



SEPTEMBER 2005

# SEE YOU IN THE U.S.A.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS



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Editor, *eJournal USA: Foreign Policy Agenda*  
IIP/T/IS  
U.S. Department of State  
301 4th Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20547  
United States of America  
E-mail: [ejforpol@state.gov](mailto:ejforpol@state.gov)

# ABOUT THIS ISSUE

If you haven't applied for a visa in the last two years, you might not be aware that the United States has made impressive strides in coordinating the competing needs of protecting its borders and welcoming foreign visitors to its homeland. A commitment to fostering international exchanges and maintaining an open society is a continuing hallmark of American values.

Recent changes include expedited appointments for student and business visa applications, better technology on biometric documents, and an increase in the number of immigration officials to assist visa applicants. Beyond that, the United States continues to work on even more initiatives to make international travel faster and safer.

This *eJournal USA* brings together the information you need to make your trip to the United States as easy as possible. It also defines the acronyms of U.S. government travel programs and explains how these fit in with those of other nations.

"See You in the USA" makes clear that the United States wholeheartedly welcomes foreign visitors who desire to study, conduct business, or simply see the sights in its very diverse 50 states.

The journal begins with an explanation of



LAWA Photo by Jay Berkowitz

border-crossing procedures and terms, followed by first-person articles of what it is like to be an American official—a consular officer and a customs and border protection officer—on the other side of the window, trying to determine who is a legitimate short-term traveler.

The following section acquaints the foreign visitor with some less familiar ways of approaching the United States, including the suggestion of an American musical tour by renowned music historian John Edward Hasse.

Experts in international student exchange programs give tips on how to both seek admission and pay for a U.S. college education, while international students write about their time in the United States.

Finally, a panel of government and business experts frankly discuss the issues around obtaining business travel visas. This is followed by two business executives—from Santiago, Chile and Hong Kong—describing their experiences with post-9/11 travel to the United States.

It concludes with a bibliography of relevant readings and a list of useful Internet sites.

We welcome you to this edition of *eJournal USA*.

*The Editors*



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<http://www.usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0905/ijpe/ijpe0905.htm>

# Welcome to the United States

SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE



U.S. Department of State

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Millions of foreign visitors travel to America each year, and each visitor, whether a tourist, a business traveler, or an immigrant, adds to America's cultural, educational, and economic life. I am delighted to welcome all our guests to the United States.

As Americans, we are eager for our international visitors to explore our culture, meet Americans, and see our country. We are equally eager to learn from our visitors about the richness and diversity of their cultures, history, languages, and ideas.

President Bush and I are convinced that developing ties based on respect, understanding, and a grounding in the common values of different countries, backgrounds and faiths will help us all build a safer and better world.

The key to success rests with making individual connections and building understanding.

We believe that travel and people-to-people exchanges can be utterly transformative. Participants in international exchange programs, Americans and foreigners alike, time and time again describe their lives as being forever changed by their experiences.

As a nation of immigrants, the United States has always welcomed visitors. We will continue to work hard to ensure the safety of all people within our borders, tourists and residents alike, and we will continue to cherish the richness and diversity our visitors bring to this great country. ■

# Deciphering The Visa Code

*This article provides a guide to the basics of the visa process, as well as a glossary of specialized terms, and sidebars which provide information about biometrics, recent rules affecting travelers, and some statistics about travel to the United States.*

Like any host country, the United States needs basic information about its guests: who they are, when they are arriving and when they will depart. This information is obtained by issuing visas. Most citizens of foreign countries need visas to enter the United States, but the vast majority of the people who wish to visit the United States are able to do so.

- In 2004, nearly three-fourths of all applicants for a U.S. visa were successful. An even greater majority of those seeking student visas—about 80 percent—received approval.
- In addition, the United States had a 12-percent increase in the number of business and tourism travelers and a four-percent increase in the number of students who came as nonimmigrant visitors last year.

## Visas

A visa is a permit allowing you to apply for entry into a country's borders. Under U.S. law, the Department of State has responsibility for issuing visas. One of its consular officers, after looking at your documents and conducting a short interview, decides whether you qualify for a visa—a process called “adjudication.” Consular officers have the final say on all visa cases.

Just as an application does not guarantee you will get a visa, a visa does not guarantee entry to the United States. It simply indicates that a consular officer has reviewed your application and determined that you are eligible to travel from your country to a U.S. port-of-entry for a specific purpose.



AP/Wide World Photo by Marcio Jose Sanchez

At the port-of-entry, an immigration officer decides whether to grant you admission to the United States. Only a U.S. Department of Homeland Security immigration officer has the authority to permit you to enter. It is highly unusual, however, for a traveler holding a valid visa to be

denied entry.

## The Process

To obtain a visa and enter the United States, you must begin by completing an application form, DS-156 [<http://evisaforms.state.gov>]. Contact the U.S. Embassy in your country [[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies\\_1214.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html)] to make an appointment. Take your application, passport, a photograph, and supporting documents to the embassy or consulate, where you will be interviewed about the purpose of your visit. You must also pay an application fee, currently \$100. The visa allows you to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry where an official will again look at your travel documents before granting you permission to enter the country.

There has been little change in that straightforward process since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, although there have been changes in various procedures in order to address increased security concerns:

- All males between the ages of 16 and 45 are required to complete an additional form, DS-157, to provide a detailed history of their previous travel and their affiliation with various institutions. Consular officers can request that this form be filled out by other applicants as well.
- All student and exchange visitors, regardless

of nationality, must complete a supplemental application form and be enrolled in SEVIS (see page 10) by their sponsoring institution.

- Almost all persons requiring visas must have a face-to-face interview with a consular officer. Previously, consular officers could waive the requirement for an applicant's personal appearance, and some travel agents could submit applications for their clients. Because this is no longer the case, over the past three years the State Department has greatly increased the number of its consular officers and worked to improve appointment scheduling systems.
- Technological systems have been put in place to electronically share visa files and law enforcement and watch-list information, as well as to track student enrollments. Since 2004, the technology, the consolidation of databases, and the correction of problems within these systems have been dramatically improved and backlogs reduced.
- Since 2004, embassies have been instructed to expedite the processing of visas for students and business travelers. As a result, consular posts have set up special appointment times and now give priority to scheduling and processing these visas.
- The United States and many other countries are moving toward tamper-resistant machine-readable visas, passports, and other entry-exit documents that contain digital photographs and biometric indicators, such as fingerprints. For instance, finger scans are taken during the visa application process and again on arrival in the United States.
- Information on the identity of all passengers is provided to U.S. immigration officials by all commercial ships and airplanes en route to the United States.
- Passengers who would normally require a visa to enter the United States must now have one even if they are just in transit, traveling on a carrier that



AP/WWP Photo by Stephen J. Boitano

stops in the United States on its way to another destination.

The requirements and costs for a U.S. visa are similar to those of other democracies; and the need for a visa, additional fees charged, and any restrictions imposed are based on reciprocity with other nations—that is, they match the requirements that other countries place on U.S. citizens wishing to travel there.

## Plan Ahead: Waiting Times

Although the average amount of time it takes to get a visa has been noticeably reduced recently, it is still

very important to plan ahead and start the visa application process as soon as you begin your travel planning. It takes time to fill out the forms, assemble the documents you will need to show the consular officer, and get an interview appointment.

Because your and every applicant's circumstances are unique, the process—and the time involved—varies. Individuals wishing to study or work in the

United States, for example, need to fill out additional forms and provide more documentation than tourists.

Similarly, the average waiting time to get an interview appointment varies by country. U.S. embassies post their estimated wait times at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait.php](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php). If you are a student or business traveler, check for expedited appointments.

The State Department is committed to making the visa application process easier to understand, and a list of important resources can be found at the end of this journal.

## The Interview

It is extremely important that you be well prepared for your visa interview.

Not only must you bring a completed application form, the paid application fee receipt, your valid passport, and a photograph that meets certain criteria (see page 12), you must provide documentation showing that you intend to return to your home country at the end of your stay.

If you are applying for a student visa, you must also have a receipt showing that your SEVIS I-901 fee [<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/i901/faq2.htm>] has been paid.

The consular officer will conduct a short interview,



during which you will be asked to explain your reason for wanting to visit the United States, and review your documents. In addition, your two index fingers will be recorded by a special, inkless digital scanner as part of the US-VISIT program's (see page 10) security precautions, and your identity will be checked against databases containing the names and records of people who are ineligible for visas or whose applications require additional review.

You will be told whether your application has been approved or denied at the end of the interview. Most approved visas are delivered within one week. If there are security concerns, however, it may take a few weeks to resolve the issue through additional screening.

Should you be denied a visa, you can always re-apply with additional documentation, but each time you do so, you will have to pay the non-refundable \$100 visa application fee.

## Visa Denials

The consular officer is required to look at each applicant's individual circumstances and apply U.S. immigration laws accordingly.

The most common reason for being denied a visa is the inability to show that your ties to your home country are so strong that it is highly unlikely you would try to illegally stay in the United States. This refusal is commonly known as 214(b). "Ties" are the various aspects of your life that bind you to your country of residence. This requirement to prove that you have a residence abroad and which you have no intention of abandoning is part

of U.S. law, the Immigration and Nationality Act [<http://www.ufafis.org/visa/visadenials.asp>].

You can demonstrate your intent to return home by showing things that would compel you to leave the United States at the end of a temporary stay: a job or enrollment in an academic program in your home country; family members still living there; substantial property holdings such as a house or money in a local bank account, etc. There is no distinct group of documents that you must present to the consular officer or set of circumstances that will guarantee visa issuances, but the facts of your case must be convincing. The law places the burden of proof for meeting this residence abroad requirement on you.

If you are refused a visa for failure to prove you will return home, and your circumstances later change, or you have gathered further evidence of your ties, you may reapply, but you will be charged another application fee.

Consular officers are aware of the cultural and social differences that can define ties in different countries and understand that younger applicants may not have had an opportunity to form many significant financial attachments. They consider all these circumstances when adjudicating visas.

Other reasons for visa denials include having a contagious disease, a criminal history, or association with terrorist activities.

Following are some terms you may find helpful in deciphering the visa code. Links to more comprehensive explanations are provided at the end of each definition.

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## Glossary of Visa-Related Terms



AP/WideWorld Photo by Sergey Ponomarev

**Biometrics:** Biometrics are the means of identifying a person by biological features that are unique to each individual, such as fingerprints or eye scans of the complex patterns in one's iris.

Biometric identifiers protect you by making it extremely difficult for anyone else to assume your identity, even if your travel documents are stolen or duplicated. They guarantee that the person carrying a passport or visa is the person to whom it was issued.

[<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?content=4542>]



AP/WideWorld Photo by Bobbie Hernandez

**Border Crossing Card (BCC):** The Mexican-U.S. border-crossing card, allowing card-holders to move easily through border immigration controls, is available to qualified travelers to use as a B1/B2 (business/tourist) visa. It contains many security features, is valid for 10 years, and is often called a "laser visa."

Even before the 2001 terrorist attacks occurred, U.S. law stipulated that all BCCs must contain a biometric identifier, such as fingerprint, and be machine-readable. The BCC program then became the model for subsequent U.S. secure entry/exit procedures.

[[http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info\\_1336.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info_1336.html)]



out a machine-readable passport or a visa, do not expect to be granted entry. In fact, you will probably not be allowed to board a carrier to get to the United States without an MRP.

Check with your nation's passport agency if you are not sure if your passport is machine-readable.

[<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?content=4499>]

**NEXUS:** Frequent travelers between Canada and the United States should consider applying for the existing NEXUS program designed to simplify land, air, and sea border crossings for pre-approved, low-risk travelers between the two nations.

Applicants are interviewed, provide a biometric scan, and undergo a background check. Both countries must agree to a person's inclusion in the program. Once approved, NEXUS travelers are issued a photo-identification card that allows them to move quickly through border inspections via dedicated travel lanes.

This voluntary program has been in place since 2002. A single application is sufficient to meet both the U.S. and Canadian requirements for enrollment. Group travelers should be aware, however, that everyone traveling together must be a member of the program in order to use a NEXUS lane.

[[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travell/frequent\\_traveler/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travell/frequent_traveler/)]

**Non-immigrant Visa (NIV):** When you wish to travel to the United States for a temporary period—as a tourist, for business, or to take part in an academic program—you are classified as a nonimmigrant.

[<http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/visas.htm#non>]

#### **National Security Entry/Exit Registration System**

**(NSEERS):** NSEERS is a special registry for non-immigrant visitors who, based on intelligence criteria, are identified as posing an elevated security concern for a variety of reasons.

The program requires these visitors to check in periodically to verify their location, and to show that they are complying with the terms under which they were granted admission to the United States, such as attending classes if on a student visa, not engaging in illegal activities, and/or not staying beyond their visa expiration date.

Following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, NSEERS was put in place as a first step toward developing a full entry and exit record of non-immigrant visitors. With the SEVIS and US-VISIT databases now in operation, there is no longer a re-registration requirement for whole groups of visitors — such as those from certain countries. The Department of Homeland Security can, however, still require individuals to appear for additional registration interviews during their stays.

[<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/specialregistration/index.htm>]

**Reciprocity:** Certain aspects of visas—such as visa issuance fees or the length of time a visa remains valid—are based on reciprocity: that is, the United States matches the fees and restrictions that another country places on U.S. citizens for its visas.

Countries often work together to eliminate citizen exchange barriers. For example, in 2005, China and the United States reached agreements allowing qualified students, business travelers, and tourists to obtain 12-month visas that allow multiple entries. Previously, the standard had been six-month visas with a two-entry limit.

