



United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee

Visa and Entry Handbook

2026

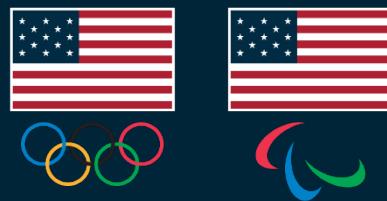


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Contact visainquiry@usopc.org if you have questions or need help with your visa application.

Do I require a visa to travel to the United States?

To determine if you require a visa to travel to the United States, please review the instructions below or visit the U.S. Department of State's [Visa Wizard](#).

A visa is required for all visitors to enter or transit through the U.S. **except for** nationals of Canada and Bermuda, and nationals of countries that are part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Currently, 42 countries participate in the VWP. **Nationals of all other countries will require a visa to enter or transit the U.S.**

For additional information on the Visa Waiver Program, please refer to Section A. If you require a visa to travel to the U.S., please refer to Section B on Page 2. Please also find links to additional resources on Page 3.

SECTION A: I AM FROM A VISA WAIVER PROGRAM COUNTRY

Visa Waiver Program Countries			
Andorra	France	Lithuania	Slovakia
Australia	Germany	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Austria	Greece	Malta	South Korea
Belgium	Hungary	Monaco	Spain
Brunei	Iceland	Netherlands	Sweden
Chile	Ireland	New Zealand	Switzerland
Croatia	Israel	Norway	Taiwan
Czech Republic	Italy	Poland	United Kingdom*
Denmark	Japan	Portugal	-
Estonia	Latvia	San Marino	-
Finland	Liechtenstein	Singapore	-

**To be eligible to travel under the VWP, British citizens must have the unrestricted right of permanent abode in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man.*

Travelers from these countries who are eligible to travel visa-free will need an [Electronic System for Travel Authorization](#) (ESTA) before traveling. Travelers should check ESTA status well ahead of traveling, and those who are applying for ESTA for the first time should apply early, and no later than 72 hours before traveling.

If an ESTA application is refused, the traveler must apply for a visa instead.

Under the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015, **travelers in the following categories must obtain a visa before traveling to the United States** as they are no longer eligible to travel under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP):

- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled to or been present in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, or Yemen on or after March 1, 2011 (with limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country).
- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled to or been present in Cuba on or after January 12, 2021 (with limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country)
- Nationals of VWP countries who are also nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria.

SECTION B: I REQUIRE A VISA TO TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES

Best Practices: Apply early! It is recommended you apply at least 90 days before your travel to the U.S.

- Appointment wait-times can exceed 200 days in some locations, making applying early especially important.
- Although most visa applications are processed within several weeks after interviewing, some applications will require additional screening, which can take several months.

How do I apply for a visa?

1. Complete the online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form [DS-160](#).
2. Pay the required visa application fee.
3. Schedule an interview appointment. Appointments should be scheduled as soon as possible. Please consult the instructions on the Embassy's website if you have questions. Note that interview appointments must be scheduled by the applicant: they are not assigned by the Embassy/Consulate.
4. Print the DS-160 barcode page and bring it with you to your interview appointment.

!! No appointments are available before my date of travel. How do I request an expedited appointment?

Applicants should schedule the earliest available appointment. If you are unable to schedule an appointment before your date of travel to the U.S., you need to request an expedited appointment. Please carefully review the instructions on your U.S. Embassy or Consulate's website for specific instructions on how to request an expedited appointment.

Generally, the instructions will be:

1. Schedule the earliest available appointment date (even if it is beyond your date of travel).
2. Once you have scheduled an appointment, log back into your account, click "Continue", then on "Request Expedite".
3. You **must** specify when you complete the "Reason for Request" section. **Clearly** explain who you are, your reason for traveling to the U.S., and the date you wish to have your appointment.
4. Click on the "Submit Request" link.

Please note that the instructions for how to submit an expedited request can vary by location. **Failure to follow the correct instructions could result in a denial of the request.** The instructions will be available on each Embassy's [website](#) or Visa FAQ page.

If your expedite request is denied, reach out to your event's organizers and/or USOPC.

Sample Expedite Request Explanation:

I am a National Team athlete of (**INSERT country**), invited to compete in the upcoming (**INSERT event**), which has the support of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee.

