INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FAQS

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS TRAVELING TO THE U.S.?

All adult foreign nationals traveling to the U.S. by air are required to provide proof that they are fully vaccinated before boarding their flight. In addition, all foreign nationals must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test (either antigen or PCR) taken within one calendar day of departure to the U.S. According to the CDC, test acceptability does not depend on the time of the flight or the time of day that the test sample was taken. For example, if your flight is at 1 p.m. on a Friday, you could board with a negative test that was taken any time on the prior Thursday.

As of November 29, 2021, foreign nationals who have been in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique or Malawi within the prior 14 days will be prohibited from entering the U.S.—regardless of their vaccination status.

DO THE NEW REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO LAND BORDERS AND SEAPORTS?

No, the requirements only apply to air travel into the U.S.

WHEN WILL THE NEW RESTRICTIONS GO INTO EFFECT?

The new entry restrictions will go into effect at 12:01 a.m. EST on December 6, 2021. We hope the measure to narrow the testing window for arrivals to the U.S. will be temporary until we learn more about the omicron variant, but we do not have an end date for the new policy at this time.

WILL THERE BE ANY EXEMPTIONS FOR UNVACCINATED FOREIGN NATIONALS?

There will be very few exemptions for unvaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. These include exceptions for children under 18, certain COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial participants, those with medical contraindications to the vaccines, those who need to travel for emergency or humanitarian reasons (with a U.S. government-issued letter affirming the urgent need to travel), those who are traveling on non-tourist visas from countries with low-vaccine availability (as determined by the CDC) and other very narrow categories.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT FULLY VACCINATED AMERICANS?

Fully vaccinated Americans will need to show proof of vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test taken within one calendar day of departure to the U.S. The CDC also requires airlines to collect contact tracing information from fully vaccinated U.S. citizens and permanent residents arriving back in the U.S.

WHAT ABOUT UNVACCINATED AMERICANS?

U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are not fully vaccinated will still be able to fly to the U.S., but they will see tougher testing and contact tracing protocols. They will need to be tested within 24 hours of boarding a flight to the U.S. as well as undergo testing upon return to the country. It remains to be seen, though, how the federal government will enforce the testing requirement upon return.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT CHILDREN?

Children under 18 are exempt from the vaccination requirement for foreign national travelers, given both the ineligibility of some younger children for vaccination, as well as the global variability in access to vaccination for older children who are eligible to be vaccinated. Children between the ages of two and 17 are required to take a pre-departure test. If traveling with a fully vaccinated adult, an unvaccinated child can test within one calendar day prior to departure (consistent with the timeline for fully vaccinated adults). If an unvaccinated child is traveling alone or with unvaccinated adults, they will have to test within 24 hours of departure.
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WHICH VACCINES ARE ACCEPTABLE?
The CDC says the U.S. will accept full vaccination of travelers with any COVID-19 vaccine approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, including those from Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson used in the U.S. Other vaccines also approved by the WHO and used widely around the world, including AstraZeneca and China’s Sinovac and Sinopharm, will also be accepted. The WHO is reviewing Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine but hasn’t approved it.

WILL AIRLINES COLLECT DATA ON PASSENGERS?
The CDC will require airlines to collect information about passengers and provide it to the health agency if it needs to conduct contact tracing.

Foreign nationals crossing the land borders with Canada and Mexico or arriving in the United States by passenger ferry for non-essential reasons, such as to visit friends or family or for tourism, will be required to be fully vaccinated. These travelers are required to be prepared to attest to vaccination status and to present proof of vaccination to a CBP officer upon request. By January, foreign nationals traveling across the land border for both essential and non-essential reasons will be required to be fully vaccinated.

HOW HAVE THE CURRENT RESTRICTIONS AFFECTED INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL?
They have made it easier for Americans to visit Europe than the other way around. U.S. international travel in August was down 54% compared with two years ago, and arrivals by non-U.S. citizens were off 74%, according to Airlines for America.

HOW WILL THE CHANGES AFFECT BUSINESS TRAVEL?
There is pent-up demand among business travelers from Europe. As of November 8, foreign executives from previously restricted countries will no longer have to seek a National Interest Exemption to prove that their travel to the United States serves the U.S. “national interest”—a time-consuming process.

WHAT COMES NEXT?
There are unanswered questions as to when the current 212(f) entry restriction on travelers from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique and Malawi will be lifted. The Biden Administration has said that the entry restrictions will be temporary and regularly reviewed.

In addition, on December 2, 2021, the Biden administration announced that it would narrow the pre-departure testing window for all fully vaccinated inbound international air travelers—regardless of nationality—from 72 hours to one calendar day before departure. It is unclear if the shorter testing window for vaccinated inbound international air travelers will be short-term or if the testing window will be extended back to 72-hours as public health conditions improve.

Source: The White House, the CDC, AP News, U.S. Travel Association