[<http://travel.state.gov/visa/reciprocity/index.htm>]

**Secure Electronic Network for Travelers' Rapid Inspection (SENTRI):** The international land border between Mexico and the United States is the busiest in the world. In 1995, as a way to ease the traffic wait time for frequent travelers,

## THE MAJOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS

- B-1 Temporary visitor for business;
- B-2 Temporary visitor for pleasure/tourism;
- F-1 Academic student;
- F-2 Spouse or child of F-1
- J-1 Exchange visitors
- J-2 Spouse or child of J-1
- M-1 Vocation or non-academic student
- M-2 Spouse or child of M-1



AP/WWP Photo by David Maung

dedicated commuter lanes were created under the SENTRI program.

The number of SENTRI participants has grown dramatically in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks and, in response, the U.S. government recently took steps to process enrollments faster by adding personnel, employing new technologies, and extending the enrollment period from one to two years. Persons applying must provide electronic fingerprints for pre-screening, and pay a fee for themselves, their family members, and their vehicles. The vehicle and everyone in it must be enrolled in the

program to use a SENTRI lane.

[\[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travell/frequent\\_traveler/sentri.xml\]](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travell/frequent_traveler/sentri.xml)

**Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS):** All incoming international students must be registered by their host institutions in SEVIS, a database maintaining information on students and exchange visitors in the United States, before they can obtain a visa. The Web-based system, which replaced a paper-based system in 2002, enables U.S. academic institutions to maintain accurate and timely data on foreign students, exchange visitors and their dependents, and to communicate this information in real time to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State. SEVIS is administered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), part of DHS.

[\[http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/index.htm\]](http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/index.htm)

**United States Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT):** This automated entry/exit system collects biometric data on visitors to reduce the opportunity for fraud and prevent criminals from entering the country.



AP/WWP Photo by Gregory Smith

All non-immigrant visitors between the ages of 14 and 79 holding visas—regardless of race, national origin, or religion—participate in the US-VISIT program, as do visitors traveling under the Visa Waiver Program.

For most travelers, the process begins during the visa interview at a U.S. consulate, where applicants must provide a photo that meets certain guidelines and have an electronic scan taken of their two index fingers. When they arrive at a U.S. port-of-entry, another digital photograph and another two-finger scan will be taken for a comparison check.

In addition, the identity information is run through shared law enforcement databases to check for criminal records, aliases, or terrorist-related watch-list warnings. Information on stolen or lost passports is also being incorporated into these databases.

Nearly 30 million travelers have taken part in US-VISIT since it began operation at 115 airports, 13 seaports, and the 50 busiest land ports in 2004. The Department of Homeland Security, which operates the program, plans to have the entry procedures in place at all remaining land ports by the end of 2005, and is currently testing similar exit procedures at 12 airports and two seaports.

US-VISIT not only enhances security for everyone, it allows immigration officials quickly to identify and welcome legitimate travelers to the United States.

Most Mexicans and Canadians participate in other entry-exit programs and are exempt from US-VISIT enrollment.

[\[http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublicinterapp/editorial/editorial\\_0525.xml\]](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublicinterapp/editorial/editorial_0525.xml)

[\[http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublicinterapp/content\\_multi\\_image/content\\_multi\\_image\\_0006.xml\]](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublicinterapp/content_multi_image/content_multi_image_0006.xml)

[\[http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublicinterapp/editorial/editorial\\_0435.xml](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublicinterapp/editorial/editorial_0435.xml) (Multilingual Videos and Brochures)]

[\[US-VISIT Step-by-Step Entry Guide \(PDF, 1 page, 609 KB\)\]](#)

[\[US-VISIT Step-by-Step Exit Guide \(PDF, 1 page, 768 KB\)\]](#)

**Visa Waiver Program (VWP):** The Visa Waiver Program was instituted in 1986 to promote tourism and facilitate travel among U.S. allies by allowing business travelers and tourists visiting the United States for less than 90 days to enter without visas. Not all U.S. allies take part in the program and, depending on the purpose of their travel and legal bars to their admission to the United States, not all citizens from VWP countries are qualified to participate in this program.

The 27 countries participating in the VWP are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand,

Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Some travelers from Mexico, Canada, and Bermuda enter the United States visa-free, but based on a different legal basis than VWP travelers. Passport requirements for VWP travelers do not apply to travelers from Mexico, Canada, and Bermuda.

To be included in the VWP, a country must meet legislative requirements that include, among other things, provision of reciprocal visa-free travel for U.S. citizens, production of machine-readable passports, prompt reporting of the theft of passports, a refusal rate of less than three-percent for U.S. visas, and a low overstay and immigration violation rate by visitors from that country. In addition, countries must have a biometric passport program and be able to demonstrate strong document and border security, immigration controls, and law enforcement cooperation, so that their participation in the program would not be a threat to U.S. security or law enforcement interests.

VWP travelers must have machine readable passports and, depending on when their passport is issued, may also be required to have biometric passports with digitized photos or e-passports. VWP travelers are screened prior to admission to the United States, and take part in the US-VISIT program.

*[[http://www.travel.state.gov/visaltemp/without/without\\_1990.html#1](http://www.travel.state.gov/visaltemp/without/without_1990.html#1)]*

**Western Hemisphere Traveler Initiative:** By far, the largest number of nonimmigrant travelers to the United States come from our neighbors to the north and south, Canada and Mexico. In the past, our relationships with these countries, and with Bermuda, allowed for special passport-free, visa-free, or other border crossing programs.

In the new security environment, however, valid passports or other specified, secure documents will eventually be needed for all these citizens, including our own, to enter or re-enter the United States from any country in the Western Hemisphere. Travel between the United States and its territories is not affected by the new law.

Since the volume of travel between these nations is so high, new requirements will be phased in according to the following proposed timeline:

- December 31, 2006—A passport or another accepted document will be required for all air and sea travel to or from Mexico, Canada, and Bermuda, as well as Central and South America and the Caribbean;
- December 31, 2007—A passport or another accepted document will be required for all air, sea, and land border crossings into the United States from countries in the Western Hemisphere.

What are other acceptable documents? The United States currently offers secure travel cards under the SENTRI, NEXUS, FAST, and BCC programs (see above), and is using new technologies to create other document options.

Persons traveling between countries in the Western Hemisphere should understand that Social Security cards and drivers licenses are no longer acceptable substitute documents for entry into the United States.

Another issue to note: single parents, grandparents, or guardians traveling with children may be asked for either proof of custody or a notarized letter from the absent parent authorizing the transportation of children across borders. This requirement evolved from international concern about child abduction. In addition, if you are under the age of 18 and traveling alone, you should carry a letter from a parent or guardian authorizing your trip across borders. Without such documentation, travelers could experience delays at their U.S. port-of-entry.

*[[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/lebygf/west\\_hem\\_init](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/lebygf/west_hem_init)]* ■

# BIOMETRICS: FROM EYE COLOR TO EYE SCAN

The word “biometrics” is often misunderstood. It simply means a measurable biological characteristic that can be used for automated recognition. Early non-automated forerunners of biometrics have been used in travel control documents for a very long time.

At least as early as the 1700s, ship manifests dutifully recorded in writing such things as the age, height, weight, eye color, distinguishing marks, and complexion to describe each passenger. As the photograph came into being in the 1800s—and the color photograph in the 1900s—it replaced many of these more primitive descriptors as the general means by which to identify travelers.

It should not be surprising then, that with the advent of even more sophisticated technology, automated biometric indicators have replaced these forerunners as the norm—especially in this era of new threats.



AP/WWP Photo by Chuck Stoody

Digital photographs allow for mapping the contours of one’s face and skin texture. Scans of the eye measure the pattern of the iris that is unique to each person; and capturing finger scans no longer entails using a roller, wet ink, and fingerprint cards. You merely place your index fingers on an electronic reader, and verification of your identity occurs rapidly.

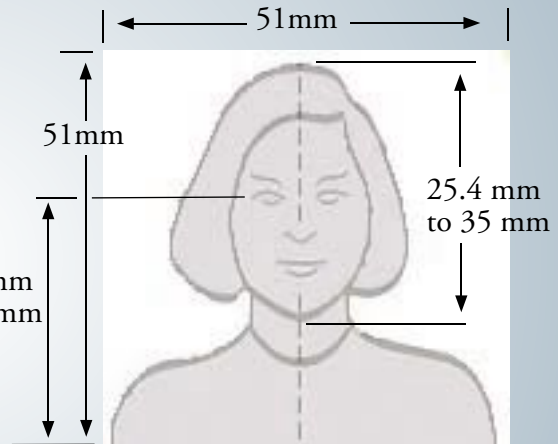
The United States is far from alone in plans to use biometrics in travel documents—members of the European Union and Association of Southeast Asian Nations are taking the same steps to make international travel safer for all.

[[http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info\\_1336.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info_1336.html)] ■

## VISA PHOTOGRAPH REQUIREMENTS

*When applying for a visa, you must bring a single, unsigned photograph to the interview and the photograph must meet specific criteria:*

- It must have been taken within the last six months and it must be the original. Copied or digitally scanned photos cannot be accepted.
- It may be in color or in black and white, but it may not be tinted.
- The size must be 51 x 51 mm square, with your face, centered, measuring not less than 25.4 mm nor more than 35 mm from the top of your head to the bottom of your chin. There should be 28.6 to 35 mm from the bottom of the photo to your eyes.
- The photograph must give a clear, front view of the full face, with eyes open and looking straight ahead, against a white or off-white background.
- Do not wear dark glasses unless you have a certificate showing that you need them for medical reasons. If wearing regular eyeglasses, the eyes must still be visible in the photograph.
- Wear normal street clothes. Do not wear a hat or other head coverings. Some exceptions can be made for religious attire, but nothing can obscure any part of the face.



For more details, check your U.S. Embassy website [[http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/US\\_Embassies.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/US_Embassies.html)].

# SHOES OFF, ARMS OUT?: NEW TRAVELLING RULES

If you have traveled at all in the past few years, you've probably already stood in security lines while your bags were x-rayed and you and your fellow passengers produced your identification papers numerous times, took cell phones and laptops out of their cases and turned them on, emptied pockets of coins and keys, stripped off your shoes, belts and jewelry, and then stood, arms outstretched, while an electronic wand was waved around your body, possibly to determine what caused all that beeping when you stepped through the metal detector.

Remember: This is a good time to keep your sense of humor, but it is not a good time to make jokes.

Comments about guns, bombs, box cutters, hijackings and anything else related to terrorist activities that have caused the deaths of thousands of innocent travelers will be taken seriously. At the very least, you will be detained—not a good way to start your journey.

It is important to arrive early at your departure site—90 minutes to two hours is the general rule. International travelers usually go through three lines—once at check-in, once for the examination of checked luggage, and once at the personal security check-through. Being late for your flight will not get you moved to the front of these security lines.

To make things move faster for yourself and for those waiting in line behind you, make use of the following tips:

- Read the permitted and prohibited items list: [http://www.tsa.gov/publicinterapp/editorial/editorial\\_1012.xml](http://www.tsa.gov/publicinterapp/editorial/editorial_1012.xml). Some things that are not allowed in your carry-on baggage can be carried in your checked luggage. And, no, your fingernail clippers will not be taken away from you.
- Keep your passport and boarding pass readily available. You will be asked for these documents more than once, so there is no point in burying them in the bottom of a well-stuffed purse or carry-on bag.
- How you dress for an international flight can make a difference in how quickly you can move through security. Shoes with thick soles or metal stays will set off the metal detector. Since you may be asked to remove your shoes, intricate laces, long rows of clasps, buckles, or other fasteners that take time to get your footwear off and on will hold up the line. Smart travelers wear slip-on shoes, which are also convenient for getting comfortable on long international flights.
- Although you will not be asked to remove your clothes (other than coats, suit jackets, and blazers), clothing with metal

buttons and buckles will definitely cause the beepers to go off and you will need to be “wanded” which, again, uses up time for everybody. Wear comfortable clothing with a minimum of metal fasteners.

- Keep in mind that you will have to remove much of your jewelry if it contains metal, and you will also have to empty your pockets of coins, keys, cell phones, and other bulky items. Even full packs of cigarettes can set off the beepers. It takes time to take things off and put them back on, to empty each of your pockets and fill them up again. Dress accordingly. If you have lots of pocket items, put them in a clear plastic bag so you can pull it out for inspection in one easy go and are not patting yourself down repeatedly while your fellow travelers are glancing at their watches. Even better, put the plastic bag in your carry-on luggage and retrieve it after clearing the



AP/WWP Photo by Stewart F. House

inspection point.

- Pack your valuables and fragile items such as jewelry, cash, cameras, and laptop computers in carry-on baggage only. If you are traveling with a laptop computer, remember that you will have to remove it from its case and turn it on for inspectors. You may be asked to do the same with other electronic devices.
- Put all undeveloped film in your carry-on baggage because the checked-baggage screening equipment could damage it. Don't hold things up by trying to locate

and remove it from your suitcase while in an inspection line.

- Do not pack wrapped gifts and do not bring wrapped gifts to the security checkpoint. This will assuredly cause you to be pulled aside for further inspection. And use common sense: if you bought Aunt Berta a great set of knives, pack them—unwrapped—in your checked, not your carry-on luggage. Items confiscated at security checkpoints are not returned, and you wouldn't want to disappoint Aunt Berta.
- If you wish to lock your baggage, use a Transportation Security Administration (TSA)-recognized lock [[http://www.tsa.gov/publicinterapp/editorial/editorial\\_multi\\_image\\_with\\_table\\_0234.xml](http://www.tsa.gov/publicinterapp/editorial/editorial_multi_image_with_table_0234.xml)]; otherwise you may find the fastener on your bag broken when you arrive at your destination. Checked luggage may randomly undergo additional inspections before being loaded onto the carrier. If your bag is chosen, it will be opened—so it's best to allow unfettered access. ■

# On The Other Side Of The Visa Window

JON PIECHOWSKI, VISA OFFICER  
U.S. EMBASSY CAIRO, EGYPT

The visa interview can be a stressful experience on both sides of the window. I know that because, as a visa officer at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, one of the largest embassies in the world, my primary job is to conduct those interviews and make decisions on non-immigrant visa applications for people who want to study, do business, or simply visit the United States.

