

FAQ: Lifting of Geographic-Related COVID Travel Bans

As previously announced, the White House will replace the current geographic COVID-19 related travel ban with a vaccination requirement for all foreign nationals traveling to the U.S. starting on November 8, 2021.

The new policy is still evolving. The plan will rescind the current travel bans implemented for individuals from Brazil, China, India, Iran, Ireland, the Schengen Area, South Africa, and the U.K. and will allow those currently affected to travel directly to the U.S. after the effective date of the new rule as long as the person complies with the new requirements.

Q: What are the new requirements for international travelers to enter the U.S.?

A: Under the new rules, non-citizen non-immigrant travelers by air must show:

- proof of *full COVID vaccination* prior to boarding a flight to the U.S. and
- proof of pre-departure negative test taken within three days of travel before boarding.

Land-border travelers are not expected to need proof of a negative test.

Limited exceptions to the new vaccine requirement are expected to apply to children and others.

For more details, see [Biden Administration Fact Sheet for International Air Travel System](#) and [The White House Proclamation on October 25, 2021](#).

Q: Which COVID vaccines will be accepted?

A: The CDC has advised that the accepted vaccines will include FDA-approved or authorized and WHO Emergency Use Listing vaccines for entry into the United States.

As of the date of this writing, the accepted vaccines are as follows:

1. FDA Authorized/Approved: Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer-BioNTech
2. WHO Approved: Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca/Covishield, Sinopharm, and Sinovac.

It appears that as vaccines are added to the approved/authorized list by either the FDA or WHO, they will subsequently be accepted for international travelers. The CDC and the interagency are working to develop orders and guidance documents to implement this new travel policy. Please monitor travel.state.gov for more information as it becomes available.

Q: Do I need to obtain a National Interest Exception (NIE) after this rule is implemented?

A: Foreign nationals traveling under the Visa Waiver Program (ESTA) or with current visa stamps will not need to obtain a national interest exception (NIE) prior to travel, as long as they have proof of vaccination and testing noted above.

***This material is not intended to substitute as legal advice.**

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Q: I need a new visa stamp. What should I expect?

A: Those who require a new visa should prepare for consular backlogs, delays, and reduced operations (as noted below). The ongoing worldwide consular delays could worsen as more individuals seek visas based on the easing of country-specific travel restrictions. Depending on the country, some foreign nationals will have more challenges than others and are likely to face difficulty obtaining a visa appointment.

It is key to routinely check the embassy or consulate website for the latest information:

[DOS List of US Embassies and Consulates](#)

[Visa Appointment Wait Times](#)

Q: I want to go back home and visit my family (haven't been back for 3 years). I want to travel abroad as soon as I can. What should I know?

A: There are several important points to consider.

First, note that the easing of travel restrictions based on countries will begin Nov. 8th and it is subject to change depending on the ongoing global pandemic. The CDC is expected to release additional guidance and information as travel requirements are finalized later in October.

Second, and very important, the most significant restriction to traveling abroad for those who need a new visa is the variety and unpredictability of consular appointments. The situation of the U.S. Consulates abroad is that some are temporarily closed, some are emergency appointments only, etc.

Third, there are significant processing backlogs in certain countries, and the wait times for visa appointments could increase with the new travel rules.

Q: What are the expected changes to the land and ferry border crossings from Canada and Mexico into the U.S.?

A: DHS announced that it will lift the restrictions for land and ferry border crossings from Canada and Mexico in two phases.

In early November 2021, DHS will first allow non-essential travel across the land and ferry borders for fully vaccinated individuals, while still allowing essential travel for unvaccinated individuals.

In early January 2022, DHS will then require all foreign travelers, whether essential or not, to be fully vaccinated. There will be limited exceptions to these requirements, such as for children. This announcement only applies to regular land and ferry border crossings and does not lift the restrictions for irregular land and ferry border crossings.

Q: My visa stamp has expired. Can I remain in the U.S.?

A: Yes, your visa stamp does not determine your legal stay in the U.S.; your I-94 record does. However, note that if your visa stamp has expired, the next time you travel internationally you need to apply for a visa stamp abroad in order to be able to reenter the U.S.

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