work in your own company:** you need a **Foreigner's Work Permit + Work-Type Residence Permit** (Z-visa route). Hainan's joint application can process straightforward cases in as few as **3–5 working days**; budget 4–8 weeks end-to-end. Founders already holding a work permit from a partner region in China may qualify for simplified transfer procedures under the April 2026 action plan.
- ☐ **Family:** Z-visa and R-visa holders can sponsor spouse and minor children for S1 dependent visas, converted to family-reunion residence permits.
- ☐ **Claim the 15% personal income tax cap** (vs. progressive rates up to 45%). It works as an **annual refund**, not a reduced rate. Five-question self-check:
 - ☐ Will you spend at least 183 cumulative days in Hainan this tax year — with **at least 90 days physically on the island** (business travel can count toward the rest)?
 - ☐ Will your Hainan-sourced income reach **RMB 300,000** (~USD 42,000)? (This income path requires no formal "talent" certification.)
 - ☐ Is your employer a substantively operating Hainan entity?
 - ☐ Do you hold a labor contract of at least 1 year with it?
 - ☐ Are you enrolled in Hainan social insurance (or exempt under a bilateral agreement)?
- ☐ **File the annual IIT settlement between March 1 and June 30** — that's when the refund above 15% is calculated and returned. Salary and refunds that are earned, taxed, and documented can be remitted overseas, and Hainan has committed to making this faster for foreign talent.

5 Mistakes That Cost Foreign Founders the Most

1. **Starting document legalization late** — it's the longest item and it's in your home country's hands, not China's.
2. **Writing the business scope wrong** — misaligned with the encouraged catalogue, and your 15% rate is gone before you start.
3. **Over-declaring registered capital** — it's a liability ceiling, not a vanity metric.
4. **Ignoring the compliance calendar** — zero revenue doesn't mean zero filings; penalties and blacklisting follow fast.
5. **Choosing the \$300 agent** — license-only providers leave you without banking, tax onboarding, or English support; founders typically pay far more to a second provider to fix the mess.

Want This Done For You?

This checklist is exactly what we execute every week at **Hainan Setup** — a local team physically based in Hainan, fluent in English and Mandarin, reachable on WhatsApp in your timezone.

Start with a free 30-minute consultation. We'll map your industry against the 15% qualification tests, flag anything in your situation that needs special handling, and give you an honest answer — including if Hainan isn't the right fit.

Book your free call: calendly.com/hainansetup/30min(<https://calendly.com/hainansetup/30min>)

WhatsApp: [\[+86 133 9892 4455\]\(https://wa.me/8613398924455\)](https://wa.me/8613398924455)

Email: [\[contact@hainansetup.com\]\(mailto:contact@hainansetup.com\)](mailto:contact@hainansetup.com)

Our Published Packages

Package	Starting From	What It Covers
Starter (Formation)	USD 2,500	Scope & structure review,

		name & e-registration coordination, business license & standard chops, first-year registered address, bank & tax onboarding checklist
Growth (First-Year Setup)	USD 4,800	Everything in Starter, plus tax & invoicing onboarding, 12 months of bookkeeping & routine filings, first-year compliance support
Premium (Full Landing)	USD 9,800	Everything in Growth, plus workspace and policy screening for a fuller soft-landing

These are published starting anchors — formal quotes follow a real consultation about your industry, structure, and premises, because honest pricing requires knowing your situation. For context, comparable Singapore all-in packages run SGD 25,000–55,000 by market sources.

Policy references: Hainan FTP Master Plan; MOF/STA corporate and personal income tax preferences (window through December 31, 2027); Hainan Three-Year Action Plan for Optimizing Foreign-Related Services (Qiong Yingshangban [2026] No. 18, April 2026); island-wide customs closure effective December 18, 2025. Tax outcomes depend on individual circumstances — verify current policy with qualified advisors before making investment decisions. © 2026 Hainan Setup — hainansetup.com