In an average week, I serve more than 300 customers, almost all of whom come from Egypt and the Sudan.

And that isn't my only job. I also serve, on a rotating basis, as duty officer for the embassy, which means I am responsible for assisting American citizens in Egypt who are in need of emergency help.

Applicants who understand that consular officers have limited time to make each adjudication will find their visa interview much more manageable. A little pre-interview homework goes a long way. Preparing specific information that pertains to their case—like the purpose of their trip, showing how they will pay for it, and providing proof of significant ties to their own country, will save a lot of time and anxiety. Bringing this material along to the interview is extremely important.

I would also advise applicants to be honest and direct in their answers and not to be afraid to ask the consular officer to repeat questions. I know that my pronunciation in Arabic is not perfect, and that the words don't always come out the way they're supposed to, so I am always willing to try again.

After reviewing the forms submitted by the applicant and conducting the interview, I am required to apply U.S. immigration law to each situation. I must justify all of my decisions according to U.S. law. For most



Photo Courtesy of U.S. Embassy Cairo

non-immigrant visas, I must consider whether the applicant has shown significant ties to a residence outside of the United States, a requirement designed to prevent illegal immigration, which applies to visa applicants all over the world. Applicants should, therefore, give careful thought to how they will meet this requirement prior to their interview.

In most cases, I am able to issue a visa to the applicant.

Sometimes, however, I have to refuse. This is always a difficult decision for me because I understand that people have a strong desire to visit my country.

One of the biggest misconceptions here in Egypt is that, after the 2001 terrorist attacks, consular officers began routinely refusing applications of Muslim men with beards and women with the hijab. This is just not true.

Although the attacks changed some aspects of the visa process, such as requiring personal interviews of all applicants and using finger scans to improve the security of our visas, they could never alter our fundamental pride and belief in keeping the United States open to legitimate travelers.

Like most of my colleagues, I joined the Foreign Service because I enjoy traveling, learning foreign languages, living abroad, and meeting people from different walks of life. My wife and I consider ourselves very lucky to be in Cairo, Egypt, the city of a thousand minarets, a city of great history and cultural importance, and to be working with its impressive people.

We will always look back on our time in Egypt as a special and memorable period in our lives, and I hope that the visas I adjudicate every day will allow Egyptians to visit my country and feel the same. ■



# Border Officers: First To Protect, First To Welcome

KATHLEEN FAWS, CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION OFFICER  
PORT OF WASHINGTON  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

**M**y name is Kathleen Faws. I am a Customs and Border Protection Officer (CBPO) for the Port of Washington at Washington Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C.

On any given day, I see between 200 and 300 passengers, from all walks of life, many with interesting backgrounds and reasons for visiting the United States.

Among the questions I ask all passengers is the purpose of their trip. I have met many parents coming to visit children who are either studying at U.S. schools or who have moved permanently to the United States and now have children of their own.

One couple I met was coming to visit their son who was studying at a university. When I asked how long their visit would be, they answered that it would be about two weeks. Then the woman smiled and said that it would be two weeks—unless their son sent them home sooner. As a parent myself, I understood exactly what she meant and we shared a laugh at our common experience.

Another passenger was coming here from Great Britain to visit some U.S. citizens who are veterans of World War II. When he was a boy, these men crashed their military plane on his parents' farm in England. Over the years, he said, most of their reunions had taken place back at his family farm, but now it was getting harder for the aging veterans to travel, so he was making the trip to the United States for their reunion.

I especially enjoy talking to children who are coming to the United States for the first time. If they are coming to visit the sights in the Washington, D.C., area, I like to know what, in particular, they are most eager to see. One



Photo Courtesy of Department of Homeland Security

little boy told me that he wanted to go to the Air and Space Museum. After a few moments, he offered that his little sister wanted to see Toys-R-Us.

While it is a pleasure to meet so many people from such diverse backgrounds, it is the mission of the CBP officers to be guardians of America's borders. We are the front line, and it is our responsibility to enforce the laws of the United States and protect the American public against terrorists and the instruments of terror.

Here at the Port of Washington, we serve approximately 42 international flights per day with passengers coming from all corners of the world. It is our responsibility to ensure that passengers have the proper documentation, whether on a return or initial visit to the United States. This task must be accomplished relatively quickly, since a lot of passengers arrive at the same time and many may have connecting flights.

We must decide in a short period of time that the passenger is who he or she claims to be, has the proper documentation, and is not here in the United States to do harm to our country, either physically or economically.

The new security procedures we now have in place help with that. We check passports, photos, and visas against several databases to make sure they haven't been stolen or altered, rapidly scan and compare a passenger's digital fingerprints, and conduct a brief conversation to determine entry eligibility.

Most current travelers have heard of the US-VISIT (United States Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology) program, which was put in place to enhance the security of both American citizens and our visitors,

make legitimate international travel and trade go more smoothly, ensure the integrity of our immigration system, and protect the privacy of our visitors.

As a general rule, we complete a US-VISIT transaction for all visitors between the ages of 14 and 79. This includes a fingerprint reading by a digital scanner for both the right and left index fingers and taking a photograph. It is a very quick process that adds minimal time to the inspection process. Travelers have rapidly become accustomed to the procedure, and most understand that it is an important security measure. Normally, the only passengers who express unhappiness with the procedure are the children under 14 who are disappointed not to have their own fingerprints and photograph taken. It must look like fun to them.

All customs and border protection officers hold a tremendous responsibility in being able to grant or deny entry into the United States, as well as being the first persons to greet legitimate travelers. We take pride in doing our job well. ■

## TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES- BY THE NUMBERS

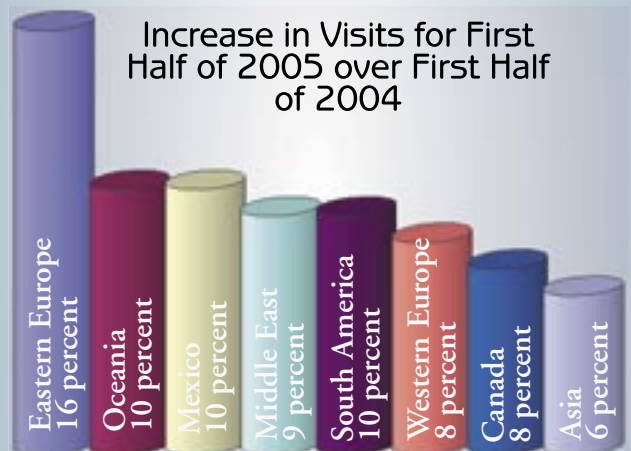
### Approval Rates in 2004

- U.S. Visas Worldwide 75%
- Student Visas 80%

### Travelers in 2004

- Business: 4.6 million
- International Visitors: 46 million

### Increase in Visits for First Half of 2005 over First Half of 2004



### Double-digit Increases of Visitors from June 2004 to June 2005

- Argentina • Australia • Brazil
- China • France • Italy • Mexico
- the Netherlands • South Korea
- Spain • Sweden

### Visits in 2004

- Peak month July: 3.3 million
- Lowest month February : 2.1 million

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

# Something for Everyone

The millions of tourists who come to the United States each year soon discover that the United States is a large country and that many of its famous attractions are thousands of miles apart. It is just not possible to see everything on a single, or even a series of visits. So planning ahead is essential.

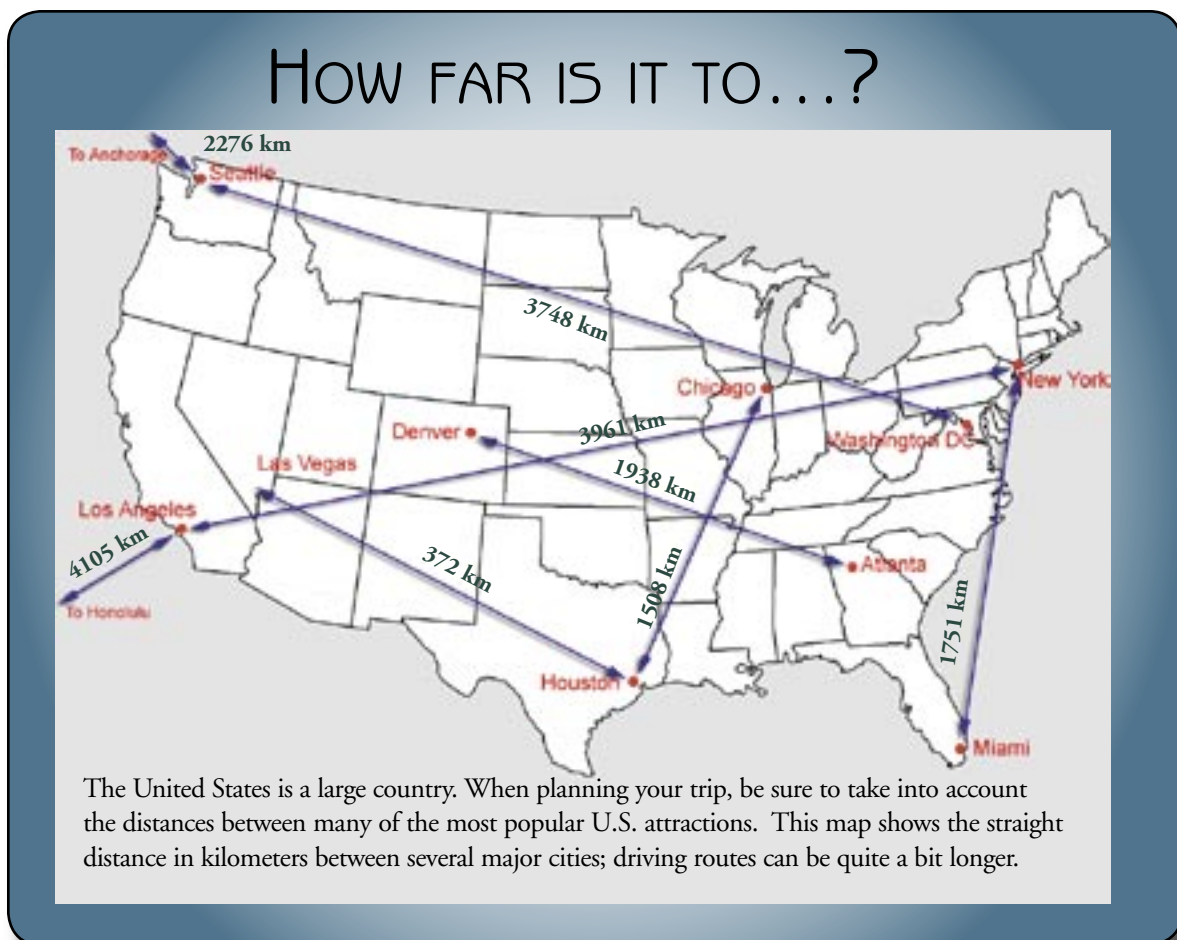
Although the government does not maintain a national tourism bureau, the Travel Industry Association of America [<http://www.seeamerica.org>] and each of the states offer extensive information on things to see and do [<http://www.statelocalgov.net/50states-tourism.cfm>]. Travel agencies, automobile clubs, hotels, and other businesses also provide tourist information and can be located on the Internet.

There are many ways to organize a vacation: you might settle on a single city and the area around it—such as Miami, Florida or San Francisco, California, or a particular region of the country—such as New England or the Great Lakes of the upper Midwest, or a particular sight—such as Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming or the Ozark National Scenic Riverways in Missouri.

In the next two essays, we supply some additional organizing suggestions: pianist and award-winning music historian Dr. John Edward Hasse proposes a trip arranged around America's musical heritage; this is followed by a photo-story of other tourist possibilities such as fairs, farms, and vineyards, historical reenactments, enjoyable U.S. eccentricities, and sporting events.

The United States is diverse in its people and its geography, offering something for everyone.

Whatever your preferences, we're sure you'll find something of interest. Wherever you go, you will find people of openness, generosity, and warm hospitality. ■



# A Musical Tour of America

JOHN EDWARD HASSE, PHD

CURATOR OF AMERICAN MUSIC, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

*There are dozens of ways to organize a visit to the United States—you can tour its major cities, hike the national parks, or sightsee the famous monuments. In this essay, Dr. John Hasse suggests a more unique way: explore America by touring its many and varied musical shrines which can be found in every region of the country.*

Even people who have never visited the United States are familiar with its music. During its nearly 230 years as a nation, this country has developed an enormous amount of original music that is astonishing in its variety, vitality, creativity, and artistic accomplishment. Running the gamut from the humblest banjo tunes and down-home dances to the haunting blues of Robert Johnson and the brilliant jazz cadenzas of Charlie Parker, American music is one of the most important contributions the United States has made to world culture.

Arguably, no nation in history has created such a wealth of vibrant and influential musical styles as has the United States. American music reflects the energy, diversity, spirit, and creativity of its people. You don't have to understand English to feel the power of Aretha Franklin, the plaintiveness of Hank Williams, the *joie de vivre* of Louis Armstrong, the directness of Johnny Cash, the virtuosity of Ella Fitzgerald, or the energy of Elvis Presley.

These musicians and their musical genres are available to people around the world via recordings, downloads, Internet radio, Voice of America broadcasts, and television and video. But to really appreciate and understand them, there is nothing like visiting the places where they were born, and where their musical creations evolved and are preserved.

This article offers visitors a unique tour of the United States by surveying music museums and shrines across the country. Other musical traditions brought here by more recent immigrants—such as salsa and mariachi—and other new U.S. styles, including grunge,

rap, and hip-hop, have yet to be associated with dedicated museums or historical landmarks. They are, though, easy to find in nightclubs and festivals, or by searching the World Wide Web. Nightclubs come and go at a dizzying pace, and new festivals pop up all the time, so the emphasis here is on those locations that are likely to be around in the years ahead.

