

6 Things to Know About Visa Waiver Program (VWP)

With the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), citizens of eligible countries can travel to the US for business or tourism for up to 90 days without a visa.

Q1. What type of travel purpose is allowed with the Visa Waiver Program?

The VWP allows up to 90 days of travel for tourism or business, including vacation, visiting family or friends, medical treatment, participating in social or musical events, enrolling in short recreational courses, negotiating contracts, attending short-term training or conventions, or consulting with business associates. The program cannot be used to study for credit, employment, permanent residence, or work in information media.

Q2. What are the passport requirements?

To travel under the VWP, you must have a passport with certain security features, including a machine-readable zone on your biographic page and an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information. You must have an e-passport to use the VWP.

Q3. What is ESTA authorization?

To travel to the US without a visa, you will need authorization through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before boarding a ship or plane bound for the US. This automated online system determines your eligibility to travel without a visa. An ESTA approval authorizes a traveler to board a US-bound carrier. It's recommended that you apply for ESTA authorization at least 72 hours before traveling but you will usually receive a response immediately after entering your application.

Q4. How long is the ESTA travel authorization valid?

An approved ESTA application is usually good for 2 years and allows for multiple visits to the US without applying for a new approval. If your passport expires within two years, the ESTA authorization will last until the date of your passport expiration.

Q5. Can I use the VWP if I was denied a visa?

Being denied a visa recently for any reason can result in a denial through the ESTA system or denial of entry into the US. If you think you may not get ESTA authorization or VWP travel, you can apply for a visa instead.

Q6. Can I extend my stay under the VWP?

People who are admitted to the US under the VWP cannot extend their stay in the US and must depart before the date on the admission stamp. You cannot apply for a change of status in the US while in the country under the Visa Waiver Program.

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