



Welcome to the United States

A Guide for
International Visitors



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

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Introduction

Welcome to the United States. We are glad that you decided to travel to the United States to visit, study, work, or stay. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) wants to make your experience entering the United States as smooth as possible.

CBP is responsible for a wide-ranging set of missions that protect the United States against terrorists and other criminals while facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

Important note: The information in this brochure was correct as of the date of printing. For the most up-to-date information, please visit our website at www.cbp.gov

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mission Statement

We are the guardians of our Nation's borders.

We are America's frontline.

We safeguard the American homeland at
and beyond our borders.

We protect the American public against terrorists
and the instruments of terror.

We steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States
while fostering our Nation's economic security
through lawful international trade and travel.

We serve the American public with vigilance,
integrity and professionalism.

Preparing for Your Trip

Before You Go Checklist

__ Get a passport. See page 3 for more information on passports.

__ Make a copy of your passport and put it in a separate place. Carry your passport—do not pack it in your checked luggage. You must present it to the Customs and Border Protection officer upon arrival in the United States.

__ Get an ESTA. Prior Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) approval is required once every two years for all travelers from Visa Waiver Program countries to the United States. See page 9 for more information on ESTA.

OR

__ Get a visa. Make a copy and put it in a separate place. Carry your visa with you—do not pack it in your checked luggage. For more information, go to <http://travel.state.gov/visa/>

__ Plan your travel. When planning connecting flights in the United States, allow at least two hours between flights. CBP processing must be completed at your first port of entry, so allow adequate time.

__ Carry only medication needed for the trip in its original container. Do not pack it.

__ Carry only the jewelry needed for the trip. Do not pack it.

__ If bringing a dog, have a health certificate and proof of rabies vaccinations from a veterinarian in your country of residence. Prior to your trip, check with your airline for its rules on transporting animals—many airlines require a health certificate.

__ Carry documents for traveling with minor children. See page 3 for more information on traveling with children.

Passports

Most temporary visits to the United States require passports valid for the period of the intended stay. For visitors from certain countries, passports must be valid for six months beyond that time. Go to www.cbp.gov/travel and click on For International Visitors for more information.

All travelers under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), including infants, must have either:

- 1) a machine-readable passport or
- 2) an e-passport if the passport was issued on or after October 26, 2006. See Visa Waiver Program Visitors on page 5.

Traveling with Children

- All children, including infants, must have their own passport or Trusted Traveler Program document for U.S. entry. See page 11 for more information on Trusted Traveler Programs.
- All children must have their own visa or, if a resident of a Visa Waiver Program country, their own Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). See page 5 for more information on Visa Waiver Program Visitors.
- A third party, such as a relative or travel agent, may apply for a visa or ESTA on behalf of a child.
- If you are escorting a minor child without the parents, have a letter from both parents indicating that you have permission to travel with the minor.
- If the child is accompanied by only one parent, the parent should have a note from the child's other parent. For example, "I acknowledge that my wife/husband is traveling out of the country with my son/daughter. He/She/ has my permission to do so."
- If a single parent has sole custody, a copy of the court custody document can replace a letter from the other parent.

- Canadian citizen children under age 16, and those age 16 to 18 traveling with a school group, religious group, social or cultural organization, or sports team, may present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card, when arriving in the United States by land or sea from contiguous territory.
- The adult leader of the group of Canadian children should have a letter on organizational letterhead with: the names of the group and supervising adult; a list of the children on the trip; the primary address, phone number, date and place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child; a written and signed statement of the supervising adult certifying that he or she has parental or legal-guardian consent for each child.

Visa Waiver Program Visitors

Before traveling to the United States, a citizen of another country generally must obtain from the U.S. Department of State a nonimmigrant visa for a temporary stay or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. However, many countries participate in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP).

To participate in the VWP you must be a citizen or national of one of the following participating VWP countries:

Andorra	Hungary***	The Netherlands
Australia	Iceland	New Zealand
Austria	Ireland	Norway
Belgium	Italy	Portugal
Brunei	Japan	San Marino
Czech Republic, the***	Korea, Republic of ***	Singapore
Denmark	Latvia***	Slovakia***
Estonia***	Liechtenstein	Slovenia**
Finland	Lithuania***	Spain
France	Luxembourg	Sweden
Germany	Malta***	Switzerland
Greece	Monaco	United Kingdom*

* Only British citizens with the unrestricted right of abode in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

**Citizens/nationals of Slovenia must use only the red cover Slovenian passport for admission into the United States under the VWP.