**Jazz.** Jazz is the most consequential, influential, and innovative music to emerge from the United States, and New Orleans, Louisiana is widely known

as the birthplace of jazz. No city, except perhaps for New York City, has received more visiting jazz aficionados than New Orleans. In the wake of the devastating blow to the “Crescent City” by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, unfortunately, international jazz enthusiasts may need to remain alert to news reports concerning the rebuilding of New Orleans.

New Orleans residents and jazz devotees worldwide eagerly await the reopening

of the French Quarter and Preservation Hall [<http://www.preservationhall.com>], a bare-bones pair of wooden rooms that has served since 1961 as a shrine of sorts to the traditional New Orleans sound. Other New Orleans treasures that will be revived include the Louisiana State Museum's exhibition on jazz [<http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/site>], complete with the musical instruments of Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke and other early jazz masters, and the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Visitor Center [<http://www.nps.gov/jazz>], which will once again offer self-guided walking tours and other information from its North Peters Street location.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Kansas City, Missouri was a



AP/WWP Photo by Jennifer Szymaszek  
Musical giant and Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, Wynton Marsalis, performs on his trumpet.

hotbed of jazz—Count Basie, Charlie Parker, Mary Lou Williams, and other greats performed there. You can get a sense of the music by visiting the old jazz district around 18th and Vine Streets, where you'll find the American Jazz Museum [<http://www.americanjazzmuseum.com>] and the historic Gem Theater.

In New York City, jazz from all periods can be heard in the city's many historic nightclubs, including the Village Vanguard [<http://www.villagevanguard.net/frames.htm>], the Blue Note [<http://www.bluenote.net>], and Birdland [<http://www.birdlandjazz.com>]. Harlem's Apollo Theater [<http://www.apollotheater.com>] has seen many great jazz artists, as has Carnegie Hall [<http://www.carnegiehall.org>] located at 57th Street and 7th Avenue. The city's newest jazz shrine is Jazz at Lincoln Center [<http://www.jazzatlincolncenter.org>], a \$130-million facility, opened in October 2004, featuring a 1,200-seat concert hall, another 400-seat hall with breathtaking views overlooking Central Park, and a 140-seat nightclub, Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola.

In the Queens area of New York City stands the home of, to my mind, the most influential U.S. jazz musician, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong (1901-71). The Louis Armstrong House [<http://www.satchmo.net>] offers tours and a small gift shop.

**Ragtime.** This syncopated, quintessentially piano music is one of the roots of jazz. A small display of artifacts from Scott Joplin, "The King of Ragtime Writers," is at the State Fair Community College in Sedalia, Missouri—the town where Joplin composed his famous Maple Leaf Rag. Sedalia hosts the annual Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival. In much larger St. Louis, you can visit one of Joplin's homes, the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site [<http://www.mostateparks.com/scottjoplin.htm>].

**Blues.** The twelve-bar blues is arguably the only musical form created wholly in the United States; and the state of Mississippi is often considered the birthplace of the blues. Certainly the state produced many leading blues musicians, including Charley Patton, Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and B.B. King. Most came out of the broad floodplain known as the Mississippi Delta, which runs 200 miles along the Mississippi River from Memphis, Tennessee south to Vicksburg,



AP/WWP Photo by Amanda Bicknell  
Blues guitarist W.C. Clark enjoys performing.

Mississippi. This part of Mississippi boasts three modest blues museums: the Delta Blues Museum [<http://www.deltabluesmuseum.org>] in Clarksdale, the Blues & Legends Hall of Fame Museum [<http://www.bluesmuseum.org>] in Robinsonville, and the Highway 61 Blues Museum located [<http://www.highway61blues.com>] in Leland.

Highway 61 is a kind of blues highway, the road traveled by blues

musicians heading north to Memphis, Tennessee. In Memphis, there is a statue of W.C. Handy, composer of "St. Louis Blues" and "Memphis Blues," on famed Beale Street [<http://www.bealestreet.com>] as well as a B.B. King's Blues Club [<http://www.bbkingclubs.com>].

**Bluegrass Music.** Bluegrass music—syncopated string-band music from the rural hills and "hollers" (hollows or valleys) of the eastern U.S. Appalachian mountain range—has found a growing audience among city-dwellers. You can visit the International Bluegrass Music Museum [<http://www.bluegrass-museum.org>] in Owensboro, Kentucky and the smaller Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Hall of Fame [<http://www.beanblossom.com>] in Bean Blossom, Indiana. A newly-designated driving route, the Crooked Road: Virginia's Music Heritage Trail [<http://www.thecrookedroad.org/>], is a 250-mile route in scenic southwestern Virginia that connects such sites as the Ralph Stanley Museum, the Carter Family Fold, the Blue Ridge Music Center, and the Birthplace of Country Music Museum.

**Country Music.** Long the epicenter of country music, Nashville, Tennessee boasts the Grand Ole Opry [<http://www.opry.com>], home of the world's longest-running live radio broadcast, with performances highlighting the diversity of country music every Friday and Saturday night, and the impressive Country Music Hall of Fame [<http://www.countrymusichalloffame.com>].



AP/WWP Photo by John Russell  
Little Jimmy Dickens is a tradition at the Grand Ole Opry.

Its permanent exhibit, *Sing Me Back Home: A Journey Through Country Music*, draws from a rich collection of costumes, memorabilia, instruments, photographs, manuscripts, and other objects to tell the story of country music.

Nearby are Historic RCA Studio B, where Elvis Presley, Chet Atkins, and other stars recorded, and Hatch Show Print, one of the oldest letterpress print shops in America whose posters have featured many of country music's top performers. In Nashville, you can also see Ryman Auditorium [<http://www.ryman.com>], former home to the Grand Ole Opry, as well as many night spots, such as the Bluebird Café [<http://www.bluebirdcafe.com>], one of the nation's leading venues for up-and-coming songwriters. In Meridian, Mississippi, the Jimmie Rogers Museum [<http://www.jimmierodgers.com>] pays tribute to one of country music's founding figures.

**Rock, Rhythm & Blues, and Soul.** Rock 'n' roll music



AP/WWP Photo  
Elvis Presley performs in 1973.

shook up the nation and the world, and more than 50 years after emerging, it continues to fascinate and animate hundreds of millions of listeners around the globe. Memphis, Tennessee, is home to Elvis Presley's kitschy but interesting home known as Graceland [<http://www.elvis.com>], the Sun Studio [<http://www.sunstudio.com>] where Elvis made his first recordings (and many other famous musicians have subsequently recorded), the Stax Museum of American Soul [<http://www.staxmuseum.com>] which covers Stax, Hi, and Atlantic Records, and the Memphis and Muscle Shoals sounds.

The Memphis Rock and Soul Museum features a superb Smithsonian exhibition tying together the story of Memphis from the 1920s to the 1980s with blues, rock, and soul—from W. C. Handy through Elvis and Booker T. and the MGs [<http://www.memphisrocknsoul.org>].

Detroit, Michigan offers the Motown Historical Museum [<http://www.motownmuseum.com>] with memorabilia from the Supremes, Temptations, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin and other soul singers who recorded for Motown Records.

If you're a big Buddy Holly fan, you might trek to the Buddy

Holly Center [<http://www.buddyhollycenter.org>] in Lubbock, Texas.

The formidable Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame [<http://www.rockhall.com>] in Cleveland, Ohio fills a stunning building designed by renowned architect I.M. Pei with hundreds of rock and roll artifacts and audio-visual samples. In Seattle, Washington, The Experience Music Project in the Frank Gehry-designed building [<http://www.emplive.org>] is a unique, interactive museum, which focuses on popular music and rock.



AP/WWP Photo by Edward Stapel  
Emmylou Harris sings at the Newport Folk Festival.

**Folk Music.** Most nations have their own indigenous music—in Europe and the United States it is often categorized as “folk music.” Folk music is passed along from one person to the next via oral or aural tradition, i.e., it is taught by ear rather than through written music. Typically the origin of the songs and instrumentals is shrouded in mystery and many different variants (or versions) of each piece exist, honed through the ears, voices, fingers, and sensibilities of many different performers. The easiest way to find live folk music is at one of the many folk music festivals held throughout the United States. The biggest is the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival [<http://www.folklife.si.edu>] held every June and July on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The 40th annual festival will be held in 2006.

**Latino Music.** Of course, the United States is a “New World” country of immigrants and each new ethnic group that arrives brings its own musical traditions which, in turn, continue to inevitably change and evolve as they take root in their non-native soil. Hispanics now account for the largest minority group in the United States, and

they practice many musical traditions.

Played by ensembles of trumpet, violin, guitar, vihuela, and guitarrón, Mexican mariachi music can be heard in many venues in the American Southwest; the closest thing to a mariachi shrine is La Fonda de Los Camperos, a restaurant at 2501 Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, which in 1969 pioneered in creating mariachi dinner theater. Bandleader-violinist Nati Cano has been honored with the U.S. government's highest award in folk and traditional arts, and his idea of mariachi dinner theater has spread to Tucson, Arizona; Santa Fe, New Mexico; San Antonio, Texas; and other cities.

The vibrant dance music called salsa, which was brought to New York City by Cuban and Puerto Rican émigrés, can be heard and danced to in nightclubs of New York, Miami and other cosmopolitan cities. A museum exhibition called *¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz*, featuring the Queen of Salsa who spent the majority of her career in the United States, has been mounted at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. It will be on display through October 31, 2005. An on-line exhibition may be viewed at <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/celiacruz/>.

**Cajun Music.** The Prairie Acadian Cultural Center in Eunice, Louisiana (about a three-hour drive west of



AP/WWP Photo by Reed Saxon  
The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is located in Cleveland, Ohio.

New Orleans) tells the story of the Acadian, or Cajun, peoples—who emigrated here after being evicted from Canada in the 1750s—and their distinctive Francophone music and culture [<http://www.nps.gov/jela/pphtml/facilities.html>].

The nearby Liberty Theater is home to a two-hour live radio program, *Rendez-vous des Cajuns*, featuring Cajun and zydeco bands, single musical acts, and Cajun humorists every

Saturday night. Eunice is also home to the Cajun Music Hall of Fame [<http://www.cajunfrenchmusic.org>], and the Louisiana State University at Eunice maintains a web site devoted to contemporary Creole, zydeco, and Cajun musicians [<http://www.nps.gov/jela/Prairieacadianculturalcenter.htm>].

**Show Tunes and Classical Music.** No tour of music in the United States would be complete without mentioning two other great offerings: show tunes and classical music. Although the latter originated in Europe, native composers such as Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein brought an exuberant American style to the classical genre. The Lincoln Center [<http://www.lincolncenter.org/index2.asp>] and historic Carnegie Hall in New York City [<http://www.carnegiehall.org/jsp/intro.jsp>] are the best-known venues for classical offerings, although excellent performances by some symphony orchestras can be found throughout the country [<http://www.fndaconcert.com/>].

For show tunes enthusiasts, Broadway is America's shrine to live theater. Broadway is the name of one of New York City's most famous streets. It also refers to the entire 12-block area around it known as "The Great White Way" of theater lights. In the United States revivals of Broadway musicals appear throughout the year at regional theaters.

**Musical Instruments.** New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art [[http://www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_of\\_Art/department.asp?dep=18](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/department.asp?dep=18)] exhibits rare musical instruments as works of art. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. displays rare decorated Stradivarius stringed instruments,



AP/WWP Photo by J.Pat Carter  
J. Paul Jr. of the Zydeco New Breed Band performs at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

pianos, harpsichords, and guitars, and has, as well, exhibits devoted to jazz legends Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington.

In Carlsbad, California—not far from San Diego — the Museum of Making Music [<http://www.museumofmakingmusic.org>] displays over 500 instruments and interactive audio and video samples. The Fender Museum of Music and Arts [<http://www.fendermuseum.com>] in the Los Angeles suburb of Corona, California has an exhibition on 50 years of Fender guitar history.

In the Great Plains town of Vermillion, South Dakota, the National Music Museum [<http://www.usd.edu/smm>] displays 750 musical instruments.

No matter where you go in the United States, you'll find Americans in love with "their" music—be it jazz, blues, country-western, rock and roll, or any of its other myriad forms—and happy to share it with visitors. It's a fun and informative way to tour every region of the U.S.A.

## RECOMMENDED READING

**Bird, Christiane.** *The Da Capo Jazz and Blues Lover's Guide to the U.S.* 3rd Ed. New York: Da Capo Press, 2001.

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**Clynes, Tom.** *Music Festivals from Bach to Blues: A Traveler's Guide.* Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 1996.

**Dollar, Steve.** *Jazz Guide: New York City.* New York: The Little Bookroom, 2003.

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**Knight, Richard.** *The Blues Highway: New Orleans to Chicago: A Travel and Music Guide.* Hindhead, Surrey, UK: Trailblazer Publications, 2003.

**Millard, Bob.** *Music City USA: The Country Music Lover's Travel Guide to Nashville and Tennessee.* New York: Perennial, 1993.

**Unterberger, Richie.** *Music USA: The Rough Guide.* London: The Rough Guides, 1999.

**John Edward Hasse, Ph.D.**, is a music historian, pianist,



and award-winning author and record producer. He serves as Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, where he founded the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and the international Jazz Appreciation Month. He is the author of *Beyond*

*Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, the editor of *Jazz: The First Century*, and the producer-author of the book and three-disc set *The Classic Hoagy Carmichael*, for which he earned two Grammy Award nominations. He lectures widely about American music throughout the United States and other parts of the world. ■



# AMERICAN TREASURES

**M**ovies and television have made so many U.S. landmarks familiar to the world—big city skylines, the white marble memorials of Washington, D.C., the plains and high mountain “cowboy” country of the west and, of course, the hillside Hollywood sign announcing the glamour of Los Angeles—that it is not unusual for people to think they know what America is like before ever setting foot here.

