

Visa

Certain international travelers may be eligible to travel to the United States without a visa if they meet the requirements for visa-free travel. The Visa section of this website is all about U.S. visas for foreign citizens to travel to the United States. Certain qualifying family members are eligible for a derivative U visa based on their relationship to you, the principal, filing for the U visa. The principal petitioner must have their petition for a U visa approved before their family members can be eligible for their own derivative U visa. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables most citizens or nationals of participating countries* to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. Travelers must have a valid Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) approval prior to travel and meet all requirements explained below. If you prefer to have a visa in your passport, you may still apply for a visitor (B) visa. In order to travel without a visa on the VWP, you must have authorization through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to boarding a U.S. bound air or sea carrier. ESTA is a web-based system operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to determine eligibility to travel under the VWP to the United States for tourism or business. Visit the ESTA webpage on the CBP website for more information. Under the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015, travelers in the following categories must obtain a visa prior to traveling to the United States as they are no longer eligible to travel under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP): These individuals can apply for visas using regular appointment processes at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. For those who require a visa for urgent travel to the United States, U.S. Embassies and Consulates stand ready to handle applications on an expedited basis. If an individual who is exempt from the Act because of his or her diplomatic or military presence in one of the seven countries has his or her ESTA denied, he or she may go to the CBP website, or contact the CBP information Center. The traveler may also apply for a nonimmigrant visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Yes, you may apply for a visitor (B) visa, if you prefer to do so or if you are not eligible for VWP travel. Additionally, you need to apply for a visa if you will be traveling on a private aircraft or other non-VWP approved air or sea carrier. Review the approved carriers list. Also, if you intend to stay longer than 90 days, then you need to apply for a visa. A recent visa refusal for any reason could result in denial of ESTA authorization, additional review at the port of entry, or denial of admission to the United States. If you are uncertain if you qualify for VWP travel, you may apply for a visa. Citizens of Australia, Brunei, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and the United Kingdom do not need a visa or ESTA to visit both Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands because of the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program, though they must complete Form I-736 prior to travel. Chinese citizens also do not need a visa if they complete Form I-736 for temporary admission into the Northern Mariana Islands. For more information on the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program, [click here](#) Advance travel planning and early visa application are important. If you plan to apply for a nonimmigrant visa to come to the United States as a temporary visitor, please review the current wait time for an interview using the tool below. *Not all visa applications can be completed on the day of the interview; please read the information below for more details.* The estimated wait time to receive a nonimmigrant visa interview appointment at a U.S. embassy or consulate and is based on workload and staffing and can vary from week to week. The information provided is an estimate and does not guarantee the availability of an appointment. Wait times for applicants eligible for Interview Waiver are applicable only for locations where applicants schedule appointments to submit their passport and any required documents to a U.S. embassy or consulate. The wait time estimate does not account for the time required for a consular officer to adjudicate the application nor mailing time of passports or other documents. Refer to the website of the Embassy or Consulate Visa Section where you will apply to determine your eligibility for Interview Waiver and for instructions for submitting a nonimmigrant visa application. Note that applicants must be a national

or resident of the country where they are applying to be eligible to apply via Interview Waiver. Consular sections overseas may be able to expedite your interview date if there is an urgent, unforeseen situation such as a funeral, medical emergency, or school start date. The process to request an expedited nonimmigrant visa interview varies by location. You should refer to the instructions on the website of the Embassy or Consulate Visa Section where you will interview, or on their online appointment scheduling site. You will need to provide proof of the need for an earlier appointment. **In all cases:** You must first submit the online visa application form (DS-160), pay the application fee, and schedule the first available interview appointment. Only at this point will a consular section consider your request for an expedited appointment. **Note:** Travel for the purpose of attending weddings and graduation ceremonies, assisting pregnant relatives, participating in an annual business/academic/professional conference, or enjoying last-minute tourism does not qualify for expedited appointments. For such travel, please schedule a regular visa appointment well in advance. There are only two possible outcomes for U.S. visa applications. The consular officer will either issue or refuse the visa. If a visa applicant has not established that he or she is eligible for a visa, the consular officer must refuse that application. However, some refused visa applications may require further administrative processing. When administrative processing is required, the consular officer will inform the applicant at the end of the interview. The duration of the administrative processing will vary based on the individual circumstances of each case. At the conclusion of the administrative processing period, the consular officer might conclude that an applicant is now qualified for the visa for which he or she applied. The officer may also conclude that the applicant remains ineligible for a visa. Visa applicants are reminded to apply early for their visas, well in advance of the anticipated travel date. In addition, it is important to thoroughly review all information on the specific Embassy or Consulate Visa Section website for local procedures and instructions, such as how to make an interview appointment. Embassy and Consulate websites will also explain any additional procedures for students, exchange visitors and those persons who need an earlier visa interview appointment. Overview Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for a temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Visitor visas are nonimmigrant visas for persons who want to enter the United States temporarily for business (visa category B-1), for tourism (visa category B-2), or for a combination of both purposes (B-1/B-2). There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary by U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Please consult the instructions on the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website. You should schedule an appointment for your visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at another U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but be aware that it may be more difficult to qualify for a visa outside of the country where you live.

- **Fees - Pay the non-refundable visa application fee**, if you are required to pay it before your interview. If your visa is approved, you may also need to pay a visa issuance fee, if applicable to your nationality. Fee information is provided below:

Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish if you are qualified. For example, additional requested documents may include evidence of: **Note:** Visa applicants must qualify on the basis of the applicant's residence and ties abroad, rather than assurances from U.S. family and friends. A letter of invitation or Affidavit of Support is not needed to apply for a visitor visa. If you choose to bring a letter of invitation or Affidavit of Support to your interview, please remember it is not one of the factors used in determining whether to issue or deny the visa. A consular officer will interview you to determine whether you are qualified to receive a visitor visa. You must establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive a visa.

Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans are taken as part of the application process. They are usually taken

during your interview, but this varies based on location. After the visa is approved, you may need to pay a visa issuance fee (if applicable to your nationality), and make arrangements for the return of the passport and visa to you. Review the visa processing times to learn more. A visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry (generally an airport) and request permission to enter the United States. A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at the port-of-entry have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. If you are allowed to enter the United States, the CBP official will provide an admission stamp or a paper Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record. Learn more about admissions and entry requirements, restrictions about bringing food, agricultural products, and other restricted/prohibited goods, and more by reviewing the CBP website.



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