



## VISA WAIVER PROGRAM Office of International Activities

The **Visa Waiver Program** (VWP) enables citizens of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. Not all countries participate in the VWP. Some restrictions apply to the program for citizens of VWP countries as well. For further information on how a country's eligibility for the visa waiver is determined, go to the State Department travel web site at

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors\\_novisa\\_waiver3.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_novisa_waiver3.html)

Currently 27 countries participate in the Visa Waiver Program. They are the following:

Andorra	Iceland	Norway
Australia	Ireland	Portugal
Austria	Italy	San Marino
Belgium	Japan	Singapore
Brunei	Liechtenstein	Slovenia
Denmark	Luxembourg	Spain
Finland	Monaco	Sweden
France	The Netherlands	Switzerland
Germany	New Zealand	United Kingdom

If you are planning to travel to the United States, we want you to be aware of changes to visa policies that may affect your travel. These changes have come about since 11 September 2001 to increase the United State's ability to verify the identity of all travelers who enter the US each year.

A new automated system (**ESTA**) to screen passengers traveling to the U.S. under the VWP has also been implemented. Beginning on August 1, 2008, the Department of Homeland Security started accepting voluntary **ESTA** applications and it is anticipated that **ESTA** will become mandatory for VWP travelers on January 12, 2009. Please visit

[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id\\_visa/esta/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/) or

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without\\_1990.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html) to learn more.

After 26 October 2004, there is a requirement that Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries must have **machine readable passports** and any passports issued after 26 October 2005 must include **biometric data**. Biometrics are unique personal features which help identify the passport holder (the three most common are the **face**, **finger** and **iris**). You should contact your country's passport issuing agency or authority if you have any doubts related to whether your passport meets these requirements.

Travelers from Visa Waiver countries **without** biometrically enabled passports must apply for and obtain "B" visas for travel to the United States, even if they are citizens of those countries. In addition, resident non-citizens or expatriates living in a Visa Waiver country must apply for and obtain a B visa (for example, a resident in a Visa Waiver-eligible country within the European Union, who holds non-EU citizenship and a non-EU passport and / or holds resident alien or refugee or other non-citizen status within that country).



On October 17, 2008 President Bush announced the imminent expansion of the Visa Waiver Program to include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Republic of Korea and the Slovak Republic. **The Department of Homeland Security has announced that nationals of these countries will be able to travel without a visa for tourist and business travel of 90 days or less beginning on November 17 provided they possess a biometric passport and register on-line through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).** Read more at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/10/20081017-5.html>

For more information about the Visa Waiver Program, log onto [www.unitedstatesvisas.gov](http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov)  
You can also visit these sites:

**Español:** <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/cons/nonimmigvwpimportantsp.html>

**Français:** <http://french.france.usembassy.gov/niv-exemption.html>

**Deutsch:** <http://www.us-botschaft.de/germany-ger/visa/index.html>

**Italiano:** <http://italy.usembassy.gov/visa/default-it.asp>

**日本語:** <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/visa/tvisa-waiver.html>

**På norsk:** [http://norway.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant\\_visas.html](http://norway.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant_visas.html)

**Português:** [http://portugal.usembassy.gov/niv\\_waiver\\_program2\\_port.html](http://portugal.usembassy.gov/niv_waiver_program2_port.html)