Once actually in the United States, however, visitors find a remarkably diverse nation—often far different from their expectations—full of wonderful and unique sights, sounds, foods, and friendly, welcoming people.

AP/WWP Photo by Beth A. Keiser



AP/WWP Photo by Matt York

While U.S. icons, like Chicago’s Sears Tower, the Grand Canyon, and Disney World are well worth seeing, there are other treasures and often a few surprises to be found off the beaten path.



AP/WWP Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Think, for instance, of New York City ... did you come up with the image of a Hansom cab ride through Central Park in the snow?



AP/WWP Photo by Wally Santana

We’ve put together a collection of photos to suggest ways to expand the possibilities of seeing the United States, even those places you already think you know.

An interest in U.S. history, for example, could lead you to the various Native American festivals which can be found in all 50 states, not just the western ones [<http://www.500nations.com/>]. This Tuscarora Indian is performing in New York. History buffs around the entire country stage local reenactments of U.S. battles, the most popular being those of the American Revolution (1774-1781) and the Civil War (1861-1865). Although not pictured here, other alternatives include everything from ancient Indian mounds to historical villages of various periods.



AP/WWP Photo by April L. Brown



AP/WWP Photo by Seth Perlman



AP/WWP Photo by Danny Johnston

Our deep agricultural roots are evident in the hundreds of state and county fairs [[http://www.expocentral.com/agriculture/us\\_fairs/US\\_Fairs.html](http://www.expocentral.com/agriculture/us_fairs/US_Fairs.html)] held throughout the summer and fall. The fairs are occasions for local residents to show off the results of their previous year's work, and for tractor competitions, parades, and midway attractions. Here you see "Uncle Sam," one of several decorated 'cows' on parade at the Illinois State Fair and the midway rides of the Arkansas State Fair.



AP/WWP Photo by J.D. Pooley

If you are a ride enthusiast, there are many theme parks [<http://themeparks.about.com/od/findusthemeparks/>] in addition to the world-famous Disney attractions. Cedar Point Amusement Park in Ohio, for example, has the Millennium Force (lower left) which rises 95 meters and goes over 145 kilometers per hour.

Should you prefer museums, there is an incredible range located all over the country [<http://icom.museum/vlmp/usa.html> or <http://www.museumlink.com/states.htm>] from classical art to museums devoted to every topic possible: maritime life, stitchery, and western heritage to name just a few. Shown is the Children's Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana.

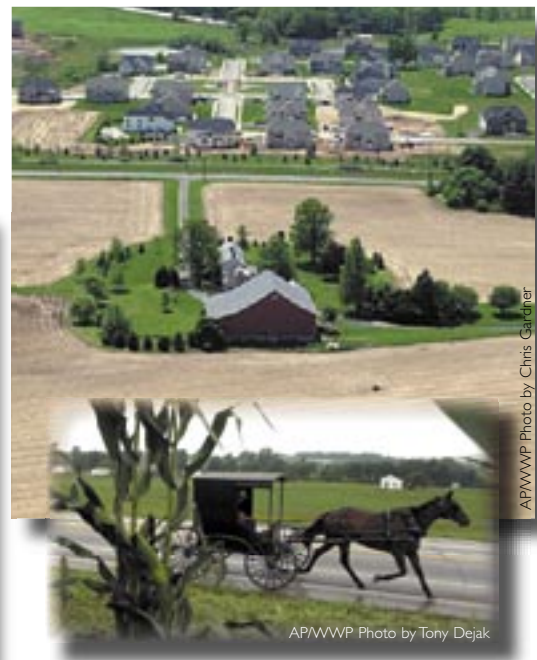


AP/WWP Photo

Or how about a visit to our wineries? America's wines continue to earn international awards, and vineyards offering tours now exist in almost every state [<http://www.travelenvoy.com/wine/USA.htm>]. Shown (below left) are the Robert Mondavi vineyards in California. Visitors who go beyond the cities are often surprised by how rural much of the United States is. Efforts are in place to keep it that way. Pictured is a farm in Pennsylvania, part of the state's Farmland Preservation Program. While driving through the countryside, especially in Pennsylvania and Ohio, you might share the road with an Amish buggy (lower right). The Amish, a religious group of German background, shun modern culture and conveniences, emphasizing humility and mutual support of members of their community.



AP/WWP Photo by Eric Risberg



AP/WWP Photo by Chris Gardner

AP/WWP Photo by Tony Dejak

Other Americans take delight in expressing their individualism, often in humorous ways. On the “Pizza Farm” in Alton, Illinois, a farmer has taken a half-acre plot, made it circular and divided it into ‘slices’ with each wedge devoted to growing a pizza ingredient.



AP/WWP Photo by Tom Gannam



AP/WWP Photo by Mike Gullett

The legendary Route 66, running diagonally from Chicago to Los Angeles, still offers views of kitschy Americana roadside attractions. Here a member of the Galena, Kansas Chamber of Commerce paints markers to guide the way. Read about things to see on Route 66 and other U.S. transcontinental road trips at <http://www.roadtripusa.com/>.

If you're really into the off-beat, travel to Carhenge, which duplicates the dimensions and orientation of Stonehenge. It's part of the Car Art Reserve near Alliance, Nebraska. There are at least nine other versions of Britain's Stonehenge in the United States—and a few are actually made out of stone, although foam and refrigerators have also been used—according to <http://www.roadsideamerica.com/set/OVERhenges.html>.



AP/WWP Photo by David Zalubowski

Of course, whether you like to watch or play, the United States is a sports-lover's paradise.

For outdoors enthusiasts, there are rugged sports like dog sledding in Alaska [<http://www.iditarod.com>], or kayaking, shown here at Great Falls Park in northern Virginia.



AP/WWP Photo by Ron Edmonds



AP/WWP Photo by Al Grillo

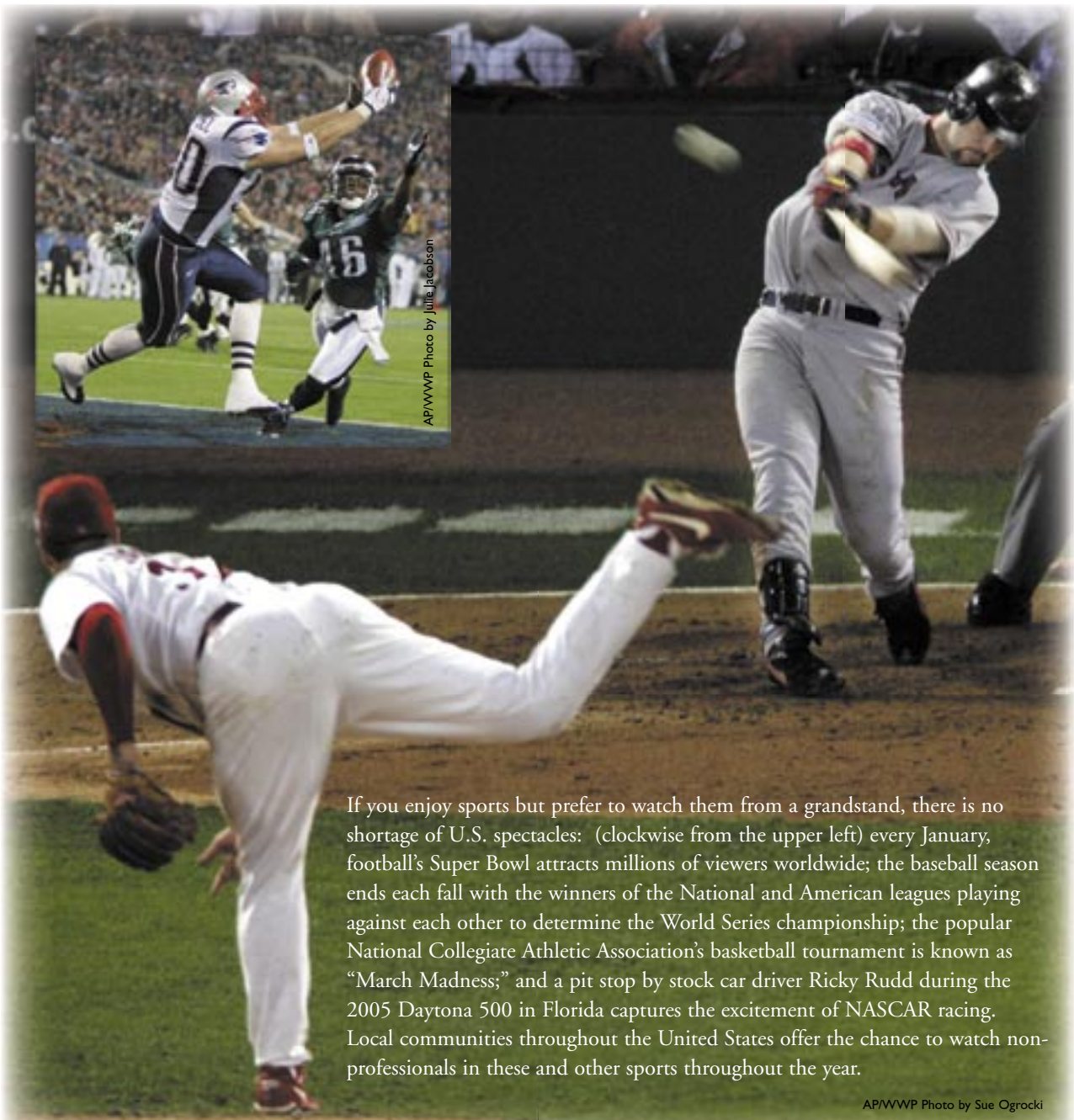
A game that began with college students lobbing “Frisbie Bakery” pie tins at each other, Frisbee has evolved into a competitive sport. Pictured are students from Brown and Dartmouth universities contending in the 2005 New England Regional Ultimate Frisbee Tournament in Rhode Island. Lacrosse, which originated with Native Americans hundreds of years ago, is the most rapidly growing team sport among U.S. men and women. The photo shows the game between teams from the universities of Oregon and Washington at the 2004 Pacific Northwest Collegiate Lacrosse League Tournament.



AP/WWP Photo by Adam Hunger



AP/WWP Photo by John Froschauer



AP/WWP Photo by Julie Jacobson

AP/WWP Photo by Sue Ogrocki

If you enjoy sports but prefer to watch them from a grandstand, there is no shortage of U.S. spectacles: (clockwise from the upper left) every January, football's Super Bowl attracts millions of viewers worldwide; the baseball season ends each fall with the winners of the National and American leagues playing against each other to determine the World Series championship; the popular National Collegiate Athletic Association's basketball tournament is known as "March Madness;" and a pit stop by stock car driver Ricky Rudd during the 2005 Daytona 500 in Florida captures the excitement of NASCAR racing. Local communities throughout the United States offer the chance to watch non-professionals in these and other sports throughout the year.



AP/WWP Photo by Bob Jordan



AP/WWP Photo by Mark Humphrey

# A World-Class Education While Getting to Know the United States

Every year, over half a million international students choose to study in the United States. And the United States is eager to host them. Regardless of what you may have heard, about 80 percent of all student visa applications are approved.

Moreover, in the last two years, U.S. consulates have made important changes to accommodate international students. They now offer special visa interview appointment times or, at some locations, set aside times when students can come in without any appointment at all.

The State Department is also working with the governments of other countries to develop reciprocal programs allowing student visas to remain valid for lengthier periods, as well as providing for multiple entries in order that international students can more easily travel home for visits during school breaks.

Understanding that students have to meet very specific deadlines, the State Department has encouraged consulates to find even more ways to expedite student visa applications.

More than 620,000 foreign students enrolled in America's schools of higher education last year, and another 322,000 came as part of various academic exchange programs.

These international students attend U.S. colleges



Photo Courtesy of the University of Georgia/ Paul Efland

The University of Georgia Chapel was completed in 1823.



AP/WWP Photo by Rex Arbogast

Two U.S. presidents, eight U.S. Supreme Court justices, and 29 Nobel Prize winners have graduated from Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey.

and institutions for the same reasons that Americans do: academic excellence, unparalleled choices in types of institutions and programs, and great flexibility in designing courses of study.

In addition to world-class instruction in both traditional and cutting-edge fields of study, the higher education programs in the United States are valued for their commitment to fostering the ability to think independently—through logical examination, rational analysis, and lively discussion.

Like our culture, our academic environment is widely diverse. You can attend a small college where you will come to know practically every-

one on campus, or a large university in which the student population of a single dormitory alone equals that of a small village. There are urban and rural colleges, and colleges around which small towns have evolved. There are state schools, subsidized by taxpayers, which have more open admissions policies, and private schools that are more selective and, generally, more expensive. There are schools steeped in tradition and those that pride themselves on modernity, two-year and four-year colleges, liberal arts and scientific research schools, single-gender and coeducational institutions. Whatever academic experience you are looking for, with its 3,700 colleges and universities from which to choose, the United States has it.

America holds education in high esteem, which is one of the reasons we have many of the best colleges and universities in the world. We, indeed, welcome talented students from around the globe as a means of enriching mutual understanding and fostering universal advancement. We encourage you to apply.

The various degree- and non-degree programs offered at U.S. colleges, the types of schools available, an explanation of American educational philosophy, and much more information is available at <http://educationusa.state.gov>.



AP/WWP Photo by Angela Rowlings

Sixty-one current or former members of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) community have won the Nobel Prize. The Boston-based university admitted its first students in 1865.

While at a U.S. college or university, you will have the opportunity not only to learn more about your chosen area of study but also, through travel and daily contact with Americans, come to really know more about life in the United States—much more than you can ever learn as a tourist on a short-term visit.

This can be exciting, but can also pose challenges: the food and perhaps the climate may be completely different; you will have to make new friends and will miss the familiarity of home; the behavior and attitudes of the Americans you meet may puzzle or even frustrate you. In addition to your school lessons, you will need to learn such basics as how to get around, use a U.S. bank, take care of your shopping needs, and comprehend measurements that are not based on the metric system.