***Citizens/nationals of these countries must present an electronic passport.

All applicants for admission to the United States under the VWP must:

- Have an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the United States. See ESTA, page 9.
- Be entering only as a visitor for business or pleasure for 90 days or less.
- Arrive by air or sea on a carrier that is signatory to a VWP country, and must possess a return ticket to any foreign place/port other than Canada or Mexico or an adjacent island (unless the traveler permanently resides there).
- Prove economic solvency and a foreign residence to which they intend to return.

Passports for Visa Waiver Program Travelers

VWP travelers must hold passports valid for the period of their intended stay except for travelers from Brunei, who need a passport that is valid for six months beyond the period of their intended stay.

New passports issued by Visa Waiver Program countries must be e-passports, which include a computer chip with biographic and biometric information and a digitized photo. You can identify an e-passport by this symbol.



If your passport does not have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if yours is a valid passport issued:

- Before October 26, 2005, and includes a machine-readable zone, or
- Between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006, and includes a digital photograph.

If you were issued a passport on or after October 26, 2006, and it is not an e-passport, you will need to obtain a visa.

Machine-Readable Passports

Valid passports issued by Visa Waiver Program countries before October 26, 2005, must have a

machine-readable zone. Machine-readable passports have two lines of letters, numbers and chevrons (<<<) at the bottom of the personal information page, along with the bearer's picture.

If your passport does not have this feature, you can get a qualifying, new passport from your country of nationality or get a visa.

Digital Photographs

Passports issued, renewed or extended by Visa Waiver Program countries between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006, must include a digital photo printed on the data page. A digital photo is one that is printed on the page, not a photo that is glued or laminated into the passport.

If your passport does not have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if you:

- Were issued a valid passport before October 26, 2005, with a machine-readable zone, or
- You have an e-passport, which includes a computer chip containing biographic and biometric information and a digitized photograph.

If you are issued a passport on or after October 26, 2005, and it does not meet the requirements outlined in this section, you will need to obtain a visa.

Passports for Travelers from Austria and Germany

- Austrian visas issued prior to December 31, 2006, may have a "foil" as an acceptable alternative for the digital photo requirement for VWP applicants.
- The German child's passport or kinderreisepass is valid for visa-free travel only if issued prior to October 26, 2006.

Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

ESTA is an automated system to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program and whether their travel poses any law enforcement or security risk. All nationals or citizens of VWP countries who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure under the VWP must receive electronic travel authorizations through the ESTA website prior to boarding a U.S.-bound airplane or vessel.

ESTA is accessible online in 22 languages at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>. Each approved ESTA application is valid for two years—a visitor may travel to the United States repeatedly within a two-year period without having to apply for another ESTA approval. Travelers whose ESTA applications are approved, but whose passports will expire in less than two years, will receive an ESTA valid until the passport's expiration date.

A friend, relative, travel agent, or another person may file an application on behalf of the traveler. However, the traveler is responsible for the truthfulness and accuracy of all information submitted on his or her behalf. The traveler must provide (in English) biographical data, including name, birth date, and passport information. The traveler also must answer questions regarding communicable diseases, arrests and convictions for certain crimes, and history of visa revocation or deportation, among other VWP eligibility questions.

For additional information on ESTA go to www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/

For Residents of Canada

Air Travel: Canadian citizens flying to or through the United States must have a valid passport or a NEXUS card for use at NEXUS kiosks only at designated airports. For more information, see Trusted Traveler Programs on page 11.

Land and Sea Travel: Documents that Canadian citizens may show for U.S. entry:

- Canadian passport
- Enhanced driver's license, currently available in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.
- Trusted Traveler Card. See Trusted Traveler Programs on page 11.

Students and Exchange Visitors

Before leaving your country:

- Confirm that your passport and nonimmigrant visa are still valid for entry into the United States. The passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
- Check that your visa reflects the correct, intended visa classification.
- Verify on your visa the correct name of the institution or exchange program you will attend, if your visa includes this information.
- When you receive your visa, it will be attached by the consular officer to your passport. You will also receive a SEVIS form – I-20AB, I-20MN or DS-2019. The consular officer will seal this form and any additional immigration documents in an envelope and attach it to your passport. Do not open this envelope! The CBP officer at the U.S. port of entry will open it and review your papers. Any discrepancies or problems may require you to visit the U.S. embassy or consulate to resolve the discrepancies or obtain a new visa to enter the country.