I respectfully request an expedited appointment so that I may interview for my visa before the (**INSERT date**) date of travel, and so I can compete in this event to eventually qualify for and compete in the (**INSERT Olympics/Paralympics**).

SECTION C: Presidential Proclamation on Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats

Effective January 1, 2026, the United States fully or partially suspended entry for and visa issuance to nationals of 38 countries. There is an exception for athletes, coaches, essential support personnel, and immediate family seeking to enter the United States to compete in major international sporting events.

With limited exceptions, visa issuance to nationals of the following countries is fully suspended:

- Afghanistan, Burma, Burkina Faso, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Laos, Libya, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen

With limited exceptions, visa issuance to nationals of the following countries is suspended for nonimmigrant B-1/B-2 visitor visas and F, M, and J student and exchange visitor visas, and all immigrant visas:

- Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Burundi, Cote D'Ivoire, Cuba, Dominica, Gabon, The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

It is critical that nationals of these countries contact their Local Organizing Committee and/or National Federation (NGB) hosting them in the U.S. **before** the visa interview. **If you do not do this, appropriate notifications cannot be made before your visa interview, which may result in a denial of the exception.**

SECTION D: Countries Subject to Visa Bonds

Effective January 8, 2026, nationals of the following countries are subject to visa bonds, as outlined in INA Section 221(g)(3) and the [Temporary Final Rule \(TFR\)](#) establishing the pilot program. The implementation dates are in parentheses.

- Algeria (January 21, 2026)
- Angola (January 21, 2026)
- Antigua and Barbuda (January 21, 2026)
- Bangladesh (January 21, 2026)
- Benin (January 21, 2026)
- Bhutan (January 1, 2026)
- Botswana (January 1, 2026)
- Burundi (January 21, 2026)
- Cabo Verde (January 21, 2026)
- Central African Republic (January 1, 2026)
- Cote D'Ivoire (January 21, 2026)
- Cuba (January 21, 2026)
- Djibouti (January 21, 2026)
- Dominica (January 21, 2026)
- Fiji (January 21, 2026)
- Gabon (January 21, 2026)
- The Gambia (October 11, 2025)
- Guinea (January 1, 2026)
- Guinea Bissau (January 1, 2026)

- Kyrgyzstan (January 21, 2026)
- Malawi (August 20, 2025)
- Mauritania (October 23, 2025)
- Namibia (January 1, 2026)
- Nepal (January 21, 2026)
- Nigeria (January 21, 2026)
- Sao Tome and Principe (October 23, 2025)
- Senegal (January 21, 2026)
- Tajikistan (January 21, 2026)
- Tanzania (October 23, 2025)
- Togo (January 21, 2026)
- Tonga (January 21, 2026)
- Turkmenistan (January 1, 2026)
- Tuvalu (January 21, 2026)
- Uganda (January 21, 2026)
- Vanuatu (January 21, 2026)
- Venezuela (January 21, 2026)
- Zambia (August 20, 2025)
- Zimbabwe (January 21, 2026)

Citizens traveling on a passport issued by one of these countries who are found otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa must post a bond in amounts of \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000, determined at the time of visa interview.

There is a waiver to the bond requirement. It is critical that nationals of these countries contact the Local Organizing Committee and/or National Governing Body (NGB) hosting them in the U.S. **If you do not do this, appropriate notifications cannot be made before your visa interview, which may result in a denial of the waiver.**

Appendix

Preparing for your visa interview

Do all nonimmigrant visa applicants have to come to the Embassy for an interview?

Yes, most applicants will need to attend an in-person interview at the Embassy. The following applicants generally do not have to appear in person:

- Applicants eligible for an interview waiver.
- Applicants for A1, A2 (official travelers on central government business), C2, C3 (central government officials in transit on central government business) or G1, G2, G3, G4 (central government officials traveling in connection with an international organization, or employees of an international organization).
- Children under 14 years of age at the date of the initial visa interview in the Embassy or Consulate if either of the parents have a valid nonimmigrant visa.
- Applicants older than 79.

I have a nonimmigrant visa that will expire soon and I would like to renew it. Do I need to go through the entire visa application process again?

Yes. You may be eligible for an interview waiver, which you can check [here](#).

Do I require an official letter of invitation?

Official letters of invitation are strongly recommended, and you can carry it with you to your visa interview and when traveling to the US. Contact the National Federation or Organizing Committee that is hosting you in the US to secure your invitation letter.

How should I prepare for my visa interview appointment?

