

From Our Constituent Services Desk...

We are in the midst of the summer travel season, so we wanted to share information regarding the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. This program is beneficial for U.S. Citizens traveling overseas, and for visitors to the U.S. The Visa Waiver Program falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security, and is an agreement between thirty-eight (38) countries, allowing citizens entry for up to 90 days. The list of countries included in this program can be found online at [Visa Waiver Program Requirements](#).

Travel under the Visa Wavier Program is restricted to travelers possessing passports with specified security features, including a machine-readable zone on the biographic page, and it must be an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. If your passport does not meet these requirements, you will either have to obtain a new passport or obtain a visa for the country you wish to visit.

It is important to note that most countries require your passport to be valid for at least three (3) months, from the date you travel, in order to enter their country. If you are unsure your passport will be valid, you can find legal entry requirements for each country provided by the [U.S. State Department – Bureau of Consular Affairs](#). If you need a new passport, you may apply [online](#) or, for those traveling in less than two weeks, you can apply in person at the Atlanta Passport Agency. Watch this [video](#) to learn how to apply in person.

For travelers to or from a Visa Waiver country, you may get expedited entry with the [Automated Passport Control](#) (APC) kiosks at more than 25 airports around the world.

According to the CBP, “Instead of filling out a paper Customs declaration form, eligible passengers can proceed directly to the APC kiosks in the passport control area. Travelers are prompted to scan their passport, take a photograph using the kiosk, and answer a series of CBP inspection related questions verifying biographic and flight information. Once passengers have completed the series of questions, a receipt will be issued. Travelers then bring their passport and receipt to a CBP Officer to finalize their inspection for entry into the United States. The kiosks allow people residing at the same address to be processed together.”

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has created the [Mobile Passport Control](#) (MPC) App. Mobile Passport Control (MPC) allows U.S. citizens and Canadian visitors to use the app to expedite their entry process into the U.S. It is the first app, authorized by CBP, for eligible travelers with a smartphone or tablet to submit their passport information and answer CBP inspection-related questions prior to CBP inspection. Much like [Automated Passport Control \(APC\)](#), the app does not require pre-approval, and is free to use. The app streamlines the traveler inspection process and enables CBP officers to focus more on the inspection and less on administrative functions. It takes only a few minutes to complete, while your plane is taxiing to the gate. Once you submit your information, you will receive digital confirmation. Then simply look for the signs for ‘Mobile Passport App’ users, and prepare for a quicker reentry process. Currently available for use in twenty-five (25) international airports and three (3) sea-ports of entry, it definitely receives “two thumbs up” from users we know.

There are several [Trusted Traveler Programs](#) available through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expedite travelers through airport security and/or customs. These are pay-to-use services with the top two being TSA Pre✓[®] and Global Entry.

- [TSA Pre✓](#) is \$85, and is valid for five (5) years. It allows quicker security processes on departures from U.S. airports. Benefits include: no need to remove shoes, laptops, etc.; expedited security screening; and availability at more than 200 U.S. airports.
- Global Entry has a \$100 fee, is valid for five (5) years, and is good for travel by air, land or sea, allowing for quicker entry in the U.S. from international destinations. Benefits of Global Entry include: TSA Pre✓, reduced wait times with self-serve kiosks, and no paperwork to be filled out by hand.

Safety is always important; so, as mentioned in our previous travel tip article, consider enrolling in the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). This is a free service which allows U.S. citizens traveling abroad to receive the latest security updates from the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. This allows you to make informed decisions about your trip and enables the embassy or consulate to contact you in an emergency. It will also allow the State Department to contact a family member or friend back in the U.S., should you have an emergency and cannot reach them yourself.

If you have any questions, or a specific problem with the Department of Homeland Security or the Department of State, please contact our office at caseworkga11@mail.house.gov or 770-429-1776. We look forward to serving you, should you need our assistance.