

Guide for Individuals Traveling Outside of U.S. During Holiday Season

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Extreme vetting, strict scrutiny, travel warnings, and the latest travel ban have made travel abroad more worrisome than ever this holiday season.

Reminders for individuals who will have to apply for new U.S. visas while abroad in order to return to the United States:

- Consulates are dealing with new guidance and procedures. This means that delays may occur just as a matter of course especially because the holidays are busy times at the Consulates.
- Make sure to check with the relevant Consulate and your airline to find out if you may need a transit visa to board your aircraft.
- Make sure to book an appointment at the Consulate as soon as possible before leaving the United States. Consulates may not have appointments available and may have limited holiday hours.
- Check processing times and documentary requirements on the Consular websites, but remember published times are not guarantees.
- Carry a signed employment verification letter along with other required documentation.
- Extreme vetting means more administrative processing. Administrative processing can result in delays of several days, weeks, or even months. Employees should inform their supervisors regarding their planned travel and have back-up plans for travel, lodging, and work should they experience a lengthy delay.
- Under the U.S. Supreme Court's new ruling, President Donald Trump's Presidential Proclamation known as Travel Ban 3.0 is in effect (at least until the lower courts make additional rulings). Individuals from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen [may be affected](#).

- Employees who have pending change-of-status or advance parole applications should not travel until after their case has been adjudicated. Under new guidance, travel during the pendency of an advance parole application can lead to a denial.

All travelers, particularly U.S. citizens, should:

- Check the Department of State (DOS) [website for Travel Alerts and Travel Warnings](#)
- Review the DOS [Traveler's Checklist](#) and [safety and security information](#) to assess their risk of traveling to a particular country or region.
- Make sure to sign their passports, fill in the emergency information, and check whether a visa is required for entry into the country of choice.

If you are carrying electronic devices, remember that:

- At many airports, all electronic devices larger than a cell phone have to be inspected at security and must be taken out of carry-on luggage. This can lead to delays.
- Even U.S. citizens can have [bags and electronic devices searched](#) upon return to the U.S.
- According to the ACLU, warrantless searches of electronic devices have increased by 125 percent since 2015. During the first half 2017, 15,000 such searches have been conducted. The ACLU has [filed a suit in federal court in Massachusetts](#) challenging these searches.

Finally, all travelers should remember the various strategies that can help to reduce the likelihood of delays or inconvenience when traveling. The Transportation and Security Administration has [released a list of tips](#) to keep in mind.

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