



Role of Sister Cities International

Welcome to the Inbound Visa Toolkit section of the Sister Cities International Visa Toolkit. In hopes of making the daunting visa process more understandable, the following document breaks down the different visas that are needed to enter other countries how to go about getting them.

Visa Resources and the Role of Sister Cities International in the Visa Process

As an organization Sister Cities International is unable to process visas directly through the Department of State. However, there are several resources that Sister Cities International offers that can help answer questions and educate members on the process of attaining visas for inbound and outbound travelers.

- Online Visa Toolkit which includes:
 - Inbound visa application process
 - Outbound visa application process
 - Visa Types for inbound travelers
 - Important links and resources for visa questions
 - Necessary Forms
 - Frequently Asked Questions
- J-1 High School Visa program:
 - A partnership with American Cultural Exchange Service to help international students in the sister cities network to get their J-1 visa for one year or semester of study in a US public high school
- Sister Cities International staff resources
 - If you have any questions or cannot find information on a particular aspect of the visa application process, please do not hesitate to contact Dean Suozzi-Auberry in the DC office at 202-347-8632 or by email at dean@sistercities.org.
- American Immigration Council (AIC)
 - This new partnership between Sister Cities International and AIC gives members access to immigration lawyers across the country and opportunities for educational conference calls and staff expertise to help make the visa process more manageable.
- Letters of Invitation
 - For programs organized by the DC office, Sister Cities International can write letters of invitation for inbound visitors to help with the application process. For programs run by local sister city associations, letters of invitation must be written by the official responsible for the event. Sister Cities International can write letters of support for the exchange but a local letter will also be necessary.



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Russia requires visitors to have a valid passport with the correct visas. You must obtain a valid visa for your specific purpose of travel before arriving in Russia, unless you are arriving as a cruise ship passenger. Russian authorities strictly enforce all visa and immigration laws. The Embassy of the Russian Federation website provides the most up to date information regarding visa regulations and requirements. In accordance with Russia's Entry-Exit Law, Russian authorities may deny entry or reentry into Russia for 5 years or more and cancel the visas of foreigners who have committed two administrative violations within the past three years. Activities that are not specifically covered by the traveler's visa may result in an administrative violation and deportation. Students and English teachers should be certain that their activities are in strict keeping with their visa type. Students must not teach or coach English, whether compensated or not, while traveling on a student visa as it is considered a visa violation and may subject you to detention and deportation.11

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Obey all Turkish visa regulations and maintain valid residence permits at all times. The U.S. Embassy is unable to assist with Turkish immigration or visa-related matters. Passports must be valid for six months beyond your entry date. You will be denied entry into Turkey if there is not enough space for entry and exit stamps in your passport. You need a visa to travel to Turkey. For tourism or commercial travel of up to 90 days within a 180 day period, obtain a Turkish visa from Turkish missions abroad or from the e-Visa application system prior to arrival. Make sure you keep track of entry and exit stamps. You must have a Turkish entry stamp to fly domestically. Get an exit stamp in your passport when leaving the country or you may face difficulties re-entering Turkey in the future and a fine. If you are planning to work, study, or conduct academic or scientific research in Turkey, you must receive a visa from a Turkish embassy or consulate before arriving in Turkey.12

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Background Information and Visa Waivers

When traveling outside the United States, it is important to know as much information as you can about the visa process for the country to which you are traveling. Being informed will help prevent difficulties and will make your travel arrangements run much more smoothly. Many countries require different protocols when obtaining a visa and some countries do not require a visa at all. You must check the visa requirements before you begin to make your travel plans.

Visa Waiver Program:

The Visa Waiver Program allows American citizens to travel to certain foreign countries (as a tourist) for a period of up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa. Participating countries usually have a very high Human Development Index. As of February 10, 2020, eligible countries include:

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| – Andorra | – Lithuania |
| – Australia | – Luxemburg |
| – Austria | – Malta |
| – Belgium | – Monaco |
| – Brunei | – the Netherlands |
| – Chile | – New Zealand |
| – Czech Republic | – Norway |
| – Denmark | – Poland |
| – Estonia | – Portugal |
| – Finland | – San Marino |
| – France | – Singapore |
| – Germany | – Slovakia |
| – Greece | – Slovenia |
| – Hungary | – South Korea |
| – Iceland | – Spain |
| – Ireland | – Sweden |
| – Italy | – Switzerland |
| – Japan | – Taiwan |
| – Latvia | – United Kingdom |
| – Lichtenstein | |

However, if you applying as a student or as part of an exchange trip, you still may find difficulties. Be sure to apply as early in advance as you can with all of the appropriate documents readily available.