AP/WWP Staff photo by Paul Sakuma

Seventeen Nobel laureates teach on the Stanford University faculty.

Obviously, both a sense of adventure and humor will serve you well.

Use this opportunity to see America and its people close-up to test your preconceptions. We think you will find us more complex than you might imagine.

So keep an open mind. As the United States was built by waves of immigrants bringing their own values and cultures, the people of this country are enormously diverse in their opinions and standards and simply cannot be reduced to a few stereotypes. Yes, there are representative qualities—it is not unusual to find that, in general, Americans are informal in dress and manner with each



Marsha Miller/The University of Texas at Austin PA Office

The University of Texas at Austin is known for its outstanding library system and nationally ranked academic programs.

other, that they are sometimes competitive, that they place a premium on time and schedules, and that they value individual independence. It is also not unusual to find that Americans are, in general, friendly and open, humorous and generous, achieving, and inclusive team players. Keep in mind, however, that there are plenty of Americans who exhibit only some or none of these “typical” traits—just like people in your country.

Remember that many others have gone through the same thrilling and anxious experience of studying in the United States and that most feel the experience was very rewarding academically and personally. Rest assured the university will work to help you come to feel at home in your U.S. college community.

International students can find excellent information on understanding life in the United States at <http://educationusa.state.gov/life.htm>. ■



# Opportunity of a Lifetime: International Admissions to U.S. Colleges

DALE EDWARD GOUGH  
DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND  
ADMISSIONS OFFICERS (AACRAO) WASHINGTON, DC  
<http://www.aacrao.org>

If you are a student preparing to apply for admission to colleges and universities in the United States, it is important for you to understand the procedures most U.S. institutions will follow in deciding whether to admit you to their program of study.

In other countries, it is usually the ministry of education, or some similar body, that determines the general eligibility of applicants coming from outside their own educational system. In the United States, each college or university is free to set its own standard for admission and establish its own criteria to determine if a student's academic qualifications meet that admission standard.

The higher the standard, the more selective the



AP/WWP Photo by Victoria Arocho  
Paula Nirschel, founder of "The Initiative to Educate Afghan Women," walks with two program participants at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island.

college and the harder it is to gain admission. U.S. schools are generally classified as: 1) highly selective; 2) selective; 3) somewhat selective; and 4) open admission (institutions able to admit students regardless of their previous academic performance).

Your previous study records, therefore, may meet the standards at some institutions but not at others.

It is the responsibility of the college or university to review your educational background to determine if you meet the standard required for admission.

Many institutions will have their own staff evaluate or assess your previous study. Other schools might require you to send your academic records to an agency that specializes in providing evaluations of a non-U.S. education. Sometimes an institution will specify a particular agency, or provide you with a list of several agencies from which you can choose. Despite assessing your previous education and providing the institution with their evaluation, these agencies do not make the decision whether or not to admit you. Only the college or university to which you have applied will make the admission decision.

Pay close attention to the instructions on each admission application you submit. Follow the instructions carefully. If you apply to more than one institution you will probably be required to follow different instructions for each. Do not assume that one institution's requirements are the same as another.

Regardless of whether your records are going to be reviewed by the college or university to which you apply or by an outside agency to which you have been referred,



AP/WWP Photo by Alan Diaz

Moussa Dao of Côte d'Ivoire sits in front of the campus bookstore at Florida International University in Miami, Florida.



AP /University of Southern Mississippi Photo by Steve Rouse

A South Korean student at the University of Southern Mississippi English Language Institute serves a Korean dish during the university's annual International Food Fair.

you will need to provide all of your previous academic records:

- You will need to have an official or attested copy of all of your previous academic records (often referred to in application materials as a “transcript”) sent to the institution to which you apply, and to the agency that will review your education. ‘Official records’ mean that the school where you studied must send a copy of your academic record directly to the institution to which you apply and/or to the evaluating agency. You, as the applicant, should not mail these records to the institution yourself because, if you do, the records might not be considered “official.”
- Academic records not in English will need to be translated. A copy of the translation must also be sent to the institution to which you apply and/or to the agency evaluating your education. Institutions and agencies will need to have the academic record in both the original language and the translation.
- You will need to pay particular attention to the instructions regarding translation. You might need to have an ‘official’ translation, or one by an ‘authorized’ or ‘licensed’ translator. Yet, some institutions and agencies might allow you to do the translation yourself, if you are sufficiently proficient in English.
- External examinations are an important part of the process for U.S. institutions to decide whether to admit you to their programs. If you have been educated in an educational system that uses external national examinations such as the *Baccalauréat* from France, or Ordinary and/or Advanced level examinations from

the United Kingdom, you will need to send copies of the results of these examinations.

- If you are applying as a first-year student at the undergraduate level (for a Bachelor’s degree) you may also need to take certain standardized assessment tests usually required of U.S. applicants, too, such as the SAT or ACT. Schools will instruct you as to which tests to take and how to make arrangements for testing.
- Those applying as graduate students (for the Master’s degree or PhD) might be required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), or the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) if applying for an MBA. Again, the institutions to which you apply will tell you which standardized tests are required for their graduate applicants and how to make arrangements for testing.
- If English is not your native language, or if you have not been educated in a country or region where



Courtesy of Eastern Mennonite University

A group of international students at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisburg, Virginia are studying together on the lawn.

English is a native language, both undergraduate and graduate applicants may be required to present the results of an English proficiency test, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Graduate applicants who seek a teaching assistantship may also be required to take the Test of Spoken English (TSE) as evidence of their ability to teach in English.

- If you need an F-1 or M-1 (student) visa, or a J-1 (exchange visitor) visa, you will need to present evidence that you have adequate financial support for the entire period of your anticipated study. Most U.S. colleges and universities will ask you to complete a form regarding your financial backing for your studies, or will tell you what documentation is required. You



AP/WWWP Photo by Jon C. Hancock

Students from Japan are browsing the Internet at the International Student Center at Concord University in Athens, West Virginia.

will usually have to complete a form outlining the sources of your financial support as well as provide verification for it. Again, carefully follow instructions regarding financial documentation.

- Deadlines are extremely important! Please pay particular attention to any deadlines listed on the application forms. The admission of international students takes more time than does the admission of U.S. students to U.S. institutions. Most colleges and universities will have earlier application deadlines for international students, and it is essential that your ap-

plication be received before that deadline. Many U.S. colleges and universities receive hundreds or even thousands of applications from international students each year. In order to be considered for admission for the term you desire, you will need to have all materials received by the indicated deadlines.

- It is highly recommended that you visit an EducationUSA Advising Center if there is one close to you in your home country. The EducationUSA offices have staff that can provide you with information about applying to U.S. colleges and universities. They also have information about specific institutions and can assist you in your search for a school in the United States. The U.S. embassy in your country can tell you the locations of EducationUSA offices, or you can find this information and more at [www.educationUSA.state.gov/centers.htm](http://www.educationUSA.state.gov/centers.htm).

Your studies in the United States will be an exciting and rewarding time. To start your experience in the best possible way, follow the instructions of each institution carefully. If you have any questions about your application process or what you need to provide, contact the institutions in which you are interested for clarification or assistance. ■

# U.S. Higher Education: The Financial Side

NANCY W. KETEKU

REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ADVISING COORDINATOR FOR AFRICA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE, ACCRA, GHANA

Interested in attending college in the United States? You may have noticed that the cost of an American education is higher than what you would pay in countries where the government centrally controls the educational system. We hope you have also noticed, however, that an American education gives you a tremendous return on investment, making it an excellent value for the money.

A U.S. education gives you broad exposure, not only to your chosen field of study, but to so much more: practical experience, hands-on laboratory work, the world's most advanced and most richly funded facilities (did you know that American universities were awarded \$40 billion dollars in research funding last year?), development of analytical writing and speaking skills, networking, and close relationships with professors who support your aspirations.

In addition to academics, American universities boast residential accommodations, clubs and student organizations, sports and recreational facilities, internships, and exchange programs with other universities—all designed to broaden your horizons and make you a dynamic force in society when you return home.

Fortunately, ambitious students who plan carefully can reduce their costs and also qualify for financial assistance from the university they attend.

Here are some ways of managing the cost of your U.S. education:

- Visit the nearest EducationUSA Advising Center, where you will receive comprehensive, current, accurate, and unbiased guidance on all opportunities available in the United States. EducationUSA



AP/WWP Photo by Toby Talbot

Students are walking on the campus of the University of Vermont in Burlington, one of "America's 25 Hot Schools" according to the 2006 edition of the Kaplan/Newsweek College Guide.

centers are backed by the U.S.

Department of State and serve as your official source of information. Locate the EducationUSA center nearest you by going to <http://www.educationUSA.state.gov/centers.htm>.

- Talk to your parents about how you are going to finance your U.S. education. Your parents (and perhaps other relatives) need to tell you how much they can afford each year multiplied by the four years it normally takes to get an undergraduate degree. This figure, called the Family Contribution, forms the basis for your decisions on which universities to apply to, and protects you from applying to universities that are too expensive for your budget.

- Think about other features you seek in the college that is best for you: size,

location, living environment, fields of study, special programs, demographics, etc. With well over 3,000 institutions to choose from, it helps to know what you are looking for.

- There are special publications that provide information pertinent to international students: admission requirements, costs, and financial aid. Two publications you'll want to look for at your EducationUSA Advising Center are: *The College Board International Student Handbook* and Peterson's *Applying to Colleges and Universities in the United States*.

Besides university financial aid which is discussed below, funding for higher education in the United States falls into several categories, briefly described as follows:

**Family funds:** This is the most common source of financing for U.S. citizens and international undergraduates studying in the United States. Americans believe that individuals and their families are primarily responsible for

paying for a university education.

**College and university funds:** Funding provided by the university is the second most common source of educational funding. These funds can be either based on merit (scholarships for academic performance) or financial need (financial aid).

**Athletic scholarships:** These are another form of university funding. With careful planning, international students who have distinguished themselves in a sport can use these skills to finance their education in the United States.

**Corporate or institutional sponsors:** U.S. or foreign private sponsorship may take the form of an individual arrangement between the student and sponsor, or a competition open to selected candidates. If a company, public institution, or religious group pledges to sponsor a student, it should provide detailed documentation of the genuineness of its support, including details of any conditions (such as repayment or future employment) agreed to by the student.

**Foundations and international organizations:** Well-known organizations such as the United Nations select recipients according to their development priorities for a particular country. Recipients are primarily graduate rather than undergraduate students.

**Your government:** Check to find out about any local government support for overseas education programs.

**U.S. government:** Most U.S. government programs target graduate students. They are administered through the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS) or the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) in accordance with bilateral agreements.

**Scholarship agencies:** Beware! Fraudulent agencies abound. As a rule of thumb, any so-called scholarship agency that demands a fee in exchange for information should be treated extremely cautiously, no matter how impressive the literature or convincing the guarantees.

### University Financial Aid: How It Works

The competition for financial aid among international students is very keen. Students who have limited personal financial resources will need to be exceptional applicants in order to compete successfully for the largest financial aid packages. The number of international students applying for financial aid is so great that successful applicants must go far beyond basic competence to gain the favorable consideration of an admission committee. Students vying for the big aid awards must distinguish themselves in a pool of outstanding students.

Your EducationUSA advisor can help you to develop a

strong and compelling application. In the Advising Center, you will find helpful guidebooks on essay writing and other aspects of the admissions process.

The amount of aid and the number of students receiving awards vary tremendously from one institution to another, and very few colleges or universities provide financial aid packages that cover the entire cost of a college education. Each institution sets its own budget and policies for international student financial aid, which is administered separately from aid for U.S. citizens.

Private liberal arts colleges award the most financial aid to international students, with private research universities following. Public universities (operated by the various states) and two-year institutions (community colleges) are less expensive than private universities, but rarely award financial aid to international students. Some institutions may offer aid only under special circumstances, or after the student has completed (and paid for) the first year of study.

Students in need of financial assistance should begin the college selection process at least one year in advance to allow plenty of time to research and identify possible sources of funding, take required examinations, and complete the admission and financial aid applications by the required deadlines.



AP/WWP Photo by Pat Sullivan

Rice University in Houston, Texas is regularly ranked among the "best buys" in American higher education.

### Ways of Reducing Educational Costs

Reducing the cost of education is the equivalent of creating a scholarship. Although you should not overestimate your potential for cost saving, you are encouraged to look for ways of minimizing your educational expenditure. Some ideas include the following:

- **Best buys:** Find the colleges and universities that offer the highest quality education at the lowest cost. Your EducationUSA advisor can refer you to several books

and magazines devoted to identifying educational bargains.

- **Accelerated programs:** Completing a four-year bachelor's degree in three years saves many thousands of dollars. Students can accelerate their programs by: a) taking one additional course each semester (in selected cases), b) attending summer school, c) taking courses at a nearby community college if tuition is lower and credits are transferable, and d) earning credit for college-level studies (such as A-levels, Baccalauréat) completed in the home country. Taking placement exams or submitting SAT Subject Test scores may also yield credit toward the degree, depending upon institutional policy.
- **Out-of-state tuition waivers:** In some states, selected international students are permitted to pay in-state tuition rates, often as a reward for excellent grades or leadership roles. Seek information about tuition waivers from admissions officers or the international student adviser. International students can also take advantage of in-state tuition if your hometown has a formal Sister City link with the city where you attend college.
- **Living expenses:** Becoming a resident assistant in a dormitory saves thousands of dollars in boarding costs. Working in the dining hall offers a modest salary plus meals. Living off campus with a relative or friends saves money, if suitable accommodation is available and public transport is efficient.



AP/WWP Photo by Daniel Miller

Community colleges such as Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio, offer two-year Associate Degrees.

