



# U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Electronic System for Travel Authorization *Modernizing the Visa Waiver Program*

# FACT SHEET

Effective January 12, 2009, Visa Waiver Program (VWP) travelers will be required to obtain a travel authorization via the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the U.S. under the VWP. ESTA is now accessible online at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> for citizens and eligible nationals of VWP countries.

This modern system enhances the security of the VWP and will allow the U.S. government to continue and expand the VWP, which 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.

### What is the Electronic System for Travel Authorization?

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization 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 soon required for VWP travelers?

Recently enacted U.S. legislation requires the Department of Homeland Security to implement an electronic travel authorization system and other measures to enhance the security of the VWP. ESTA adds another 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 will need to submit an electronic travel authorization?

All nationals or citizens of visa waiver countries who plan to travel to the U.S. for temporary business or pleasure without a visa will need this authorization to travel prior to boarding a U.S.-bound airplane or cruise ship.

### 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.

### When will travelers be required to obtain pre-travel authorization?

All travelers will be required to obtain a travel authorization via ESTA to travel under the VWP as of **January 12, 2009**.

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

Andorra	Luxembourg
Australia	Monaco
Austria	The Netherlands
Belgium	New Zealand
Brunei	Norway
Denmark	Portugal
Finland	San Marino
France	Singapore
Germany	Slovenia
Iceland	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Italy	Switzerland
Japan	United Kingdom
Liechtenstein	

### When should I start using this Web tool?

The ESTA Web site is already operational, and the U.S. government recommends all those eligible to travel to the U.S. under the VWP to begin using the Electronic System for Travel Authorization this fall. An approved travel authorization via ESTA will be mandatory as of **January 12, 2009** for travel to the U.S. under the VWP.

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

Yes. Although the Web site initially is available in English only, multiple languages will be available on October 15, 2008. All 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 other third parties may file an application on your 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 and travel information, as well as answers to questions regarding eligibility to travel under the VWP. Again, all answers must be submitted in English.

For more information, visit [www.cbp.gov/esta](http://www.cbp.gov/esta)  
or email [esta@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:esta@cbp.dhs.gov).





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### Is there a fee to obtain travel authorization?

No, the U.S. government will not initially collect a fee for ESTA applications. However, there may be an application fee in the future.

### 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 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.

### 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 will be referred to [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for information on how to apply for a visa to travel 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.

### 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 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.

### 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, the traveler 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).

### 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 have 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.

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

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

### In Brief

Who: Citizens and nationals of visa waiver countries

What: Travel authorization to visit the U.S.

When: Required starting January 12, 2009.

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

Why: Modernize and secure the Visa Waiver Program

For more information: [www.CBP.gov/ESTA](http://www.CBP.gov/ESTA)



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or email [esta@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:esta@cbp.dhs.gov).