Conditions to being accepted by the Visa Waiver Program include:

- You need to have a valid passport from the participating country.
- You have complied with the visa conditions of any previous trip to the United States.
- You must never have been arrested for a crime given over 5 years of total sentence in prison. Also, the crime must not involve “moral turpitude”.
- You must not have been denied entry into the United States (for any reason) over the previous 5 years.



- You must not be entering the United States for reasons other than short-term business and pleasure. Because of this, journalists must obtain a visa prior to entering the United States no matter where they are from.

Before leaving, be sure to check with the American Consulate or Embassy to see if this policy has changed and if you will need additional documentation. The United States government reserves the right to withdraw this permit at any time if it feels that you will likely work without a permit or overstay your 90-day visitation limit. If you do not meet these requirements, you must obtain a visa for the country that you are to visit.

Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI):

Americans traveling to Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, or some Caribbean countries currently need to only present a passport, a passport card, a WHTI-compliant document, OR a valid government issued photo ID (driver's license) AND proof of citizenship (birth certificate). Check country specific information of where you plan on traveling to at State Department's website at http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html to see if the country that you are traveling is part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

For Countries NOT in the Visa Waiver Program:

For all the countries not listed above, it is most likely a visa is needed for entry. If a visa is not necessary, a reciprocity fee will be charged at the port of entry for each US visitor. This information can be found on the US Department of State's website at http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html. If you are unsure of what is required to enter your destination country, you can call its DC Embassy which can be found at <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/> or you can contact Sister Cities International in DC.

The Schengen Zone:

The Schengen Zone is a coalition of countries in Europe who agreed to drop all border restrictions between themselves to promote travel. If you are travelling to countries within the Schengen Zone you are not required to have a visa for 90 days. However, the amount of days in the Schengen Zone only resets when you are out of the Schengen Zone for the same amount of days. Make sure to have documentation of your entry and exit of the Schengen Zone. You should also always carry your passport with you as countries may reinstate border controls without notice. While traveling between these countries, just make sure you have your passport available for identification purposes. These countries are:

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|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| – Austria | – Hungary | – Poland |
| – Belgium | – Iceland | – Portugal |
| – the Czech Republic | – Italy | – Slovakia |
| – Denmark | – Latvia | – Slovenia |
| – Estonia | – Lithuania | – Spain |
| – Finland | – Luxembourg | – Sweden |
| – France | – Malta | – Switzerland |
| – Germany | – the Netherlands | |
| – Greece | – Norway | |



US Passport Information

No matter what country you are traveling to, you will need a valid passport. In addition, this passport must be valid for over six months following your visit to the country. If it is not going to be valid for up to six months after departure from that country, you must renew your passport or you may be refused entry to the country or detained and not permitted to depart as scheduled. This can be a lengthy process taking up to four to six weeks. However, it is important that you apply early to avoid any last minute troubles with visas or the passport service.

For First Time Passport Applicants:

It is necessary to go in person to a US Passport Acceptance Facility (usually can be found at US Post Office buildings) with two 2x2 photos of yourself (these need to be done officially and this can often be taken at the location where you are going to get your passport), proof of citizenship (i.e. birth certificate), and a valid government issued photo ID (i.e. driver's license). You will also need to fill out the D-11 form found at http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/ds11/ds11_842.html.

The process illustrated above also applies if:

- Your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession
- Your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago
- Your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16
- Your previously valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen

You may apply by mail if:

- Your most recent passport is available to submit and it is not damaged;
- You received the passport within the past 15 years
- You were over age 16 when the passport was issued
- You still have the same name, or can legally document your name change

Renewing Your Passport:

To renew your passport you can go by any US Passport Acceptance Facility and fill out the required forms. You will also need two new 2x2 passport photos of yourself and your old passport for reference. If you want to apply by mail, fill out the D-82 form found at http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/ds82/ds82_843.html and send it in with your photos, the application fee, your old passport, and a marriage certificate or court order if your name has legally changed.

Fees:

New and renewed passports for adults usually amount to \$145 in fees.



Expedited Passport Service:

If you apply for your passport today and request Expedited Passport Processing, you can expect to receive your passport in 2 weeks door-to-door. Again, there is an additional fee for expedited service. If you need a passport in less than 14 days, contact the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778).

