

2021 HOLIDAY TRAVEL GUIDE FOR THE UNITED STATES

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Over the last 20 months, entry to the United States has been restricted by multiple Presidential Proclamations and border closures seeking to slow the spread of COVID-19. While progress relating to vaccinations and testing has facilitated removing many restrictions, the situation remains fluid as evidenced by the most recent Proclamation issued on 26 November 2021 and new testing requirements taking effect on 6 December, and caution when planning international travel must be exercised accordingly. Below are important considerations to keep in mind for travel abroad during the holiday season and beyond. [Back](#)

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO RETURN TO THE U.S. AFTER INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Immigration Documents to Prepare for Travel:

- **Passport & Visa:** Both documents must be reviewed prior to travel and confirmed as unexpired and valid for re-entry on the date you intend to return to the United States.
 - If your visa stamp is expired, plan to renew it prior to your return to the U.S. *Note that there are continued challenges in scheduling visa appointments at U.S. consular posts around the world. Further, there is always a risk that once scheduled, the consular post may postpone or cancel the appointment with minimal notice.*
 - There are some limited exceptions to the requirement to present a valid visa in order to enter the U.S., which apply to brief trips to Canada, Mexico, and adjacent islands depending on visa status, via a process known as automatic visa validation. Strict criteria apply to this process, so please verify with your EY Law Professional that you are eligible before making travel plans around automatic visa validation.
- **Status Document:** For most work-authorized non-immigrants, this will be an I-797 Approval Notice or I-129S issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or the Department of State. Ensure that you are travelling with a valid status document, and, if you are an F-1 Student or J-1 Exchange Visitor, that it is endorsed for travel by your school or program sponsor prior to departure. [Back](#)

Proof of Vaccination & New Testing Requirement:

- **Prepare your vaccination documentation.** In order to board a flight to the U.S, non-immigrants must present a digital or paper record evidencing full vaccination (defined in detail below), unless criteria for one of the exceptions (detailed below) is met.
- **Get tested.** All travelers ages two (2) or older, regardless of citizenship or vaccination status, will be required as of 12:01 am EST 6 December 2021 to show:
 - A negative pre-departure COVID-19 viral test taken one (1) day prior, or
 - Documentation of recovery from COVID-19 prior to boarding a flight to the U.S.
- **Be sure to review airline-specific travel requirements related to COVID-19, if travelling by air.** [Back](#)

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

On 26 November, President Biden issued a Presidential Proclamation to suspend and limit the entry of non-U.S. Citizens who were physically present in the following countries during the 14-day period prior to their entry to the United States:

- Republic of Botswana
- Kingdom of Eswatini
- Kingdom of Lesotho
- Republic of Malawi
- Republic of Mozambique
- Republic of Namibia
- Republic of South Africa
- Republic of Zimbabwe

The Proclamation does not apply to legal permanent residents (LPRs), spouses of citizens and LPRs, and parents and legal guardians of unmarried U.S. citizens and LPRs under the age of 21, among other exempted groups.

At this time, there are no other country-specific travel restrictions in place, and non-immigrant travellers arriving from countries not covered by the Presidential Proclamation are only required to meet vaccination and COVID-19 testing requirements. [Back](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the continued unpredictability of travel restrictions and requirements as well as limited availability of visa appointments, international travel is generally not recommended unless necessary. If you do travel outside the United States, we recommend that you take the following actions:

- Advise your employer, manager, and/or HR representative prior to your intended travel date.
- Consider purchasing COVID-specific travel insurance as a precaution.
- If travelling by plane, purchase flexible airline tickets, if possible, to mitigate any last-minute cancellations or delays.
- Be prepared for change, including travel restrictions, quarantine requirements, and flight/carrier availability, which could arise during your time abroad. [Back](#)

COVID-19, TRAVEL & VISA FAQs

Air Travel Requirements

What are the vaccination and testing requirements for travelers entering the United States by air?

Prior to boarding a flight to travel to the United States, all travelers must show:

- Proof of full vaccination status from COVID-19, as defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- Proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken one day prior to departure or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 based on a positive COVID-19 viral test taken no more than 90 days prior to the

flight's departure from a foreign country **in addition to** a letter from a licensed healthcare provider or public health official stating clearance to travel. [Back](#)

Do the vaccination requirements apply to U.S. citizens and/or Green Card holders?

U.S. Citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents (Green Card holders) who are not fully vaccinated will still be able to fly to the United States, but must show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken the day prior to departure, with the exception of children under two years of age. [Back](#)

I'm not vaccinated. Are there any exceptions that might apply to me?

