

# Electronic System for Travel Authorization: Visa Waiver Program Modernization Fact Sheet and FAQ

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All Visa Waiver Program (VWP) travelers are now required to obtain a travel authorization via the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to traveling to the U.S. under the VWP.

The VWP allows visitors from participating countries to travel to the U.S. for business or pleasure for 90 days or less without first obtaining a visa. ESTA enhances the security of the VWP and has allowed the U.S. Government to expand membership in the program. ESTA is now accessible online at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> for citizens and eligible nationals of VWP countries.

Contact the Universal<sup>®</sup> Regulatory Services Team for assistance with the VWP and ESTA.

## In Brief

**Who:** Citizens and nationals of VWP countries

**What:** Travel authorization to travel to the U.S. under the VWP

**Where:** <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>

**Why:** Modernize and secure the Visa Waiver Program

## What is the Electronic System for Travel Authorization?

ESTA is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the VWP. It requires the same information as the paper I-94W form that VWP travelers currently fill out en route to the U.S.

## Why is a travel authorization via ESTA required for VWP travelers?

U.S. legislation required the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to implement an electronic travel authorization system and other measures to enhance the security of the VWP. ESTA adds a layer of security that allows DHS to determine, in advance of travel, whether an individual is eligible to travel to the United States under the VWP and whether such travel poses a law enforcement or security risk.

## Who needs to submit an electronic travel authorization?

All nationals or citizens of VWP countries who plan to travel to the U.S. for temporary business or pleasure for 90 days or less under the VWP will need authorization via ESTA to travel to the U.S.

## How do I apply for authorization to travel to the U.S.?

To apply for travel authorization, please visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. Answer all required questions and submit your application for travel authorization.

## My English skills are not very good. Will there be translations?

Yes. The ESTA Web site, including the help section, is currently available in multiple languages, though all application responses must be provided in English.

## Can someone else apply for me if I don't have access to the Internet?

Yes, a friend, relative, personnel in the travel industry, or another third party may file an application on your behalf. However, the traveler is responsible for the truthfulness and accuracy of all information submitted on his or her behalf.

## What information does a traveler need in order to complete the travel authorization form?

The traveler must provide biographical data including name, birth date, and passport information, as well as answers to questions regarding eligibility to travel under the VWP. Again, all answers must be submitted in English.

## Is there a fee to obtain travel authorization?

No, the U.S. government is not currently collecting a fee for ESTA applications. However, there may be an application fee in the future.

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## **I have seen other Web sites offer to apply on my behalf for a fee. Will this help me receive my authorization more quickly?**

No. The United States Government does not charge a fee to obtain information about, apply for, or obtain a travel authorization through the ESTA Web site. VWP travelers should be aware that unauthorized third-parties have established Web sites that charge a fee to provide information about ESTA and to submit ESTA applications on behalf of the VWP traveler. These businesses and Web sites are not endorsed by, associated with, or affiliated in any way with DHS or the United States Government. Use of a private service to apply for travel authorization via ESTA will not expedite the granting of approval.

## **How far in advance of my trip do I need to apply for travel authorization?**

Applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel. We recommend that travel authorization applications be submitted as early as possible, as soon as travel is planned. DHS realizes that not all travel is planned in advance, and applications for last-minute or emergency travel will be accommodated.

## **How long is my travel authorization valid?**

Travel authorizations are generally valid for two years, or until your passport expires, whichever comes first. A visitor may travel to the U.S. repeatedly within the validity period without having to apply for another ESTA.

## **Do I ever need to reapply for travel authorization through the ESTA?**

Yes, there are instances when a new travel authorization via ESTA would be required. If you have acquired a new passport or had a change in name, gender, or citizenship, or if the answers to any of the "yes or no" ESTA questions have changed, a new application must be submitted. Also, once the travel authorization expires, a new travel authorization via ESTA is required. Applicants may also update their destination addresses or itineraries should they change after their ESTA has been approved, although this will not be required.

## **How much time does it take for the system to process my application?**

Once a traveler's application has been successfully submitted online, in most cases an almost immediate determination of eligibility for travel is provided.

## **What are the possible responses I may receive?**

- Authorization Approved: Travel authorized
- Travel Not Authorized: Traveler must obtain a nonimmigrant visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate before traveling to the U.S.
- Authorization Pending: Traveler will need to check the ESTA Web site for updates within 72 hours to receive a final response<sup>3</sup>

## **If I am approved through ESTA to travel to the U.S., does that mean I can enter the country?**

Not necessarily. Approval only authorizes a traveler to board a plane or cruise ship for travel to the United States without a visa. In all cases, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers make admissibility determinations at ports of entry or preclearance facilities.

## **Do VWP travelers need to bring a paper printout of their ESTA approval to the airport?**

No. DHS will be able to communicate a traveler's ESTA status to the carriers. However, DHS recommends that travelers print out the ESTA application response in order to maintain a record of their ESTA application number.

## **What should I do if I am denied a travel authorization?**

If an application for travel authorization is denied and the traveler wishes to continue with the trip, he/she will be required to apply for a visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. For more about visa application procedures, please visit [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

## **I have a current and valid visa. Must I apply for a travel authorization via ESTA as well?**

No, individuals who possess a valid visa may travel to the United States with that visa for the purpose it was issued, and will not be required to apply for travel authorization through ESTA.

## **Waiver of Rights**

As a condition of each admission into the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, the submission of biometric identifiers (including fingerprints and photographs) during processing upon arrival in the United States shall reaffirm the waiver of any rights to review or appeal of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer's determination as to admissibility, or to contest, other than on the basis of an application for asylum, any removal action arising from an application for admission under the Visa Waiver Program.

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## Countries currently enrolled in the Visa Waiver Program are:

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

## Need help?

Look to Universal Weather and Aviation, Inc. to help you save time and mitigate compliance risk.

**For more information, contact our Regulatory Services Team at (713) 378-2734 or [regsvcs@univ-wea.com](mailto:regsvcs@univ-wea.com), or your Trip Support Services team.**