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## Foreign Entry Requirements – Documents American Citizens Need to Travel Abroad

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Checking the foreign entry requirements is one of the first steps to traveling abroad. An understanding what the countries you plan to visit requires of those who wish to enter is essential to preventing unnecessary problems. You will find a list of the most common and some not so common foreign entry requirements in this article.

### Valid United States Passport

The most common foreign entry requirement is a current, valid passport. The United States Department of State defines a passport as "a document issued by a country to a citizen of that country, allowing that person to travel abroad and re-enter the home country." Not only is it a passport required for entry into the country you plan to visit. It is also required for re-entry into the United States. No other document carries as much weight as a passport. It undeniably proves both your identity and your citizenship.

Due to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, a passport or other valid WHTI-compliant document is now required of American citizens who plan to travel by land, sea or air to Canada, Mexico, Bermuda or the Caribbean region. The new passport card can only be used for land and sea travel to these locations.

### Travel Visa

The second most common foreign entry requirement is a travel visa. Most travelers believe that a visa gives them the right to enter the country for which they obtained a visa. The truth is that a visa only gives you permission to arrive at the port-of-entry. There, an authorized official will analyze your entry documents to make sure they are correct. It is the official who will grant you permission to enter or not.

Not all countries require U.S. citizens to obtain a visa in order to visit. Some countries grant visas upon arrival at the port-of-entry. Visas are granted according to the purpose of your trip. The different types include tourist visas, business visas, study visas, work visas, transit visas, crew visas and resident visas.

The easiest to get is a visa for tourism. The usual requirements include a valid passport (many countries require at least six months validity), passport-style photos, completed application form and payment. The other types of visas have additional requirements.

### Other Entry Requirements

While additional foreign entry requirements are not very common, they are mentioned here so that you may be aware of them. These entry requirements are usually demanded of countries where conflict or other serious problems exist. If you believe your destination is such a place, you should verify the exact foreign entry requirements.

Additional requirements might include an immunization record. This is often requested of foreign consular services when you claim on your visa application that you have recently traveled to areas infected with yellow fever, cholera or other such diseases. The United States does not require immunizations for you to return.

Some countries require AIDS/HIV testing. This requirement was much more common just ten years ago. Less and less countries are demanding AIDS/HIV testing as an entry requirement. It is usually only required of applicants who plan to remain for an extended period of time. For example, Cuba requires AIDS/HIV testing from students on scholarship and India requires it from resident visa applicants.

All countries have entry and exit requirements. Some are stricter than other. No matter your destination, you will do yourself a favor by knowing and obtaining the foreign entry requirements for the country or countries you plan to visit.

Go to U.S. Passport Service Guide for a list of [foreign entry requirements](#) to all countries.

Click here to learn how to [expedite passport](#).

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