

THE U.S. VISA WAIVER PROGRAM MAKES AMERICA MORE SECURE

U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION

Countries that participate in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP) are required to share security information, maintain high security standards and allow U.S. inspection of security compliance.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

"The VWP is essential to protecting international travel in today's growing and persistent threat environment. It provides necessary information to identify and validate a person's identity, determine if they are a risk, and whether they pose a threat to the United States. The information provided to the U.S. prior to a VWP traveler's departure along with the information sharing and law enforcement cooperation in place between the U.S. and Visa Waiver Program countries, is essential to ensuring our country remains open for legitimate international travel and trade while preventing harmful or more threatening persons from crossing our borders."

*—Michael Chertoff,
Former Secretary of
Homeland Security*

"The VWP ... is now an essential tool for increasing security standards, advancing information sharing, strengthening international relationships, and promoting legitimate trade and travel to the United States. ... One of the VWP's most important contributions is its enhancement of U.S. law enforcement and security interests. ... The VWP is a vital part of a robust travel security system ... [E]xpansion of the program ... will ... contribute positively to our national security."

*—David Heyman,
Former Assistant Secretary
for Policy, Department of
Homeland Security*

HOW THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM STRENGTHENS U.S. SECURITY:

VWP requires increased security from participating countries.

VWP participating countries are required to:

- Share information about known or suspected terrorists and criminals with U.S. authorities, as well as maintain high standards for transportation security, border security and document integrity. Through VWP-mandated exchanges, the U.S. Government has received actionable information that was previously unknown to U.S. authorities. Without the leverage the VWP provides, the U.S. Government likely would not receive the same amount and quality of information.
- Allow U.S. inspections of their security standards, protocols and apparatus to ensure compliance with the highest security practices.
- Promptly enter data on all lost and stolen passports into INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database.
- All VWP travelers must use e-passports that conform to stringent international aviation security standards. The use of e-passports, which are particularly difficult to forge, is mandatory for all VWP travelers.

VWP security compliance is regularly reviewed by U.S. authorities.

The United States conducts comprehensive reviews of all VWP countries, at least every other year, to ensure ongoing compliance. Such reviews can result (and have resulted) in membership revocation or other conditions placed on a country's membership in the program.

Travelers from VWP countries are screened against multiple law enforcement and security databases before arriving in the United States.

Through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can determine whether an individual traveler represents any law enforcement or security risk before traveling to the United States.

ESTA gives DHS the capability to conduct both advance and ongoing vetting of VWP travelers through appropriate law enforcement data, including:

- The Terrorist Screening Database;
- Lost and stolen passports data (including INTERPOL's SLTD database); and
- Visa revocations, previous visa refusals and other immigration violations.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers may deny entry to anyone who is considered to be a security risk or is deemed to be at risk of overstaying their visa. Pre-screening works. For example, DHS estimates the visa overstay rate among VWP travelers to be less than 1 percent.

THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM WORKS FOR AMERICA. SUPPORT VISA WAIVER PROGRAM EXPANSION.

THE U.S. VISA WAIVER PROGRAM MAKES AMERICA MORE SECURE (CONTINUED)

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DID YOU KNOW?

Countries considered for VWP membership are independently assessed by U.S. intelligence agencies, in addition to DHS review.

The VWP, like all good security programs, continues to evolve in the face of current threats, such as those posed by foreign fighters.

VWP Travelers Are More Secure, More Well-Screened and More Reliably Identified

		VWP COUNTRIES	NON-VWP COUNTRIES
Who is coming here?		ESTA	B1/B2 VISA
Who poses a risk?	Required to share terrorist watchlist information?	✓	
	Required to share criminal data upon request?	✓	
	Required to share lost and stolen passport information?	✓	
Who is this person?	Generally required to have secure electronic passport?	✓	
	Fingerprints obtained?	✓	✓

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