

[Print this Page](#)
[Close this Window](#)

Printer Friendly Version Of:

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/news_releases/national/03062012_2.xml

Printed:

Wed Mar 07 2012 09:38:17 GMT-0500 (Eastern Standard Time)

CBP Reminds Travelers to 'Know Before You Go'

Refresh Your Knowledge of Border Crossing Requirements

03/06/2012

Washington — With many individuals planning to enjoy the upcoming spring and summer travel season, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is reminding travelers to be prepared by educating themselves on the rules and regulations relating to international travel. Additionally, if you have not yet applied for a U.S. passport or U.S. passport card, the U.S. Department of State will be holding "Passport Day in the USA" on March 10 at regional passport agencies nationwide. ([Passport Day](#))

Travel Requirements for U.S. Citizens

Individuals traveling abroad must have approved travel documents when returning home. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requires U.S. and Canadian citizens, age 16 and older to present a valid, acceptable travel document, such as a passport, a U.S. passport card, a trusted traveler card (NEXUS, SENTRI, Global Entry or FAST/EXPRES), permanent resident card or an enhanced driver's license that denotes both identity and citizenship when entering the U.S. by land or sea. U.S. and Canadian citizens under age 16 may present a birth certificate or alternative proof of citizenship when entering by land or sea. All travelers must have a passport book for international air travel.

A radio frequency identification (RFID) enabled travel document such as a U.S. passport card, border crossing card or permanent resident card issued after 2008, enhanced driver's license/enhanced identification card or trusted traveler card expedites entry and makes crossing at a land border more efficient. There are more than 13 million RFID-enabled travel documents issued and Ready Lanes have been deployed to 20 land border crossing locations throughout the nation, specifically designated for travelers with RFID-enabled cards.

Travel Requirements for Visitors to the U.S.

All nationals or citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries are required to have an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization, or ESTA, prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the U.S. under the VWP. ([ESTA](#)) ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, and once approved, generally will be valid for up to two years or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever comes first. Authorizations will be valid for multiple entries into the United States. CBP recommends ESTA applications be submitted as soon as an applicant begins making travel plans.

Trusted Traveler Programs

CBP recommends its Trusted Traveler Programs (NEXUS, SENTRI, Global Entry, or FAST/EXPRES) as the most efficient way to cross the border from Mexico or Canada. ([Trusted Traveler](#)) Trusted Traveler Programs allow for the use of expedited lanes in the land environment or kiosks at airports speeding travelers through the entry process. For more information or to apply for a Trusted Traveler Program, please visit the Travel section of the CBP website. ([Travel](#))

Small Vessel Reporting System

CBP now offers a new small vessel reporting system which allows boat operators and passengers an alternative to the current reporting system. By applying online and visiting a customs office in advance, owners and passengers can now obtain entry clearance by phone. The system is available in Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as along the northern U.S. border. The program will be expanded during the coming year to cover small vessel entries nationwide. For more information, please visit the CBP Small Vessel Reporting System section of the CBP website. ([CBP Small Vessel Reporting System](#))

Travel Tips

- Tip #1 – To avoid fines and penalties associated with importing prohibited items, travelers should familiarize themselves with CBP rules and regulations. For more information, please go to the “Know Before You Go” section of the CBP website. ([Know Before You Go](#))
- Tip #2 – Be prepared to declare all items acquired abroad. Travelers should prepare for the inspection process before arriving at the inspection booth and have their approved travel documents ready.
- Tip #3 – Monitor border Wait Times for various ports of entry. ([Wait Times](#)) For more information, travelers can find up to date wait time information on the CBP website. Travelers are encouraged to plan their trips during periods of lighter traffic or to use an alternate, less heavily traveled port of entry.
- Tip #4 – Build extra time into the trip in the event of crossing during periods of exceptionally heavy traffic.
- Tip #5 – Know the difference between goods for personal use versus commercial use. For more information, please visit the Restricted/Prohibited section of the CBP website. ([Bringing Agricultural Products Into the United States](#))
- Tip #6 – Do not attempt to bring fruits, meats, dairy/poultry products and/or firewood into the United States without first checking whether they are permitted. For more information, please visit the Bringing Agricultural Products Into the United States section of the CBP website.
- Tip #7 – International travelers should expect a thorough inspection, even during busy holiday periods, when entering the United States.
- Tip #8 – If you are a frequent international traveler and haven't already become a member of a trusted traveler program, sign up now. For more information, please visit the Trusted Traveler section of the CBP website. ([Trusted Traveler](#))

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

see also:

► **on cbp.gov:**

[Press Officers](#)

[News Releases](#)

[ESTA](#)

[Trusted Traveler](#)

[Travel](#)

[CBP Small Vessel Reporting System](#)

[Know Before You Go](#)

AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 12030760. (Posted 03/07/12)

[Wait Times](#)

[Bringing Agricultural Products Into the United States](#)

▶ **on the web:**

[Passport Day](#)
