Your ESTA explained

It’s easy. It’s fast.

The ESTA guide includes:

- Details of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)
- Information about your ESTA
- Commonly asked ESTA questions and answers
- Information on United States Arrival Forms and how to complete them
- United States-related travel information and tips, and fun facts about the United States
INTRODUCTION

Thank you for using Visa Bureau to obtain your Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) for entry to the United States.

This guide will provide you with details of your ESTA, answers to some commonly asked questions about ESTAs and provides tips, facts and useful information about the United States.

Please read this guide in its entirety; it will help you understand your ESTA and may answer any questions you have regarding your ESTA and the requirements and conditions placed on you while you are in the United States.

Please feel free to print a copy of this document for future reference.

ABOUT THE ESTA

United States’ Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) is one of the most advanced and streamlined entry systems in the world.

For travellers to the United States, the ESTA means processing times at the country’s airports and ports will be greatly reduced and there are far fewer delays due to lengthy queues at immigration desks. Airlines and cruise liners have benefited from the ability to check passengers’ authority to enter the United States before they are issued with a boarding card thus avoiding delays for airlines and passengers alike.

You will never actually get to see your ESTA - all your information is stored electronically and the ESTA is matched against your passport number. This innovation means no more labels and no more stamps, making for a more efficient process!

The team at Visa Bureau wishes you a pleasant journey. We are sure you will enjoy your time in the United States.

ESTA FACTS

Please note that:

- Your ESTA is valid for two years from the date of issue; this means you can enter United States for a period of 90 days at any time during a two year period from the visa’s date of issue;
- You can enter and leave the United States as many times as you like within the life of the visa (although you cannot spend more than 180 days a year in the United States as an ESTA traveller);
- You are not permitted to work;
- You should be in the country either as a Tourist, visiting relatives, attending a business meeting or a delegate at a convention or conference; AND
- You cannot undertake studies whilst in the United States.

It is also understood that:

- You are in good health; and
- You have no criminal convictions.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. When do I get a stamp in my passport?
Your ESTA is electronically linked to your passport number, so you will NOT require a stamp, nor will one be issued.

2. How soon or late can I use the ESTA?
Your ESTA allows you to make your initial entry into the United States no later than two years from the date of grant. An ESTA is valid for two years only.

3. Once in the United States, how long can I visit for?
You are allowed to stay in the country for a maximum of 90 days at a time. It is possible to leave the country and re-enter for a further 90 days as often as you like within the life time of the visa (2 years).

4. Can I study in the United States on an ESTA?
No.

5. Can I work in the United States on an ESTA?
Strictly no; this visa is not intended for work purposes. If you take employment while in the United States on an ESTA, you will be contravening the conditions of the visa.

6. I need to attend a business convention in the United States and attend a few meetings, am I covered by my visa for this?
As long as you do not intend to stay in the country longer than 90 days, you can take part in conventions and conferences as well as meetings whilst in the United States.

7. How do I know if my ESTA is still valid for travel to the United States?
You can easily view the current status of your ESTA on https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov or simply click here to sign-in to the ESTA section of the website using the ESTA application number that was emailed to you in your ESTA confirmation email.

8. Is it possible to extend my ESTA to another visa once in the United States?
If you wish to extend your stay in the United States for a holiday or to visit relatives or friends beyond the initial 90 days, you will not be able to without leaving and re-entering the United States.

9. Do I need travel/health insurance?
Not all medical treatments are covered by the United States healthcare system, and some public health systems may not cover you abroad. With this in mind, Visa Bureau recommends that travellers to the United States seriously consider arranging travel insurance through a reputable supplier.

10. Can I change to another visa while in the United States?
No, you cannot change visa types while onshore in the United States.

11. I have been issued a new passport because my other passport was lost/stolen. I have not entered the United States yet, what happens to my ESTA? Do I need to re-apply?
Since your ESTA is attached to your old passport number, you will need to re-apply for an ESTA that ties to your new number. Electronic visas are not transferable between passports.
Arriving in the United States - Arrival Forms

CUSTOMS FORM

What is the Customs Form?
Each individual arriving into the United States must complete the Customs Form. If you are traveling with other immediate family members, complete one form per family unit.

