

US Department of State Extends Validity of National Interest Exceptions to 12 Months

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On July 6, 2021, the U.S. Department of State [announced](#) an extension of the validity of National Interest Exceptions (NIEs) to the COVID-related travel ban from 30 days to 12 months. This change also expands NIE validity to allow for multiple entries and is retroactive to NIEs approved in the last 12 months. This updates the information reported in our prior [alert](#).

By way of background, the Trump and Biden administrations implemented numerous COVID-related travel bans over the past 18 months that remain in place. Currently, the bans affect travel from the United Kingdom, Ireland, China (excluding Hong Kong and Macau), Iran, Brazil, South Africa, India and all Schengen countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland). These travel bans require that individuals present in any of these countries either obtain a National Interest Exception (NIE) to the ban or quarantine in a third country for 14 days prior to entering the United States. There are also a number of individuals who are exempt from the bans including U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and certain close relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Current travel restrictions and requirements are detailed in our advisory on [U.S. travel bans](#).

Previously, NIEs were issued for a single entry, and were only valid for entry to the U.S. within 30 days following issuance of the NIE. Now, NIEs will be valid for 12 months and for multiple entries as long as the basis of eligibility remains unchanged.

In addition, this extension applies retroactively to all NIEs approved in the last 12 months. Those who have already been issued an NIE may use that existing NIE for entry into the U.S. for 12 months following the approval date as long as the purpose of the new travel is the same as the purpose for which the NIE was granted. Individuals with a previously approved NIE should carry documentation showing that the NIE was granted and the purpose of the travel.

This change provides a welcome increase in flexibility and certainty for international travel, particularly for those with frequent travel needs to the affected regions.

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