

Visas and Travel Requirements

General information about travel and visa requirements

US Visa Waiver Programme

General information about travel and visa requirements

Entry rules and visa requirements for foreign countries can change without notice to IPS and it is not our function to give travel advice. Customers enquiring about entry requirements/travel abroad should be advised to contact a travel agent or the Embassy or High Commission of the country concerned. Travel advice is also available from the FCO website www.fco.gov.uk or by telephoning the FCO Travel Advice Unit: 020 7008 1500.

US Visa Waiver Programme

UK passport holders may be eligible to travel to the United States visa free under the Visa Waiver Program if they are travelling for business, pleasure or are in transit. They must be travelling on a valid, machine readable (MRP) or ePassport with an electronic chip. (There are other requirements too.) A passport indicating that the bearer is a British Subject, British Dependent Territories Citizen, British Overseas Citizen, British National (Overseas) Citizen, or British Protected Person does not qualify for travel without a visa.

Since machine-readable passports began to be issued in 1998 and ePassports in 2006, all but a tiny minority of passports in circulation will be of these types. However, some non machine-readable documents *may* remain in use. If wishing to travel under the Visa Waiver Program, the holder's passport must be valid for at least 90 days from the date on which the holder enters the United States. If not, the holder will be admitted until the expiration date on the passport.

Should anyone not holding a MRP wish to travel to the US they will need to apply for a renewal passport. In addition, anyone holding a MRP with less than 90 days' validity at the expected date of arrival may also wish to renew their passport. The normal renewal process and fees will apply

Note: There is an additional requirement for VWP travellers: Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).

From January 12, 2009, ESTA becomes mandatory for all qualified VWP travellers entering the United States on or after that date. Travellers should go online to complete an ESTA at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>.

Currently there is a standard charge for ESTA applications, but we are aware of many websites offering to assist with ESTA applications for a higher fee - these are not official US government websites.

The existing I-94W form, that is currently completed on board an aircraft en-route, and the ESTA are very similar processes: similar data and questions asked for; no judicial review is possible; and they do not provide an entitlement to enter the U.S. The additional features of the ESTA are mainly of procedural nature; e.g. possibility of updating information, eligibility to travel to the U.S. before embarking on the aircraft or vessel.

IPS cannot offer **any** advice or assistance on completion of the required information, nor on whether an ESTA will be granted. **All enquiries should be directed to the relevant US Embassy or the US Department for Homeland Security.**

Archived