Getting a Visa to Travel Abroad

For every country there is a different set of rules and regulations for attaining a visa. Be sure to check on the specific country that you are traveling to prior to departure to be sure that you have everything that is needed to legally enter that country. This information on each country can be located at the travel section of the State Department's website at http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html.

These country pages provide insight on the political and economic conditions of the country, specific entry/exit requirements, safety and security, and other important aspects and situations that an American visitor may face while abroad.

The site also provides new travel alerts regarding political or social turmoil to warn travelers that they may either need to change their plans or avert certain locations during their foreign travels.

For many countries, visas are a source of income so make sure to check the country-specific fee and include a check, money order, or cash with your application.

In many cases you can fill out the required information and send your passport, fee, and forms, to the country embassy in Washington, D.C. If you are in the DC area, it might be more time efficient if you stop by the embassy with all the required information and they can give you the visa while you wait. This may involve sending the passport on and picking it up at the embassy to reduce wait time. Call ahead to see what their protocol is before you stop by.

Arriving Abroad:

Once you arrive in the foreign country, it is important that you register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in the event of an emergency. While the Consulate office cannot lend you money, serve as your attorney, or cash checks, they can assist you in obtaining emergency funds from your family, help you find an attorney, assist you in finding medical assistance, and replace your lost or stolen passport.

Registration is even more important if you:

- are planning on staying in the country longer than a month;
- will be traveling to a country experiencing any civil or political unrest;
- are traveling to a country that may possibly experience a natural disaster (earthquake, tsunami, hurricane, etc.) during your stay;

If the country that you are traveling to does not have a US Embassy or Consulate, register with a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in an adjacent country. For instance, if you are traveling to Iran (Iran does not have a U.S.



Consulate or Embassy), be sure to visit a United States Consulate or Embassy in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or Afghanistan.

Also, find out if there is a third country that may represent the United States' interests in the country that you are visiting. The foreign Embassy may be able to provide you some of the services that the American Embassy or Consulate typically provides. For example, the Swiss Embassy represents the United States' interests in Iran and any American traveling there should seek the Swiss Embassy if they encounter any problems.

Country Specific Travel Information

Below are 20 countries that are not a part of the Visa Waiver Program but that are frequent destinations for our members. This gives an overview of the requirements these countries have. However, requirements and fees are always changing so make sure to check with the country's embassy before you travel to make sure you have everything covered. This information is current as of February 10, 2020. Countries listed below include:

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| – Argentina | – Greece | – Romania |
| – Brazil | – Hong Kong | – Russia |
| – Cameroon | – India | – South Africa |
| – China | – Israel | – Turkey |
| – Cuba | – Morocco | – Ukraine |
| – Egypt | – Nigeria | |
| – Ghana | – Peru | |

Argentina:

As long as you are visiting Argentina for less than 90 days, you do not need a visa. However, if you arrive with an expired or damaged passport, you may be deported at your own expense. Americans who have a dual-citizenship with Argentina may stay 60 days with an American passport. They will not be permitted to leave after that 60 day period unless they have an Argentine passport. Obtaining an Argentine passport is a long and arduous process and the American Embassy is relatively powerless in accelerating the process.

Brazil:

Americans traveling to Brazil will require a valid U.S. passport. As of June 16, 2019 U.S., citizens do not need a visa if they are travelling to Brazil for tourism, business, transit, artistic or sport activities, with no intention of establishing residence. Additionally, **Brazilian law requires any minor who is a Brazilian citizen (even dual nationals who are both U.S. and Brazilian citizens) to have permission from each parent to travel within Brazil or exit the country. When a minor travels with both parents, no written authorization is needed. When the minor travels with only one parent or without either parent, s/he must have two original written authorization letters from each absent parent and carry a copy of the child's birth certificate or have an annotation in his/her Brazilian passport authorizing travel alone or with only one parent.**

Cameroon:

Those wishing to enter Cameroon will need a valid passport, visa, documentation of receiving the Yellow Fever vaccination, current immunization records must be up to date, a World Health Organization (WHO) card with



yellow fever vaccination, and proof of polio vaccination for visits longer than four weeks. Visa fees are \$91 for up to a three-month visit, \$182 for a three to six month stay, and \$273 to receive a visa valid for up to one year.