- **Two-year and community colleges:** Many U.S. and international students save thousands of dollars in tuition by attending community colleges for their first two years and then transferring to four-year institu-

tions to complete their degree. Before embarking on this route, make sure that all your courses will be recognized by the degree-granting institution when you transfer.

- **Work:** Immigration regulations permit international students in F-1 status to work part-time on campus. Students can normally expect to work 10-15 hours a week during the academic year, and full-time during vacation periods. Realistically, these earnings may be enough to pay out-of-pocket costs such as books, clothing, and personal expenses, but not pay any college bills. A variety of employment opportunities, including work in dining halls or the library, may be available on the college campus. As students advance academically, they may get jobs as research assistants or tutors, enhancing their academic work while earning money. Campus jobs are popular among American students, who are proud of earning their own way.
- **Loans:** Many colleges and universities expand their financial aid capacity by granting loans to international students as part of a financial aid package. Loans can either come from private, college-controlled funds or from financial institutions, separate from the federal government loan programs for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Some loan plans require a U.S. citizen/resident to co-sign, meaning they guarantee that the loan will be repaid. Most colleges and universities are careful not to overload international students with unreasonable loans.

## You Can Do It

If over half a million international students can succeed in navigating the U.S. university admission and financing process each year, so can you. Your hard work will pay off in an education that will fast-forward your life, enable you to achieve your goals, and offer opportunities you may never have even imagined. ■

# “A Decision You Will Never Regret”

NYASHA KANGANGA

Home Country: Zimbabwe

Undergraduate in Chemical Engineering at The College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota

Choosing a place to go away from home for study is one of the hardest decisions you will ever have to make. We all look for the one place in the world where we will not be too homesick or too lonely—in essence, the one place that is as close as can be to being perfect. Working with my advising center helped me with one of the best decisions I have ever made: coming to the College of St. Catherine in Minnesota. It is almost like they looked at me and knew exactly what I needed and where I needed to be so that I could realize my dreams.

America is a great place to be and much better in real life than seen on television or the movies.

Americans are all different—I believe there is no such thing as a typical American. Just because you have met one does not mean you know them all! American people in Minnesota are very accepting of different people and cultures and value cultural diversity. There is no pressure to be like everyone else because people like you as you are, and I am very grateful for that.

Studying in the United States has changed my perspective on a lot of world issues. The liberal arts education that I have received thus far has challenged me to think critically, to analyze issues from all sides, and to see the bias in my own opinions. I have learned that if I can think positively, my accomplishments will grow and that you can achieve anything that you set your mind and heart on.

I intend to earn a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and help place the Zimbabwean chemistry industry on the map.

The support given by the international admissions staff

here at the college is commendable.

They have been there every step of the way. I was provided with a host family who picked me up from the airport, helped me to settle into my dorm room, and are very supportive of my endeavors. The orientation program specifically designed for international students was so thorough that, by the time it ended, I not only knew my way around the campus but also the shopping areas nearby and how to get there!

During my first semester, I volunteered to be the master of ceremonies for Africa Night, an annual campus event which gives African students a chance to share with the college community experiences about life in Africa. As you can imagine, speaking in front of 300 people was a nerve-wracking experience for me, but it was also an icebreaker. I was voted

vice-president of the St. Catherine's International Students Organization for the upcoming college year, and I am very excited.

I am also going to be a resident adviser in a dormitory during the fall semester. I believe this will give me a greater understanding and appreciation of other people's experiences of college life, and will also enable me to give back to the “St. Kate's” community what I got when I arrived here: a warm welcome.

To students who wish to study in the United States, I want to say that this is a decision that you will never regret. The U.S. college system is unlike any other system in the world, and their liberal arts education is one of the best things you can ever experience. ■



Photo Courtesy of Nyasha Kanganga

Nyasha Kanganga (center) stands with Norah Hoff (left), Associate Director of International Programs and Services at the College of St. Catherine and Aimee Thostenson (right), Associate Director for International Admissions.

# “A Wonderful Experience”

ARNAB BASU

Home Country: India

Graduate Student In Entertainment Technology at Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

My interaction with the U.S. Educational Foundation in India center at Bangalore was indispensable for applying to universities in the United States. They were always available for the smallest of queries that I had, and shared the most up-to-date and important information, whether it dealt with the admission process, the visa application, or related travel information. The feedback I received in preparing my personal statements was very valuable—not only in securing admissions, but also in building confidence to aim for the career goals I set for myself.

My program has given me fantastic hands-on exposure to the industry I want to get into. They had us attend conferences and panels, as well as tour development studios. The flexibility in the curriculum that allows me to choose specific courses in alignment with my interests has been very rewarding, too.

Intense and specific coursework helped me build on the foundations of my undergraduate study. My program has also opened a lot of doors in terms of setting up internships that are not only great learning opportunities,



Photo Courtesy of Arnab Basu

but also a foot in the door to organizations you might want to work for in the future.

To be put in an environment where a lot of my peers have already worked professionally before coming back to

school has also helped me appreciate the value of having relevant work experience. Being in the middle of and working alongside so many talented individuals with varied backgrounds has given me significant exposure to new ideas and opportunities.

The work we do on live projects each semester has really equipped us with a level of confidence and preparedness to do professional quality work that demands substantial responsibility.

I've also been fortunate to have faculty that puts an enormous effort toward personally molding each student's career based on his interest and skills.

The staff at Carnegie Mellon works really hard to take care of its international student community.

Every once in a while, the university holds international food festivals. Each time, its theme is tied to a different region of the world. It is a great venue for meeting people, as well as learning about the students from these different places.

It has been a wonderful experience interacting with people from the United States. In the academic environment, specifically, I've learnt to appreciate their focus and dedication towards their professional goals. To mingle with this most diverse set of people has also been a great learning experience.

Students coming in for the first time should have an open mind and be ready from Day One to soak in all that they can. There is tremendous opportunity here, and you should be prepared for a lot of hard work and hustle.

Also, learn how to cook! It will really take you a long way in making new friends. ■



# “A Great Opportunity”

PAVEL REPYEUSKI

Home Country: Belarus

Former Undergraduate at Ithaca College, New York

Non-degree Study of Law

The EducationUSA advising center in Gomel was very useful to me. I could easily retrieve information about various educational opportunities, as well as get practical advice on how to prepare for the international exams. But what is more important, I think, is that the advising center is crucial for helping alumni keep in touch and be able to organize local activities and projects.

Apart from the American education itself, which I found to be very useful in that it freed my mind and allowed me to look critically at many issues of the modern world, the most rewarding experiences I found included:

- **Living on a university campus:** student life activities and interaction with American and other international students is important, as it gives you more opportunities to understand another nation;
- **Being involved in community service projects:** participating in having the AIDS Quilt on campus raised my awareness about both the AIDS problem globally and how volunteering could be important for local communities;
- **Internships:** having an internship at the United Nations Headquarters in New York totally changed my perception of international organizations and their role in promoting democracy and human values.

These experiences led me to organize a non-governmental organization back in Belarus to support U.N. programs and engage in volunteer actions and community service.

Ithaca College was extremely supportive. I was met at the airport by a university member, welcomed to the campus, and assigned a mentor who could address various issues or provide help when necessary.

During written examinations, the instructors paid more attention to the content of what a student wrote than the misspelling of words or grammatical mistakes (common to international students). This enabled us to get appropriate grades without being discriminated against as foreigners.

Cultural and social support was very high as well. Since most of the foreign students were staying on campus over the vacations, the university organized various day trips for us and found us host families to stay with over winter break.

Education in the United States widened my understanding of American culture and the way American society is organized and works. Courses in U.S. history, literature, and government helped me better understand the keystones of democracy and look at the United States from a different perspective.

The experience of living with an American family is also highly beneficial as this allows you to see that ordinary people living in the United States share the same values as you.

After attending Ithaca, I won a scholarship and undertook a Magister Juris program at Oxford University—a very competitive program and difficult to get into. I think it was my exchange years in the United States which prepared me for the competition. I am now completing a PhD at the University of Manchester and hope, in the future, to find a job as an academic. I think without first studying in the United States, I would never have made it this far.

I offer the following survival tips for international students going to the United States:

- Do not be afraid of the culture shock—it does not hurt. Just be yourself, but also be considerate of other people;
- Make sure your parents at home have computer access to the Internet—the fastest and cheapest way to stay in touch and not feel disconnected from your home country;
- Do not be afraid to ask if there is something you need or do not know and do not be afraid of speaking English, even if it is not perfect (yet);
- Try to make the most out of your education: participate in various societies and meetings, undertake internships and everything else you can manage;
- Establish and maintain your relationship with local friends and your host family;
- Enjoy it. This is a great opportunity which can change your life. ■



Photo Courtesy of Pavel Repyeuski

# Doing Business in the U.S.A. Today

*The following is an edited transcription of a free-flowing discussion between government and business experts on issues of international business travel. Video of the discussion can be viewed at <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0905/ijpe/rntbl.htm>.*

Both the U.S. government and the U.S. business community understand and support the need for face-to-face interactions between American businesses and their international clients, partners, and foreign employees.

However, as in many other countries, security concerns compel the United States to carefully screen those seeking to enter its borders.

Although the initial security changes in our international travel procedures did not always go as smoothly as wished, they have greatly improved in the four years since 9/11.

Achieving a balance between effective security and a commitment to openness does require longer screening times at various steps in the international travel process, but the U.S. government continues to work with business leaders to overcome the remaining challenges we face.

These issues are addressed in the following August 2005 panel discussion among the following U.S. business and government experts: Douglas Baker, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Services; Elizabeth Dickson, Advisor for Global Immigration Services, Ingersoll-Rand<sup>1</sup>; Janice Jacobs, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services; Randel Johnson, Vice President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce<sup>2</sup>; Michael Neifach, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Director of Immigration Policy; and Alexander Feldman (moderator), State Department Coordinator of International Information Programs, who poses questions to the participants.

## Working Together to Facilitate Travel

**Question (Moderator):** One of the key issues is how, in fact, is the U.S. government working with the United States business community?



Roundtable participants are, from left: Janice Jacobs, Douglas Baker, Michael Neifach, Elizabeth Dickson, Randel Johnson, and moderator Alexander Feldman.

**Jacobs:** We often describe the work that we do on visas after 9/11 as being a balance between our secure borders and open doors. And this is something that our consular officers overseas try to do every single day as they adjudicate visas, not just for business travelers, but for other visitors—legitimate visitors coming to the United States.

We have established a number of facilitation

programs. What we did last July was to go out with a telegram to remind the posts [consulates] about how important business travel is to the United States—the important economic reasons. We know that...our travel and tourism industry generates about \$93 billion per year here in the United States.

We went out and asked the posts what they were doing to facilitate business travel, and then they all came back, describing various programs where they are working either with the local American Chamber of Commerce or how they have a way for larger companies to register with the embassy or consulate so that the employees of different firms can come in [and] get expedited appointments. Some posts offer separate lines for business travelers.

We went through all of the different programs that our posts have and then we sent out a cable [a world wide message] in October describing best practices for facilitating business travel, and we asked all of our posts to come up with some type of procedure that will allow travelers who need an urgent appointment, for example, to get in earlier.

The other thing that we have tried to do for all visa applicants is to make more information available on the requirements. And so we have upgraded the website at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. If you go there, you can get information about what to expect at your visa interview [and] the documents that you should bring in.

We also now have asked all of our posts to put on that website the appointment waiting times [[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait.php](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php)], so

that if you know that you're going to travel, you can go very quickly to the post where you plan to apply and see how long it will take.

The other thing that we've tried to tell the posts is that they've got to have procedures available for people who need to travel on an urgent basis, whether it's for medical reasons [or] if there is a big business deal and you have to get in before your assigned appointment. They have to have a way to do that. [[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_2664.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_2664.html)]

**Question:** Doug, what's the Commerce Department doing with this? You're sort of the middleman between the government and, certainly, the business community.

**Baker:** We recognized shortly after 9/11 that as the visa policy and security issues started to rise to greater levels in Washington, that it really presented a great concern for the economic security of our nation's business—the generator of, you know, private sector jobs that employ so many...Americans: 88 million employed in services, 15 million employed in the manufacturing sector.

And so we reached out to the State Department. We reached out to the legacy immigration agencies [and] made sure that they understood the urgent need for the visa policies and the visa process to continue to run smoothly. [Note: "Legacy immigration agencies" refers to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and other border control agencies which were merged into the Department of Homeland Security, created after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.]

We've worked very closely with the Chamber, both in Washington as well as the AmChams located in capitals around the world, making sure that they understood that if they weren't getting their issues and concerns addressed, arising from visa delays, that they needed to contact us. We, in turn, would work on the interagency process to not only smooth out the various bumps in the road, but also, one of the key issues that we have strived for is to bring more transparency to the visa issuance process.

**Question:** Randy, what does the Chamber see in this relationship?

**Johnson:** We were very critical of the State Department and DHS and we used phrases like, "We didn't think anybody was listening to us in terms of the business community's concerns." And we all understood [the need for increased security] in terms of the post-9/11 environment, but we had to make the point—and we did in a lot of loud ways—that economic security is important in this country and that, in fact, economic security is recognized as one of the mission statements...in the creation of DHS, which we supported.

We just recently heard from our counterparts in Bogotá, Colombia, and they were ecstatic over how well things were now moving along. On the other hand, we hear from other ones who are still experiencing problems.

I do think some, you know, one issue is—our give and take [between the U.S. government and business] is somewhat on an ad hoc basis. But I think one idea would be to formalize a system here...in Washington in terms of perhaps an advisory committee between the private and public sectors, so that there is a little more of a formal arrangement...

Things are getting better. But, I think, in the business community there's still a sense of, sort of, who do we talk to, how do we get changes done, instead of this amorphous process of complain, write letters, and hope it's got some traction.

**Question:** Elizabeth, tell us a little bit about some of the problems that your company is facing and some of the challenges that we need to be aware of.

