



# 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)?**

ESTA is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the VWP.

##### **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 ESTA application?**

All nationals or citizens of VWP countries who plan to travel to the U.S. on a plane or cruise ship for temporary business or pleasure for 90 days or less under the VWP will need authorization via ESTA. 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 ESTA authorization, please visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. Answer all required questions and submit your application for travel authorization.

##### **Can I apply for a group of applicants at one time?**

Yes. You can submit applications for a group of up to 50 individuals at one time. To submit a group application, submit the initial application and prior to paying choose one of the following options: “Add New Application” or “Add Unpaid Application.” Then complete each group member’s application by entering biographic information and answering all the required questions. Once you submit the entire group, a group identification number is created and sent by email to the address provided. You will need the group identification number to access the group applications, check status, view the receipt and/or make payment.

##### **What information does a traveler need to complete the travel authorization form?**

Each application must contain, in English, biographical data including name, birth date and passport information. The applicant must also answer VWP eligibility questions regarding communicable diseases, arrests and convictions for certain crimes, past history of visa revocation or deportation and other questions. In a group application, each traveler is responsible for the truthfulness and accuracy of his or her own application. The

traveler or applicant will also need credit card information to pay the associated application fees in order to complete the ESTA application.

##### **Can someone else apply for me if I don’t have access to the Internet?**

Yes, a friend, relative, travel industry professional or another third party may file an application on your behalf. A third party may also pay the application fees on behalf of the traveler or a group of travelers. However, the traveler is responsible for the truthfulness and accuracy of all information submitted on his or her behalf.

##### **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 will accommodate applications for last minute or emergency travel. VWP travelers are not required to have specific plans to travel to the United States before they apply for an ESTA.

##### **How much time does it take for the system to process my application?**

Once an individual or group application has been successfully submitted online, in most cases an almost immediate determination of eligibility for travel is provided on the ESTA website. There are no email confirmations provided. Application status must be verified on the website.

##### **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 website for updates within 72 hours to receive a final response. In most cases, a response is provided within a few minutes.

##### **What if an application in a group submission receives a “Pending” status? Will it delay the processing of the other applications in a group?**

No. If there is a “Pending” response for any application in a group, it will not delay the processing of the remaining applications. The receipt will not indicate the total fee amount until all applications return a status of approved or denied.

##### **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 authorization.

##### **When do I need to reapply for a new ESTA?**

A new travel authorization via ESTA is required when:

- The traveler is issued a new passport;
- The traveler changes his or her name;
- The traveler changes his or her gender;
- The traveler’s country of citizenship changes; or
- The circumstances underlying the traveler’s previous responses to any of the ESTA application questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response have changed.



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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 application approval. 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 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.

### **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 as 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.

### **What if I lose the group identification number?**

The system allows the applicant to request the group identification number, which is then sent to the email address entered when the group was created.

### **ESTA FEE**

#### **Is there a fee to obtain travel authorization?**

Yes. There is a \$14 U. S. fee. The fee is comprised of two parts: Processing charge – All applicants requesting an electronic travel authorization are charged for the processing of each application submitted. The fee is \$4.

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 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 payments for ESTA applications must be made by credit card or debit card. The ESTA system currently only accepts the following credit/debit cards: MasterCard, VISA, American Express, JCB Card, Diners Club and Discover. A third party, such as a friend, relative or travel agent may pay the associated fees for an individual or group application. The name on the credit card does not have to match the name of the traveler or group. Applications will not be submitted for processing until all payment information is received. We are continuing to explore other payment options for the future.

#### **I have seen other websites 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. If the website does not end in ".gov," it is not the official ESTA website.

### **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.

### **ESTA AND THE I-94W**

#### **As a VWP traveler, do I need an ESTA authorization to enter the United States at a land border port of entry?**

At this time, there is no ESTA requirement to enter the United States via a land border port of entry. As part of the admission process when entering by land, you will be required to complete Form I-94W and pay the associated \$6 fee. CBP is currently working towards regulation changes that would implement ESTA requirements at the land border ports of entry in the future.

### **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 travel to the United States, he or 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](http://www.travel.state.gov).

#### **What if one or more travelers in a group application are denied travel authorization?**

The denied application(s) will not affect the status of the other group members.

#### **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](http://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](http://www.cbp.gov/esta)

