



U.S. Customs and Border Protection

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

FACT SHEET

All Visa Waiver Program (VWP) travelers are required to obtain a travel authorization via the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to traveling to the U.S. under the VWP. ESTA is accessible online at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> for citizens and eligible nationals of VWP countries.

The VWP allows visitors from participating countries to travel to the U.S. for business or pleasure for 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. ESTA enhances the security of the VWP and has allowed the U.S. government to expand membership in the program.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ESTA

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.

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. If a traveler is planning to transit through the United States en route to another country, an authorization via ESTA is still required.

HOW TO APPLY FOR ESTA

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 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. A third party may also pay the associated fees on behalf of the traveler. 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, in English, biographical data including name, birth date and passport information. The traveler also must answer VWP eligibility questions regarding communicable diseases, arrests and convictions for certain crimes, past history of

visa revocation or deportation and other questions. The traveler will also need credit card information to pay the associated fees in order to complete the ESTA application.

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. VWP travelers are not required to have specific plans to travel to the United States before they apply for an ESTA, but if the information is available, applicants are encouraged to provide their destination addresses and itineraries.

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.

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, a new travel authorization via ESTA is required when: (1) the traveler is issued a new passport; (2) the traveler changes his or her name; (3) the traveler changes his or her gender; (4) the traveler's country of citizenship changes; or (5) the circumstances underlying the traveler's previous responses to any of the ESTA application questions requiring a "yes" or "no" response have changed.

ESTA approvals are typically granted for a two-year period or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever is sooner. ESTA provides validity dates upon approval of the application. Therefore, a traveler must apply for a new ESTA when the prior ESTA approval or passport expires. The associated fee will be charged for each new application submitted.

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.

For more information, visit www.cbp.gov/esta





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

No. DHS communicates 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.

I forgot my ESTA application number. How can I log back into the system to update my information or check my application status?

If a traveler loses, forgets, or does not have access to his or her application number or travel status, he or she may retrieve the application number, through the ESTA website by entering the applicant's name, date of birth, passport number and passport issuing country.

ESTA FEE

Is there a fee to obtain travel authorization?

Yes, as of September 8, 2010, there is a fee required by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 (Section 9 of the United States Capitol Police Administrative Technical Corrections Act of 2009, Pub. L. No. 111-145). The fee is comprised of two parts:

Processing charge – All applicants requesting an electronic travel authorization are charged for the processing of the application. The fee is \$4.00.

Authorization charge – If your application is approved and you receive authorization to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, an additional \$10.00 will be charged to your credit card. If your electronic travel authorization is denied, you are only charged for the processing of your application.

CBP is not responsible for any additional fees that may be charged by your credit card company for the transaction.

How do I pay for my travel authorization?

All payment for electronic travel authorization applications must be made by credit card or debit card. The ESTA system currently accepts only the following credit/debit cards: MasterCard, VISA, American Express, and Discover. You may also have a third party, such as a relative or travel agent, pay the associated fees for each application. The name on the credit card does not have to match the name of the traveler. Your application will not be submitted for processing until all payment information is received.

Is there another way to pay other than with a credit card?

At this time, payment is required through the following credit cards: MasterCard, VISA, American Express, and Discover. Payments can also be made with a debit card that holds the VISA or MasterCard symbol. Please check with your bank on compatibility of your debit card. We are continuing to explore other payment options for the future.

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

No. Use of a private service to apply for travel authorization via ESTA will not expedite approval. Third party websites that provide information about ESTA and submit ESTA applications for VWP travelers are not endorsed by, associated with, or affiliated in any way with DHS or the U.S. government.

Is this website secure and private?

Yes. The website is operated by the U.S. government and employs technology to prevent unauthorized access to the information entered and viewed. Information submitted by applicants through the ESTA website is subject to the same strict controls that have been established for similar traveler screening programs as governed by U.S. laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Federal Information Security Management Act. Access to such information is limited to those with a professional need to know.

The credit card information is also secure on Pay.gov. Pay.gov uses 128-bit SSL encryption to protect your transaction information while you're logged in to Pay.gov. In addition, any account numbers you set up in your profile are encrypted before being stored in our database. When you access your profile, any account numbers you have entered will be masked on-screen; each account number in your profile will be displayed as a group of asterisks followed by the last four digits of the account number.

ESTA AND THE I-94W

If a VWP traveler has received ESTA approval, does he or she also need to fill out an I-94W?

The implementation of the ESTA program allows DHS to eliminate the requirement that VWP travelers complete an I-94W prior to being admitted to the United States. CBP has transitioned to paperless processing in most cases for VWP travelers arriving by air or sea who have obtained an ESTA authorization. Most travelers entering the United States under the Visa Waiver Program who have an approved ESTA will no longer need to fill out the I-94W form, nor will a green I-94W departure card be placed in their passport. The I-94W form will still be required at the land border.

ESTA DENIALS

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.

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.

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
How Much:	\$4 processing fee, \$10 authorization fee
For more information: www.CBP.gov/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.

For more information, visit www.cbp.gov/esta

