

# ALERTS

## Are You Ready to Travel This Summer?

05.2018

Vacation season is just around the corner. Whether you are a tourist, U.S. permanent resident, or hold a temporary visa, having the proper documentation is essential to your international travel. Discovering an expired document too late can derail your travel plans and be costly to rectify. This brief guide will help you get a jump on organizing documents such as your passport, ESTA registration, green card or nonimmigrant visa.

### Passport:

It may sound simple, but often the most obvious things are overlooked. Your passport must be valid and should have at least six (6) months of validity beyond the date you plan to enter the U.S. Accompanying family members are also subject to these passport requirements.

If your foreign passport requires renewal and you are in the U.S., you should contact the Embassy of your home government. Renewing a foreign passport while you are in the U.S. can take several weeks or possibly months. It is advisable to renew your passport in your home country if at all possible.

### Visa Waiver (ESTA):

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) allows citizens of certain countries to travel to the U.S. without having to obtain a visa, provided the visit will be less than 90 days for tourism and business purposes. Individuals must enroll in the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) to undergo counterterrorism screening, and ESTA approval must be issued prior to travelling to the U.S. The following travelers are no longer eligible to enter the U.S. under the VWP:

- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled to or been present in Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria on or after March 1, 2011 (with limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country).
- Nationals of VWP countries who are also nationals of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria.

It is advisable for all travelers currently registered for ESTA to check their registration in advance of any travel to the U.S.

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### Permanent Resident Card ("Green card"):

If you are a permanent resident of the U.S., you must have a valid passport to enter the U.S. as well as a valid permanent resident card ("green card"). If your green card has expired and you have a green card renewal application pending with USCIS, you may be eligible to receive a temporary I-551 stamp to allow for travel. The I-551 stamp can be issued via an appointment at a local USCIS office.

### Nonimmigrant Visa ("NIV"):

If you are in the U.S. pursuant to an NIV (such as H-1B, L-1 or B-1), the visa stamp in your passport must be valid in order to enter the U.S. Accompanying family members must also have valid visa stamps. If you plan to renew your visa at a U.S. Consulate when you travel this summer, please remember that:

Your passport must have sufficient validity. For visa issuance, your passport must be valid for at least six (6) months beyond the date the Consulate issues the visa. For some nationalities, the Consulate will require passport validity through the expiration of the visa being issued.

A visit to the Consulate requires an appointment. Appointments are in high demand from June through September, and many Consulates have already opened up their appointment calendars for this peak season. If you need a visa appointment, it's important to confirm availability in advance of your scheduled travel.

Visa processing requires advanced planning. The visa process requires preparation of forms and gathering of necessary documents. Document requirements vary depending on the Consulate, and often requirements and procedures can change. It is important to confirm current procedures and requirements.

You must leave your passport with the Consulate for visa issuance. Processing times vary depending on the Consulate, however the standard processing time from interview to passport return is typically 5 business days.

U.S. Consulates have implemented new questioning for visa applicants who may be subject to "extreme vetting". Applicants from countries targeted in recent executive orders (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) as well as individuals who travel frequently in the Middle East should anticipate additional questions at the Consulate. Applicants subject to this vetting process may be required to provide additional background information including: travel and employment history for the past 15 years; names and dates of birth for family members such as siblings, adult children or former spouse; and social media platforms and identifiers (handles) used in the past 5 years.

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If you have specific concerns or questions about your travel documents, please contact an MVA team member.