China

You must have a valid passport and a visa obtained from the Chinese Embassy or a Chinese Consulate to enter China. Without the appropriate documentation, you will be deported immediately at your own expense. If you are entering China with a child, it is important to have documentation that you are the child's parent or guardian. China has recently stiffened procedure because of problems with international child abduction. While the documentation may not be required, it could help facilitate your departure. Permanent U.S. residents should renew and update any residential documentation prior to entering China to prove to Chinese officials that you plan to return to the United States at the conclusion of your visa. Visa fees are \$140 per individual applicant. There also an additional expedited service fee if you need a Chinese visa very quickly.

Cuba

Americans traveling to Cuba need to obtain a tourist card. A tourist card is valid for a single entry into the national territory on a 30-day trip and you can extend it for 30 days at the hotel desk where you are staying, or with immigration authorities. To obtain a tourist card from the consulate you will need a valid passport, the required forms, and a plane ticket with the arrival and departure date. To obtain a tourist card by mail you will need a legible photocopy of your passport, a photocopy of your flight ticket with the date of arrival and departure, payment for the consular fee, and an envelope with sufficient stamps and a return address. Tourist cards can often be purchased through the airline you are flying into Cuba with. Tourist Cards usually cost \$85.

Egypt

A passport and a visa are required to enter Egypt. However, a 30-day tourist visa can be obtained upon arrival for a \$25 fee. A multiple entry visa is also obtainable for \$60. However, if you arrive overland or have previously encountered trouble entering Egypt, it is best to obtain a visa prior to arrival. You must have a completed AIDS test if you will be staying in Egypt longer than 30 days to study or work. If arriving from Israel, it is important that you obtain a visa beforehand. If not, a free 14-day visa that is only valid in Sinai will be issued to you. You may also receive a 30-day tourist visa to travel through Egypt for \$25. Make sure you go through the visa website created by the Egyptian government. There are other websites which claim to offer e-visas but at a higher price.

Ghana

A valid passport and visa are required to enter Ghana. You also need to bring documentation that you have received a yellow fever vaccination. To receive a visa, you will need four copies of the application with four passport size photographs of yourself. Visa fees for Ghana are \$60 for a single-entry visa and \$100 for a multiple entry visa. Foreign nationals who are over six years old and have been physically



present for a cumulative period of 90 days or more during a calendar year are required to register with the National Identification Authority (NIA). NIA will issue registered foreign nationals a non-citizen Ghana card, The non-citizen card will be necessary for all transactions that require identification.

Hong Kong

To travel to Hong Kong as a tourist, all you will need is a valid passport, evidence of onward or return transportation, and proof of adequate funds to cover your stay without working locally. You will be permitted to travel freely throughout Hong Kong for 90 days without needing a visa. However, if you plan on studying or working in Hong Kong, you must first obtain a visa from the Chinese Embassy or a Consulate in the United States. No visas will be given on arrival to American citizens. If you wish to travel to mainland China from Hong Kong, a visa can be acquired in Hong Kong, but it is best to obtain this visa beforehand as Americans have previously encountered problems with this. If you wish to stay longer than 90 days, you must receive an extension of stay from the Hong Kong Immigration Department. When departing, an "Airport Security Tax" and a "Departure Tax" must be paid, however these may be included in your airfare.

India

Visitors to India must have a valid passport and Indian visa to enter the country. There are no means to obtain a visa in India so one must be acquired prior to arrival from an Indian Embassy or Consulate. Please pay special attention to the type of visa that you are applying for. If you plan on participating in religious activities, obtain a missionary visa as opposed to a tourist visa. Americans with a tourist visa have been deported before because they were engaging in religious activities. Fees vary depending on the type of visa that you are seeking.

Israel

If you are a dual citizen of Israel or Palestine, Israeli officials request that you use your Israeli or Palestinian passport to enter the country. If you do not, you may not be allowed to enter the country. At the very least, you can expect major delays. To enter Israel, you must have a valid passport, proof of sufficient funds for the duration of your stay, and an onward ticket out of Israel. Upon arrival, you will be issued a three-month, renewable visa that permits you to travel freely within Israel. However, Americans have been denied entry to Gaza or the West Bank in the past and it is not uncommon for Israeli officials to institute this.

Morocco

To enter Morocco, you must have a valid passport with at least one blank page. Tourists will not be required to obtain a visa if you are planning on staying fewer than 90 days. If you wish to stay longer than the 90 day allotted period, you must apply for an extension with a valid reason to stay with a Moroccan Embassy or Consulate. You do not need any vaccinations to enter Morocco. It is important that you carry your passport with you at all times to prevent trouble if questioned by local authorities.