Noncitizens who are non-immigrants will not be permitted to board a flight to the U.S. without proof of vaccination unless they qualify for one of the following exceptions:

- Persons on diplomatic or official foreign government travel.
- Children who are unable to receive vaccinations due to their age. CDC's current guidance excepts children under 18 years of age.
- Individuals who participated in certain clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccination.
- Individuals who cannot receive COVID-19 vaccination because of a CDC-defined contraindication (i.e., severe or immediate allergic reaction to a component of the COVID-19 vaccine).
- Individuals who have been granted an exception by the Director of the CDC for humanitarian or emergency reasons.
- Individuals who are seeking entry as a non-immigrant other than travelers for business or tourism (i.e. B-1/B-2 status) and who are citizens of countries where the availability of COVID-19 vaccination is limited (i.e., where fewer than 10% of the country's total population has been fully vaccinated).
- Sea crew members traveling with a C-1 or D visa.
- Individuals whose admission has been determined to be in the National Interest and who have written authorization from a U.S. government authority. [Back](#)

Which vaccinations will be accepted for admission to the U.S.?

Vaccines accepted will include FDA approved or authorized and those listed for emergency use by the WHO, which at this time includes the following:

- Comirnaty and Pfizer-BioNTech
- Moderna
- Janssen/J&J
- Astrazeneca-SK Bio
- Covishield
- BIBP/Sinopharm
- Sinovac
- Covaxin

The CDC confirmed that it would accept a mix-and-match approach to vaccinations. Travelers who have any combination of FDA- or WHO-approved vaccines will be considered fully vaccinated. [Back](#)

What does "fully vaccinated" mean?

Full vaccination status is defined as one of the following:

- Two weeks (14 days) have passed after the second dose in a two-dose series, such as Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna, including any combination of two doses of an approved two-series vaccine (i.e. mixed doses). If mixed, the vaccines must have been administered at least 17 days apart.
- Two weeks (14 days) have passed after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson/Janssen.
- Two weeks (14 days) have passed since receiving the full series of an “active” (not placebo) COVID-19 vaccine a clinical vaccine trial. For Novavax (or Covovax), it must be a phase 3 clinical trial. [Back](#)

Quarantine/Isolation Requirements

Is there a federal quarantine requirement?

No. However, each state has the discretion to impose a quarantine mandate. We recommend that you check with local authorities prior to your travel. CDC recommends that travelers who are not fully vaccinated should stay home and self-quarantine for a full seven (7) days after travel even after testing negative at 3-5 days. [Back](#)

Are there national isolation requirements?

No. The CDC recommends but cannot mandate isolation after arrival.

We encourage you to review the regulations of the state you will be visiting or residing in after you enter the United States.

Visa Appointments at Consular Posts Abroad

What is the current availability for visa stamping appointments in my country?

You can check current average wait times here: [US Visa Appointment Wait Times](#). Please note that the times posted are not always complete accurate, and are subject to change.

You will be able to view actual appointment dates/times subsequent to submitting the DS-160 non-immigrant application online and paying the required fee(s). [Back](#)

What is the process for requesting an emergency or expedited appointment?

Typically, you will need to make an appointment by first submitting the DS-160, and then submitting a request through the visa appointment scheduling portal or emailing the consular post with the request for an emergency or expedited appointment. You must review the consular post’s website for its local processes and contact information as well as to verify the expedite criteria that will be applied to your request. [Back](#)

What are the criteria for expedited appointment requests?

Generally, below are the criteria for expedited appointment requests.

- Humanitarian reasons
- Medical emergencies
- Business urgency

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Can I go to a different country for visa stamping?

Unfortunately, most countries are currently closed for third country national visa stamping . If you wish to book an appointment in a different country, we encourage you to review the current information on the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website and where possible to call for confirmation that the office is currently accepting third country nationals for your specific visa category before booking the appointment. [Back](#)

What if my home country's offices are closed?

You may consider another country, but we recommend proceeding with caution before departing for another country. [Back](#)

What documents do I need?

The documents required is dependent on the type of visa you are applying for, but when you schedule your appointment you will be provided with a list of the required documents. All visa applicants must take their passports, DS-160 barcode confirmation page, and appointment letter to the consular post on the day of the interview. [Back](#)

I am not vaccinated; can I apply for a visa?

Yes, but the ability to travel to the United States after visa issuance will be governed by travel requirements in place at the time of proposed travel. [Back](#)

Land Border Crossing

Are there different requirements for air travel and land travel?

Yes. Different rules apply for entering the United States via a land port-of-entry (POE) from Mexico or Canada.

Fully vaccinated travelers may seek admission to the United States for non-essential reasons at the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico borders. When arriving at a land POE or ferry terminal, these travelers must be prepared to present proof of COVID-19 vaccination and attest to both their reason for travel and COVID-19 vaccination status during inspection by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) official.

The border remains closed to travelers seeking admission for non-essential reasons who are not fully vaccinated. Similar to air travel, however, children under the age of 18 are exempted from the vaccination requirement, provided that they are traveling with a fully vaccinated parent or guardian.

Beginning in early January 2022, CBP has indicated that it will require all inbound foreign national travelers seeking admission at land POEs and ferry terminals - whether for essential or non-essential reasons - to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and provide related proof of vaccination. This phased approach is intended to provide sufficient time for essential travelers such as truckers, students, and healthcare workers to get vaccinated. [Back](#)

Is a negative COVID-19 test required for border travel?

At this time, the negative test/recovery from COVID-19 requirements do not apply to travelers seeking admission at a land POE or ferry terminal. [Back](#)



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