

Traveling for the Holidays: Planning for Successful International Travel This Season for Foreign Nationals

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With the pandemic finally drawing closer to an end, many foreign nationals may use the first opportunity they have had in years to plan international travel this holiday season. In order to avoid any unnecessary hiccups when departing from and returning to the United States pursuant to international travel, foreign national travelers may want to confirm that they have all of their documents in order. Foreign national travelers may also want to continue to track local and country-specific travel restrictions and confirm with employers prior to departure, as delays in returning to the United States may impact various components of international travel.

Here are some of the main points to be aware of prior to planning and traveling internationally this season.

COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requires all nonimmigrant visa holders returning to the United States to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (with [limited exceptions](#)) prior to returning from abroad. Please see our June 2022 [travel bulletin](#) and August 2022 [podcast](#) for further information on necessary precautions and steps that must be taken prior to returning to the United States from abroad in connection with COVID-19.

Passport and Visa-Stamping Validity

When reentering the United States after international travel, travelers must be in possession of valid entry documents (e.g., a valid visa stamp, a valid green card, a valid passport, etc.). If entering as a nonimmigrant, the traveler must ensure that the visa stamp in the traveler's passport matches his or her current nonimmigrant status and is unexpired (limited exceptions apply to most Canadians seeking entry in nonimmigrant status, as well as those seeking entry using automatic visa revalidation). Additionally, for some nonimmigrant visa statuses (e.g., H-1B) travelers must carry their most recent approval notice from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to ensure they are admitted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for the validity of their petitions in the correct nonimmigrant category. Carrying recent paystubs and/or an employment verification letter

from their current employer may facilitate their admission to the United States.

Adjustment-of-Status Applicants

Applicants for adjustment of status (i.e., applicants seeking to adjust status from nonimmigrant to immigrant) face additional considerations prior to international travel. USCIS regulations allow for those maintaining H or L status (along with their dependents) to travel while their adjustment of status applications are pending. Travelers may still use their H or L visa stamps to reenter the United States, but they may want to consider seeking advance parole prior to departing the United States.

Wait Times

The holiday season is invariably a busy time for travel, so travelers may encounter lengthy appointment wait times at embassies and consulates, as well as additional visa issuance time. Visa appointment wait times can be found on the U.S. Department of State's [website](#). Further, it is possible that an application may be delayed due to administrative processing, which means that additional review or security clearances are required before a visa can be issued. Unfortunately, there is no timeline for resolution if a case is selected for administrative processing.

In addition, travelers may want to review each post's specific requirements beforehand as U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the globe do not operate under a uniform set of rules; rather, each post may have its own set of rules specific to its operations.

Additional Travel Considerations

After admission to the United States, travelers may want to obtain and check their electronic I-94 at CBP's [website](#). Although CBP is usually accurate in updating these I-94s, travelers may want to confirm that the electronic I-94 for admission is in the correct category and for the correct amount of time. Admission periods may be limited to match one's passport validity, as CBP maintains the discretion to shorten an I-94's validity to match an expiring passport. Further, CBP has recently expanded a [pilot program](#) that eliminates entry stamps on admission to the United States.

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