Gather and prepare the following required documents before your visa interview:

- Ensure your passport is valid for travel to the United States. Many passports must be valid for at least six (6) months after your planned departure from the United States, unless exempted by country specific agreements.
- Print your application fee payment receipt, if you are required to pay before your interview.
- Print the DS-160 barcode page and bring with you to your interview appointment.
- Upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the photo upload fails, the applicant must bring one printed photo to your interview. Your photo must be in the format explained in the [photograph requirements](#).
- Additional documentation may be required: Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish you are qualified. It is recommended that you bring these documents in the case that they are requested. For example, additional requested documents may include evidence of:
 - The purpose of your trip.
 - Your intent to depart the United States after your trip.
 - You may be asked to provide information about your current and previous education, work or sport.
 - Your employment and/or your family ties may be sufficient to show the purpose of your trip and your intent to return to your home country. If you cannot cover all the costs for your trip, you may show evidence that another person will cover some or all costs for your trip.

Be prepared for a short interview. Ensure that your answers are clear and concise.

Appendix

Best Practices for your visa interview

Avoiding and Overcoming the Intending Immigrant Presumption – 214(b) Visa Denial

When you appear for an interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you will be asked by an interviewing consular officer about your upcoming trip to the United States. Interviews are short, lasting an average of five minutes. In this period, you must do the following:

- Explain your purpose for going to the United States
- Demonstrate that when your visa expires you will return to your home country with no intentions of abandoning your residence there

What is the intending immigrant presumption?

U.S. immigration law presumes that you are intending to immigrate unless you can provide evidence to the contrary.

How do I overcome this presumption?

The presumption can be overcome by showing evidence (e.g., documents and paperwork) of ties to your home country and clearly articulating your reason for travel to the United States.

What are examples of ties to my home country?

- Evidence of your official status with your sporting federation
- A contact name, address, and telephone number for any government official or federation or NOC who has interceded on your behalf with the Embassy.
- Documentation establishing your ownership and/or lease commitment for a home, automobile, or significant property. Ex: deed, title, or lease, mortgage payment, electricity bills, telephone bills.
- If applicable, evidence of your marriage, the birth certificates for your children, or any other information you may have in connection with people who rely on you for support.
- Information relating to any bank accounts, deposits, pay slips to prove employment and a regular salary.

Important details to highlight

It is important that you clearly state you are a National Team athlete, traveling for international competition sanctioned by an International Sport Federation. If applicable, you can mention that the event provides Olympic/Paralympic world ranking or qualifying points.

KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THE FIVE W'S:

- 1. WHY** are you planning to travel to the US?
- 2. WHEN** are you planning to travel, and how long do you plan to stay?
- 3. WHERE** are you going to stay, and who will you be staying with?
- 4. WHAT** are you planning to do while in the US?
- 5. WHO** are you planning to see while in the US?

Appendix

Guidance for NGBs and Event Organizers

It is the responsibility of the NGB/Event Organizer to liaise with their travelers, create visa invitation letters, and provide general travel support. When hosting multiple countries for an event, the USOPC strongly recommends that you designate a staff member(s) to manage visa and entry questions. This staff should work with USOPC well in advance of the event's start date to address potential issues.

The most important step for those requiring visas is to apply early. As often as possible, event hosts should remind their travelers to:

1. Start the visa application process as soon as possible
 - a. *Ideally, 60-90 days before travel*
2. Request an expedited appointment if there are no appointments available before the date of travel
3. Contact the event host/USOPC if there are any issues

To ensure USOPC is available as a resource, accredited individuals should feel free to reach out to visainquiry@usopc.org. Event hosts can also include this email address in their registration and guidance distributed to delegations. We strongly recommend that delegations keep the event hosts updated and copied on all communication.

Appendix

USOPC Contact Information and Online References

Contact visainquiry@usopc.org if you have any questions or need help with your visa application.

Online References:

- [USOPC Visa Handbook \(EN, ES, FR\)](#)
- [U.S. Embassies & Consulates](#)
- [Visa Wizard](#)
- [Visa Appointment Wait & Processing Times](#)
- [DS-160 Form](#)
- [Photograph Requirements](#)
- [Interview Waiver Eligibility](#)
- [Country-Specific Visa Validity Length Agreements](#)
- [Visa FAQs](#)
- [Arrival/Departure Forms: I-94 and I-94W](#)
- [ESTA](#)