What does the Customs Form look like?

How do I complete the Customs Form?
The Customs Form consists of 15 questions. Make sure to answer all questions. If you are required to describe any articles you are bringing to the United States, use the reverse of the form to do this.

1. Print your last (family) name. Print your first (given) name. Print the first letter of your middle name.
2. Print your date of birth in the appropriate day/month/year boxes.
3. Print the number of family members traveling with you (do not include yourself).
4. Print your current street address in the United States. If you are staying at a hotel, include the hotel’s name and street address. Print the city and the state in the appropriate boxes.
5. Print the name of the country that issued your passport.
6. Print your passport number.
7. Print the name of the country where you currently live.
8. Print the name of the country(ies) that you visited on your trip prior to arriving to the United States.
9. If traveling by airline, print the airline’s name and flight number. If traveling by vessel (ship), print the vessel’s name.
10. Mark an X in the Yes or No box. Are you traveling on a business (work-related) trip?
11. Mark an X in the Yes or No box. Are you bringing with you:
   a. fruits, plants, food, or insects?
   b. meats, animals, or animal/wildlife products?
   c. disease agents, cell cultures, or snails?
   d. soil or have you visited a farm/ranch/pasture outside the United States?
12. Mark an X in the Yes or No box. Have you or any family members traveling with you been in close proximity of (such as touching or handling) livestock outside the United States?
13. Mark an X in the Yes or No box. Are you or any family members traveling with you bringing $10,000 or more in U.S. dollars or foreign equivalent in any form into the United States?

Read the definition of monetary instruments on the reverse side of the form.

Examples: Coins, cash, personal or cashier’s check, traveler’s checks, money orders, stocks, bonds.
If yes, you must complete the Customs Form 4790.

14. Mark an X in the Yes or No box. Are you or any family members traveling with you bringing commercial merchandise into the United States?

Examples: All articles intended to be sold or left in the United States, samples used for soliciting orders, or goods that are not considered personal effects.

As you are a visitor (non-U.S. Resident), print the total value of all goods (including commercial merchandise) you or any family members traveling with you are bringing into the United States and will remain in the United States.

Note: Visitors (non-U.S. Residents) are normally entitled to an exemption of $100.

Declare all articles on this form. For gifts, please indicate the retail value. Use the reverse side of this form if additional space is needed to list the items you will declare.

The U.S. Customs officer will determine duty. Duty will be assessed at the current rate on the first $1,000 above the exemption.

Finally, read the notice on the reverse side of the form. Make sure to sign the form and print the date. Keep the complete form with you and hand it to the CBP inspector when you approach the Customs and Border Protection area.

visit: www.visabureau.com
What is the Form I-94W?
The Form I-94W is required to be completed by all visitors who enter the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program. Essentially, it asks for almost exactly the same information as the ESTA online application.

In time, Form I-94W will be phased out entirely by the presence of the ESTA, but for now, you should still anticipate having to complete it.

What does Form I-94W look like?

**FRONT**

1. Print your last (family) name.
2. Print your first (given) name.
3. Print your date of birth in the appropriate day/month/year boxes.
4. Print the name of the country that issued your passport.
5. Print your gender (male or female).
6. Print your passport number.
7. If traveling by airline, print the airline’s signifying initials and flight number. If traveling by vessel (ship), print the vessel’s name.
8. Print the name of the country where you currently live.
9. Print the name of the city where you boarded.
10. Print your address while in the United States (including the name of the hotel / street number, as applicable).
11. Print the city and state of your address while in the United States.
12. Leave this blank.
13. Leave this blank.
14. Print your last (family) name.
15. Print your first (given) name.
16. Print your date of birth in the appropriate day/month/year boxes.
17. Print the name of the country that issued your passport.

**BACK**

A - G. Answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to these questions honestly, providing details where necessary.

FAMILY NAME. Print your last (family) name.