Carry with you – do not pack in your checked luggage:

- Your passport, including your attached visa and envelope of immigration documents.
- A Form I-797, Receipt Notice, or Internet Receipt verifying SEVIS fee payment if you are a visa-exempt national entering the United States for the first time.
- Evidence of financial resources.
- Evidence of Student/Exchange Visitor status, for example, recent tuition receipts or transcripts.
- Name and contact information for a designated school official or responsible officer at your intended school or program.

Trusted Traveler Programs

CBP's Trusted Traveler Programs expedite travel for pre-approved, low-risk travelers through dedicated lanes and kiosks.

Global Entry facilitates U.S. entry for American citizens or lawful permanent residents and citizens from certain other countries who arrive by air. Global Entry is available to members of SENTRI and NEXUS at no additional charge. Find out more at www.globalentry.gov.

NEXUS expedites U.S. entry via air—at Canadian preclearance sites—or via sea, and at all U.S. land ports of entry for approved citizens or permanent residents of the United States or Canada. Learn more at www.nexus.gov.

SENTRI (Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection) expedites travel to approved low-risk travelers entering the United States by sea and at all land ports of entry. Find out more at www.senti.gov.

FAST (Free and Secure Trade) expedites release for approved commercial truck drivers making fully-qualified FAST trips between the United States and Canada or to the United States from Mexico. To learn about applying, go to www.fastdriver.gov.

Navigating Passenger Processing

Passenger Processing Overview

- If entering the United States by air or sea, you will receive en route a CBP Declaration Form 6059B and, if you are not from a Visa Waiver Program country, a CBP Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. Complete all sections of the forms.
- On your U.S. arrival, go to the primary CBP passport control area. The CBP officer will ask to see all of your travel documents and the completed CBP forms. The officer may refer you for a secondary screening.
- Proceed to baggage claim to pick up luggage. Go to the CBP customs inspection checkpoint and show your declaration to the CBP officer, who may examine your bags and refer you for a secondary inspection.
- Pay duty, if applicable.
- Depart airport or seaport or connect to your next flight. See Connecting Flights on page 16.

Before Your U.S. Arrival

Review the brochure *CBP Traveler Entry Forms* about completing forms.

CBP Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. If you hold a nonimmigrant visa, you must complete a CBP Form I-94 while en route to the United States. This form has two perforated sections.

- The top is your arrival record. Your CBP officer will collect this when you arrive.
- The bottom is a departure record which must be returned upon exiting the United States. Follow the directions on the back of this portion of the form.

CBP Declaration Form 6059B, which is required for each person or family group. You must declare:

- Items you bought in duty-free shops, on the ship, or on the plane. Duty-free items are only duty free in the country you bought them in. You may have to pay duty on them when you arrive in the United States.
- Items you are bringing for someone else.
- Items you intend to sell or use in your business.
- Food, both processed and unprocessed, whether for human or animal consumption. Failure to declare all food items can result in a minimum \$300 fine.
- Plants and all plant products.
- If you and your travel companions together are carrying \$10,000 or more in cash or other negotiable instruments such as endorsed checks, you must declare it. If you do not, it is subject to forfeiture. Your money is not subject to taxation or duty.

You are not required to declare personal items that you are bringing for your use as a visitor except for food, alcohol or tobacco, which must all be declared. You must state how much you actually paid for each item in equivalent U.S. dollars, including all taxes. If you don't know for sure, estimate.

- As a non-resident, you are allowed to bring in up to \$100 worth of merchandise, free of duty and U.S. internal revenue tax, as gifts for other people.
- Do not gift-wrap your articles because they must be available for CBP examination and may be opened.

Arrival

With completed entry forms and travel documents in hand, go to the CBP processing area and select the appropriate line, for example, Visitors, Crew, etc. Please do not use cameras or cell phone cameras in the CBP processing areas.

When you get to the primary passenger processing booth, a CBP officer will:

- Review your documents.
- Run your passport through an electronic reader.
- Scan up to 10 of your fingerprints and take your photograph with a digital camera to establish and verify your identity. This US-VISIT requirement applies to all visitors between the ages of 14 and 79 with a non U.S. passport entering the United States, including visitors traveling under the Visa Waiver Program. US-VISIT does not apply to U.S. citizens.
- Ask you questions regarding your trip.
- Ask you if you have anything to declare.

If the CBP officer has any concerns about you, your travel, or your documents, or if you are selected randomly for additional processing, the CBP officer will direct you to the CBP Secondary Area, where you may be interviewed further to determine whether you are admissible to the United States.

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