



## What is a U.S. Visa?

A citizen of a foreign country who seeks to enter the United States generally must first obtain a U.S. visa, which is placed in the traveler's passport, a travel document issued by the traveler's country of citizenship.

Certain international travelers may be eligible to travel to the United States without a visa if they meet the requirements for visa-free travel. The Visa section of this website is all about U.S. visas for foreign citizens to travel to the United States.

(Note: U.S. citizens don't need a U.S. visa for travel, but when planning travel abroad may need a visa issued by the embassy of the country they wish to visit. In this situation, when planning travel abroad, learn about visa requirements by country, see [Country Specific Travel Information](#) in the Passport section of this website.)

## How Can I Use a Visa to Enter the United States?

Having a U.S. visa allows you to travel to a port of entry, airport or land border crossing, and request permission of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspector to enter the United States. While having a visa does not guarantee entry to the United States, it does indicate a consular officer at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad has determined you are eligible to seek entry for that specific purpose. DHS/CBP inspectors, guardians of the nation's borders, are responsible for admission of travelers to the United States, for a specified status and period of time. DHS also has responsibility for immigration matters while you are present in the United States.

## What Types of Visas Are There?

The type of visa you must obtain is defined by U.S. immigration law, and relates to the purpose of your travel. There are two main categories of U.S. visas:

- U.S. Visas – For travel to the United States on a temporary basis. [Learn more.](#)