FIRST NAME. Print your first (given) name.

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP. Print the name of the country that issued your passport.

DATE OF BIRTH. Print your date of birth in the day/month/year format.

SIGNATURE. Sign the form, making sure to read the waiver of rights and certification before you do so.

DATE. Provide a date for when you completed the form.

Keep the complete form with you and hand it to the CBP inspector when you approach the Customs and Border Protection area.

---

visit: [www.visabureau.com](http://www.visabureau.com)
Useful travel info

**DRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES**

As an overseas visitor, you are allowed to drive in the United States for the duration of your ESTA. However, you must carry your license with you at all times whilst driving. Americans drive on the right-hand side of the road (the opposite of Britain). If you are renting a car, you should check that you meet their minimum requirements prior to collecting your vehicle. Generally, you must be 25 years of age (although, depending on state, some companies will allow customers aged between 18-24 to rent, subject to further provisions) with a valid driver’s license written in English.

**VOLTAGE AND PLUGS**

The voltage in the United States is 110V. As such, you may require either or both a plug adaptor or a converter to operate any electrical equipment like hairdryers or travel irons while visiting the United States.

The United States-style plug has two rounded prongs.

**TIME ZONES**

- New York City: GMT/UTC -5 (Eastern Standard Time)
- Chicago: GMT/UTC -6 (Central Time)
- Denver: GMT/UTC -7 (Mountain Time)
- Los Angeles: GMT/UTC -8 (Pacific Time)

Daylight Saving Start
- Second Sunday in March (clocks set ahead one hour)

Daylight Saving End
- First Sunday in November (clocks set back one hour)

**EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

Dial ‘911’ - national for all emergencies

**BUSINESS HOURS**

- Banks - 9:30 am to 4pm Monday to Friday
- Shops and Businesses - 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays (with some exceptions and variations)
- Supermarkets - 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday. Some are 24 hours.

**TIPPING**

All restaurants will generally warrant a tip of approximately 15% but this remains discretionary. Some restaurants do include a service charge, so check the bill to see exactly what you are paying for when dining out. Additionally, residents in the United States will often leave a dollar or so per drink upon ordering at bars (with the unwritten rule being that the bar staff will ‘buy back’ a round after two or three rounds of drinks being ordered and tipped for).

**HEALTHCARE**

Although the United States has an excellent healthcare system, health insurance is vital for all travellers. Health care costs can add up and repatriation is expensive. Be sure to check you are covered by your existing health care plan while travelling abroad or organise extra insurance. Make sure your health coverage all your activities including diving, water skiing, surfing, or anything else your insurer may consider ‘risky’. Over the counter medications are available through private chemists in United States. If you take any medication on a regular basis, make sure to take enough for the duration of your holiday and pack these medicines in your hand luggage.

**FUN FACTS ABOUT THE UNITED STATES**

- Technically, the United States has only forty-six states: Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Massachusetts are Commonwealths.
- Confusingly, some US states have cities named the same as other US states. These are:
  - Delaware, Arkansas
  - California, Maryland
  - Oregon, Wisconsin
  - Wyoming, Ohio
  - Indiana, Pennsylvania
  - Nevada, Missouri
  - Louisiana, Missouri
  - Kansas, Oklahoma
  - Michigan, North Dakota
  - Maine is the only state whose name is just one syllable.
- The states with the smallest populations are: Alaska, North Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming.
- There are only five US states with no sales tax. They are: Alaska, Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire, and Oregon.
- Florida is the state with the highest number of lightning casualties (deaths and injuries combined), and has twice as many casualties as any other state.
- Though accounting for only 5% of the world’s population, Americans consume 26% of the world’s energy.
- At their closest the United States and Russia are just 2.5 miles apart – the distance between Little Diomede Island, Alaska, and Big Diomede Island, Russia.
- The United States is home to some curiously named towns and cities, including:
  - Paradox, New York
  - Hellhole, Idaho
  - Crapo, Maryland
  - Boogertown, North Carolina

visit: [www.visabureau.com](http://www.visabureau.com)