Nigeria

You must have a valid passport and visa to enter Nigeria and visas are not available upon arrival. You must have proof of polio and yellow fever vaccinations. Please note that there have been many fraudulent schemes claiming that individuals may enter Nigeria without a visa. You need a visa prior to arrival to enter the country



or you will be deported at your own expense. United States citizens cannot depart Nigeria without proof that they entered the country legally. As long as you maintain your entry visa, this will not be a problem.

Peru

For Peru you will need a valid passport and possibly proof of outbound tickets from your origin of travel. Your length of approved stay will be determined by border officials at the time of entry and can range from 30 to 183 days. Extensions for tourists are usually not approved and overstays result in fines. Peru has strict requirements for exit so be sure to have proof of your entry. As you will not be allowed to leave until immigration authorities can confirm your entry record. Peruvian laws on travelling with minors can be complex so be sure to be up to date on what additional documentation may be needed.

Romania

You may enter Romania with only a valid passport to enter Romania as a tourist for a period of up to 90 days within a six-month period. You can obtain a stay permitting you to stay longer than 90 days at the immigration office in Romania if you so choose. Overstaying the allowed timeframe can lead to potential fines and future difficulties entering the country.

Russia

Russia requires visitors to have a valid passport with the correct visas. You must obtain a valid visa for your specific purpose of travel before arriving in Russia, unless you are arriving as a cruise ship passenger. Russian authorities strictly enforce all visa and immigration laws. The Embassy of the Russian Federation website provides the most up to date information regarding visa regulations and requirements. In accordance with Russia's Entry-Exit Law, Russian authorities may deny entry or reentry into Russia for 5 years or more and cancel the visas of foreigners who have committed two administrative violations within the past three years. Activities that are not specifically covered by the traveler's visa may result in an administrative violation and deportation. Students and English teachers should be certain that their activities are in strict keeping with their visa type. Students must not teach or coach English, whether compensated or not, while traveling on a student visa as it is considered a visa violation and may subject you to detention and deportation.

South Africa

South Africa has a strict enforcement of entry and exit requirements. Failure to observe these requirements may result in a traveler being denied entry. Visitors for tourism will be issued a 90-day tourist visa upon entry of the country. However, you must have at least two completely blank (unstamped) visa pages in your passport each time you would like to enter South Africa. Without the necessary blank pages, you may be fined and deported at your own expense. Students, academics, and those seeking employment may need long-term visas. If you are coming from a country where Yellow Fever is present, you may need to present your World Health Organization vaccination record proving that you have been immunized to Yellow Fever. Failure to do so will force South African officials to inoculate you while at your point of transit prior to entry into the country.



Taiwan

There is no visa required for American citizens entering Taiwan if you are staying for less than 90 days. If you plan on staying longer or working, you must obtain a visa from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office.

Turkey

Obey all Turkish visa regulations and maintain valid residence permits at all times. The U.S. Embassy is unable to assist with Turkish immigration or visa-related matters. Passports must be valid for six months beyond your entry date. You will be denied entry into Turkey if there is not enough space for entry and exit stamps in your passport. You need a visa to travel to Turkey. For tourism or commercial travel of up to 90 days within a 180 day period, obtain a Turkish visa from Turkish missions abroad or from the e-Visa application system prior to arrival. Make sure you keep track of entry and exit stamps. You must have a Turkish entry stamp to fly domestically. Get an exit stamp in your passport when leaving the country or you may face difficulties re-entering Turkey in the future and a fine. If you are planning to work, study, or conduct academic or scientific research in Turkey, you must receive a visa from a Turkish embassy or consulate before arriving in Turkey.

Ukraine

If your stay is for business, tourism, or private travel, you do not need a visa for up to 90-days in any 180-day period. You must be able to provide proof of valid health insurance and sufficient funds for the duration of your stay. If you are planning to stay longer or have a different purpose for entering Ukraine, you must contact the Ukrainian Embassy or Consulate prior to leaving the United States to receive your visa. Ukrainian Officials will determine the required documents on a case-by-case basis depending on the reason of your visit, length of your visit, and the locations you will be visiting. Be very careful as to what type of visa you receive. Know if it is single or multi-entry and the dates. Be sure to contact the Ukrainian Embassy or Consulate with any corrections prior to departure as you will not be allowed to enter Ukraine if any of this information is incorrect.