

U.S. VISAS

U.S. Department of State · Bureau of Consular Affairs



VISITOR VISAS - BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

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. The visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port of entry and request permission of the U.S. immigration inspector to enter the United States.

A “visitor” visa is a nonimmigrant visa and generally is used to enter the United States temporarily for business (B-1), for pleasure or medical treatment (B-2), or a combination of these purposes (B-1/B-2).

Business Visitor Visas (B-1) - If the purpose of the planned travel is business related, for example, to consult with business associates, attend a scientific, educational, professional or business conference, settle an estate, or negotiate a contract, then a business visitor visa (B-1) would be the appropriate type of visa for the travel. For more details on these and other activities that you can undertake while in B-1 status, visit travel.state.gov to see the handout on “Business Travel to the United States.”

Personal or Domestic Employees: Under immigration law, qualified personal or domestic employees may travel to the United States as business visitors under certain circumstances when accompanying:

1) a U.S. citizen employer who lives permanently outside the United States or is stationed in a foreign country and is visiting or is assigned to the United States temporarily; OR 2) a foreign citizen employer in the United States who is in B, E, F, H, I, J, L, M, O, P, or Q nonimmigrant visa status.

Important Notice: The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (WWTVPA) of 2008 requires that an individual applying for a B-1 domestic employee visa be made aware of his or her legal rights under federal immigration, labor, and employment law. You will find information on your rights and protections on travel.state.gov.

Pleasure, Tourism, Medical Treatment - Visitor Visas (B-2) - If the purpose of the planned travel is recreational in nature, including tourism, visiting friends or relatives, rest, or is related to medical treatment, activities of a fraternal, social, or service nature, or participation by amateurs who will receive no remuneration in musical, sports and similar events or contests, then a visitor visa (B-2) would be the appropriate type of visa for the travel. Persons planning to travel to the United States for a different purpose including students, temporary workers, crew members, or journalists, must apply for a different category of visa.

You will find additional information on B-2 requirements on travel.state.gov.

Note: Representatives of the foreign press, radio, film, journalists or other information media, engaging in that vocation while in the United States, require a nonimmigrant Media (I) visa and cannot travel to the United States using a visitor visa or on the Visa Waiver Program.

Visa Waiver Program

Travelers coming to the United States for tourism or business (B-1 or B-2 category visa) purposes for 90 days or less from qualified countries* may be eligible to travel without a visa if they meet the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) requirements.

Currently, 38 countries* participate in the VWP. For a list of participating countries* and additional information on VWP requirements, see the Department of State’s travel.state.gov website.

*With respect to all references to “country” or “countries” on this page, it should be noted that the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, Pub. L. No. 96-8, Section 4(b)(1), provides that “[w]henver the laws of the United States refer or relate to foreign countries, nations, states, governments, or similar entities, such terms shall include and such laws shall apply with respect to Taiwan.” 22 U.S.C. § 3303(b) (1). Accordingly, all references to “country” or “countries” in the Visa Waiver Program authorizing legislation, Section 217 of the



Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1187, are read to include Taiwan. This is consistent with the United States' one-China policy, under which the United States has maintained unofficial relations with Taiwan since 1979.

Qualifying for a Visitor Visa

There are specific requirements which must be met by applicants to qualify for a visitor visa under U.S. immigration law. The consular officer at the embassy or consulate will determine whether you qualify for the visa.

The required presumption under U.S. law is that every visitor visa applicant is an intending immigrant until they demonstrate otherwise. Therefore, applicants for visitor visas must overcome this presumption by demonstrating:

- That the purpose of their trip is to enter the United States temporarily for business or pleasure;
- That they plan to remain for a specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the United States;
- That they have a residence outside the United States as well as other binding ties that will ensure their departure from the U.S. at the end of the visit.

Applying for a Visitor Visa

Applicants for visitor visas should generally apply at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country where they live. It is important to apply for a visa well in advance of the travel departure date.

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy or consulate consular section is required for visa applicants aged 14-79, with some exceptions. For example, persons age

13 and younger and age 80 and older generally do not require an interview, unless requested by the embassy or consulate. Check the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country for details.

Making the appointment for an interview is the first step in the visa application process. The wait time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing times for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate are available on travel.state.gov and on most U.S. Embassy or Consulate websites.

You can learn how to schedule an appointment for an interview, pay the application-processing fee, review embassy-specific instructions, and much more by visiting the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you will be applying. You will find a list of all embassy or consulate websites at usembassy.gov.

You will need to complete the electronic application form DS-160 before your interview. During the visa application process, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be taken. Some visa applications require further administrative processing, which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer. For information about required documentation and fees, please visit travel.state.gov.

Additional Information

No assurances regarding the issuance of visas can be given in advance. Therefore final travel plans or the purchase of non-refundable tickets should not be made until a visa has been issued.

- Unless canceled or revoked, a visa is valid until its expiration date. If your passport expires, you may use the expired visa for travel and admission

to the United States along with your new valid passport containing the same biographic data. Do not remove the visa page; instead carry both passports together.

- Visitors are not permitted to accept unauthorized employment during their stay in the United States.

Visa Denials

- If the consular officer finds it necessary to deny the issuance of a visitor visa, the applicant may apply again if there is new evidence to overcome the basis for the refusal. For additional information on visa denials, go to travel.state.gov.

Further Visa Inquiries

- Questions on post-specific visa application procedures and visa ineligibilities should be made to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you will be applying. Before submitting your inquiry, please be sure to review travel.state.gov and the particular embassy or consulate's website.
- If your inquiry concerns a visa case in progress overseas, you should first contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate handling your case for status information. If, after reviewing travel.state.gov, you have further questions, contact Visa Services.

For general information about applying for a visitor visa, including documentation and fee requirements, please visit travel.state.gov.

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