



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 the United States port of entry and request permission of the U.S. immigration inspector to enter the United States.

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

Business Visitor Visas (B-1) - If the purpose of the planned travel is 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 types of activities you can undertake while in B-1 status, see the handout on travel.state.gov “Business Travel to the United States – What Type of U.S. Visa Will You Need” (travel.state.gov/pdf/Business_Visa.pdf).

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 having a permanent home or stationed in a foreign country who is visiting or is assigned to the United States temporarily; OR 2) a foreign citizen employer in the United

States 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. Please read the pamphlet at travel.state.gov/pdf/Pamphlet-Order.pdf.

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, 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 U.S. for a different purpose including students, temporary workers, crew members, journalists, etc., must apply for a different category of visa.

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 (B1 or B2 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, 36 countries participate in the Visa Waiver Program. For a list of participating countries and additional information on VWP, visit travel.state.gov/visa.

Qualifying for a Visitor Visa

There are specific requirements which must be met by applicants to qualify for a visitor visa under provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The consular officer at the embassy or consulate will determine whether you qualify for the visa.

The presumption in the law is that every visitor visa applicant is an intending immigrant. Therefore, applicants for visitor visas must overcome this presumption by demonstrating:

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



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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. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside their country of permanent residence. Visa applications are now subject to a greater degree of review than in the past so 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 from ages 14-79, with few exceptions. Persons age 13 and younger and age 80 and older generally do not require an interview, unless requested by the embassy or consulate.

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 visa application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing times for each U.S. embassy or consulate are available on our website at travel.state.gov/visa under "Visa Wait Times," and on most embassy 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 may find a list of all embassy or consulate websites at www.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.

Visa Ineligibility/Waiver

Certain activities can make you ineligible for a U.S. visa. In some instances an applicant who is ineligible, but who is otherwise properly classifiable as a visitor, may apply for a waiver of ineligibility and be issued a visa if the waiver is approved. The document, "Classes of Aliens Ineligible to Receive Visas" provides important information about ineligibilities (travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/ineligibilities/ineligibilities_1364.html).

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 previously canceled, a visa is valid until its expiration date. Therefore, if you have a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport, do not remove the visa page from the expired passport. You may use it along with a new valid passport containing the same biographic data for travel and admission to the United States.
- Visitors are not permitted to accept employment during their stay in the United States.

Visa Denials

- If the consular officer should find 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, go to travel.state.gov/visa and select "Visa Denials" from the menu.

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. Very often you will find the information you need.
- 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. You may also contact the Visa Office's Public Inquiries Division by calling 202-663-1225.

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