**Dickson:** Okay. Well, first of all, I have been partaking in a lot of the meetings between the Department of State, [as a representative of] a large corporation, and with a number of other big, Fortune 500 companies. And we have appreciated the receptiveness of the Department of Homeland Security as well as the Department of State to meet with us periodically and understand some of the stresses that we are going through.

I do think the website is great. We have a link to the Department of State website [<http://www.travel.state.gov>], which is a very good website—as long as the information on there is timely. We do see, sometimes, disparity with our actual experiences in the wait times—but still it's a good ballpark figure.

One of the things that we have worked on successfully with the consulates, when there is a real delay: if we can truly establish that there is a critical business need for the travel, we have had some success in getting visa appointments moved up.

I have seen some flexibility on the consulates' part and a willingness to reserve some appointments for urgent business travel as long as you can clearly establish the need.

**Question:** I think that we've gotten a sense that there are a number of things going well, and much better, and there's...still some challenges that we face as we continue to work with the business community and improve the system.

## U.S. Visa/Entry Issues

**Question:** So our second segment is really talking

about what are the actual challenges faced by foreign or international business executives when they try to come to the United States.

And, Elizabeth, I think, in our last segment you were starting to talk about some of those, and I'd like to revisit them.

**Dickson:** I think one of the most difficult issues is the inconsistency in processing. You can send five people in with identical paperwork, identical things, you know, and some people seem to breeze through [while others experience problems]. And the other thing that we have had a lot of problems with is errors in the visa issuance... Many years ago, when the candidate would go first thing in the morning, apply for a visa, come back in the afternoon and pick up their passport, if there was an error for some reason, they would see it right then and it could be corrected right then.

The visa reciprocity, to me, is a real issue. A big success in China was renegotiating to a 12-month, multiple entry visa and that facilitated not only people coming into the United States from China, but the American business traveler who went back. And I'd like to see all the reciprocity agreements renegotiated—

**Jacobs:** Sure.

**Dickson:**—and extended, because it would certainly free up your consular offices—

**Jacobs:** Absolutely.

**Dickson:**—as well as facilitate business travel internationally.

**Jacobs:** And we're always willing to engage with another government on extending reciprocity, provided that they will give the same treatment to American citizens going there in the same category. That's sort of the whole issue there: that the country has to offer Americans equal treatment.

**Question:** Randy, are you seeing similar issues...?

**Johnson:** Yeah, I think it's the lack of... [information about] exactly what is the criteria an officer is using [to determine who gets a visa]. And sometimes, what we hear is, applicants just can't figure out why it was denied, and the explanation they got didn't really explain it to them.

Sometimes I think this may fall into... perhaps, travelers are not perceived necessarily as a customer of the State Department, but more as someone to—well, they have to be carefully examined—but there's a certain relationship in which some travelers perceive they're not being treated very well by some officers. And whether that's a small problem or a big problem, the perception spreads and so, you know, sometimes, we think maybe there would be a role for some kind of a check.

**Jacobs:** We know that our consular officers out there on the line really are representing not just the embassy but, sometimes, the entire country or the U.S. government itself. So we tell our officers over and over again that no matter what the answer is to a visa request, it has to be a dignified experience for the applicant who comes in. They have to be treated well, with dignity. They need to understand if the answer is no, why the visa is denied.

Our consular officers are required to give the reason in writing. I think what happens, sometimes, is that, you know, the applicant is understandably nervous, [and] perhaps not understanding why the answer is no. A lot of times it's because the person has been unable to establish sufficient ties to the home country and, therefore, under the law, the consular officer is required to deny the visa because the person appears to be an intending immigrant.

**Question:** But the issue of consistency?

**Jacobs:** Every case is decided on its own individual merits and so you might have two applicants [traveling] to the same event, but the circumstances for each applicant might be different and so consular officers would arrive at different decisions.

We give them all the training and tools that they need, but in the end it comes down to their judgment as to whether the person has established eligibility. I think that, for the most part, consular officers make the right decisions, but they're also human and they sometimes make mistakes.

**Question:** What's the DHS role in all of this?

**Neifach:** Under the law, we, frankly, have the primary role on setting visa policy. Now, the State Department issues the visas, they handle the consular [duties at] the posts abroad—the admissibility determination—but when that person gets to the United States, [that] is something that our inspectors handle, at each of the ports-of-entry.

We face many of the same problems and many of the same issues that Janice just went through: nervous applicants, interviews that have to happen fairly quickly, all those things.

Customer service is something that we have stressed is critical to making the United States a welcoming country, and we don't tolerate our inspectors not treating everybody with dignity.

I'm not going to say that everything is perfect—and I think this is something where we can team closer with the business community on—sort of the customer relations aspects. And it's something that we're open to considering.

We have an office of the private sector, which is a

critical input for the business community on issues that are affecting them, and getting those to me. They bring a lot of good issues to our attention and work through those things and serve as a conduit with the business community.

**Baker:** One of the things that we hear repeatedly from U.S. business is that, when a visa applicant is declined, there does not seem to be any real discernible pattern that the consular officers are following... One gets passed... [while] one gets denied; and [the two applications] seem to be fairly, fairly similar.

What we have discovered is that, certainly, from the larger company perspective, they tend to have their outlets for recourse or redress—whether it's calling their legal counsel to get involved or whether it's working through AmCham's process for expediting the interviews. So what we have found is that there's no real recourse for the small and medium-size companies that aren't members of either AmCham, the American Chamber here, or affiliated in any other AmChams in the foreign capitals.

And so we talked to the State Department and got them to agree to a pilot program to open a visa facilitation office here in Washington, which provides an outlet for the small and medium-size business to call, so they can discern what the real issue is [on a visa denial].

**Jacobs:** We did start with a pilot program just for China—U.S. firms doing business in China—because there's so much interest in that country right now. And we have just recently, last month, decided to expand that to be a global program.

And what that means is that any U.S. firm here, small or large, who would like information about how to get a visa or if there's a particular case of concern, they can contact this new center that we have set up in our visa office. You can e-mail that center at: *businessvisa@state.gov*.

**Question:** It sounds like the challenges that we face are in delays and in transparency and in understanding what is necessary for the visa applicant.

And that's what we're going to get to in our third segment, which is how do we make sure that this process is as fluid as possible and what can be done both to help the consular officers and DHS review the application.

## Obtaining a Business Visa

**Question:** Our next section is dealing with the practical elements of getting a visa to the United States

*“Customer service is something that we have stressed... and we don't tolerate our inspectors not treating everybody with dignity.”*

—Michael Neifach

and what information business travelers should know about, [and] what they need to provide to our consular officers in our embassies.

**Jacobs:** Well, as I mentioned earlier, we do have a lot of information on our website about the requirements for a visa. Basically, what the consular officers...

**Question:** Our website—tell them our website address.

**Jacobs:** It's *http://www.travel.state.gov*. And what the consular officer is really looking for is as much information [as possible] about the applicant and his or her situation in the home country, as well as information about the proposed trip to the United States.

And so, when people come in, they should be able to show ties. They need to bring evidence of their ties to their home country.

**Question:** What does “ties” mean?

**Jacobs:** That means, you know, proof that you have a job, that you have a family there, that you're in school, that you have a reason to go back to your home country after your short visit to the United States.

**Question:** And what kinds of things would be considered proof?

**Jacobs:** Well, we sometimes ask to see a letter from your employer, salary statements... if you have property, maybe a deed to the property... things of that sort. There's no sort of required list of documents, but anything that you can bring in to show that you're well established in your home country is useful to the consular officer.

And then, as far as the trip to the United States goes, the letters that explain who the person is, why they are needed here in the United States, what exactly they'll be doing—all of that is very, very helpful.

Provided that there is no question about the ties to the country and the purpose of the visit to the United States, it's relatively easy to qualify for the visa.

**Neifach:** At DHS, when we do the inspection at the point of entry, we generally look at the same things. If the story is consistent, if the individual shows why they're coming here and that they're going to go back... We have to do that review again at the border.

Where the visa is for a longer period of time and [on re-entry to the United States] there's been a change in circumstances, etc., it's important that the applicant again be ready to show updated information on what's currently going on.

**Question:** Well, so they should actually bring these documents with them when they travel?

**Neifach:** It cannot hurt. I mean, our inspectors have to make a decision at the port and, especially where there's been a long period of time from when the visa was initially issued, it's important to have the information necessary to just support your case.

**Dickson:** In situations like that, we sometimes do a port-of-entry letter if we feel it will be helpful. One of the other things we've done, particularly with our J-1 program: in the instruction letter, I have a detailed list—not only of what they need to take to the consulate, but also, what documents they should keep on their person.

And, Janice, one of these things, when we were talking about strong ties, and I mentioned my company... We actually developed a questionnaire for our letters that addresses that [the need to show ties to the home country], so that we could help explain that [requirement], particularly when there's a language issue. Many of the companies in China, for example: part of an employee's compensation package might be housing that's provided by the company. So then they don't have that [home ownership] to show, but I think you can demonstrate in a letter that their "tie" is their long-term employment and the fact that their remaining family lives in company-provided housing. So we try to address that.

**Jacobs:** I think what Ingersoll-Rand is doing is terrific. The more you can tell us about the company and what the applicant will be doing, and what the purpose [of the trip] is: if it's to view equipment... if there is a visit to several cities, what the itinerary is... All of that type of information is extremely helpful. The applicant should also be able to explain the trip as well and be able to, you know, talk about what he or she will be doing.

Let me just add really quickly, going back to what happens at the port-of-entry, we, in fact, share the information on the visas that are issued electronically so the inspectors at the ports-of-entry can very quickly confirm that the visa was issued by us and that it's a legitimate document. I think that, in the end, really helps to facilitate travel.

**Johnson:** Mike, I just want to reassure the viewers, that it's very rare that someone would have a visa approved by the consulate, travel all the way to the United States, and then be denied at the port-of-entry and have to go home.

*"Provided that there is no question about the ties to the country and the purpose of the visit to the United States, it's relatively easy to qualify for the visa."* —Janice Jacobs

**Neifach:** There would have to be something completely new for that to happen.

**Jacobs:** Perhaps new information developed after the visa was issued, something like that. But, yes, it's very rare.

**Question:**...I think a lot of people have heard about fingerprints or putting their fingers in machines. First of all, does everybody have to do this?

**Jacobs:** Congress passed a law back in May 2002 that basically requires the State Department to include biometric identifiers with the visas that we issue.

**Question:** And that's a vague, big term, "biometric identifiers."

**Jacobs:** Identifiers—basically, well, it can be many different things. We decided to use a two-fingerprint program because we were already using something like that in Mexico. We had until October 26, 2004, to deploy that [system] worldwide, so to get it out to our 200-plus posts, we used pretty much the same system that we had in Mexico.

It really isn't fingerprinting. It's a little box, finger scanning. It adds about maybe 30 seconds on to the visa interview process—fairly quick and...

**Question:** But it's not just aimed at Muslims or at the Middle East...?

**Neifach:** Not at all.

**Jacobs:** Not at all, it's a worldwide requirement. The purpose is basically to confirm the identity of the traveler, but also to make sure that no visa has been issued to that individual in another name. In other words, to make sure we don't have impostors.

**Neifach:** When the person gets to port, our [customs and border protection officers] are going to do the same thing. It [US-VISIT] is going to go back and confirm that this is the same person who got that visa.

So it does not slow down the process at all. It helps us to facilitate: you confirm that this person is who they say they are and that they have legitimate business and they can be on their way.

**Jacobs:** As long as they can show that they're well established in their home country and can articulate why it is they're going to be coming to the U.S. in the future, they shouldn't have any problem.

**Neifach:** On US-VISIT, there was a lot of trepidation with regard to how it would be implemented, particularly

at the land borders. So far, it's been well implemented without any major delays at the borders, and Chambers [of Commerce], such as Laredo [a Texas border city with Mexico], who have had great concern about it, are pleased about the way it's being implemented.

**Question:** Okay. Why don't we get to that in our next section because that's exactly what we're going to talk about: what do you do if you don't get a visa and what can you do to appeal and to find out more information about why you were denied?

### When You Need Assistance

**Question:** Welcome back to our last segment. I wanted to spend a little time, as we wrap up today, talking about what the U.S. business community can do proactively to help facilitate visas for their clients and their customers and their employees coming to the United States.

And I also wanted to...touch on what happens if something goes wrong, what happens if this visa is denied, what happens if you need to do something very quickly, that's unexpected.

Doug, tell us a little about the foreign commercial officers. What do they do and where can they be helpful in this whole process?

**Baker:** Well, Alex, through the Foreign Commercial Service, we have offices in 85 countries, and they are in most of the embassies and consulates.

And previously, prior to 9/11, they did have the ability to serve as a sponsor for a particular visa applicant. With the changes in the laws, post 9/11, that has been eliminated. Hopefully, you know, as we make additional improvements to the visa process, that's one of the things that we can get re-established.

Short of that, certainly, what I would encourage all business visa applicants to do is to apply as early as they possibly can.

It's great for the businesses to pull together as much information as they can.

And they certainly need to remember that if the visa has been denied or if they're not able to get in as early as they can, to go ahead and call the Commerce Department, either in Washington or through the commercial service presence [at the U.S. Embassy in their county].

**Question:** And do you know a website where people

*"I would encourage all business visa applicants to ... apply as early as they possibly can."* -Douglas Baker

can find out where the commercial service is located?

**Baker:** Yes, through the main Commerce website, which is <http://www.doc.gov>, and follow the link to the Foreign Commercial Service.

**Jacobs:** It really is up to the interviewing consular officer to make that decision about whether the person was eligible or not. And as I said, the more information that the officer has at hand, the easier it is to make that decision.

We have talked a little bit about what happens when people are denied [a visa]. In fact, all of the denials that are done...by...what we call the line officers, the people out there actually adjudicating the visas, those denials are reviewed by our senior supervisor at post. If that supervisor disagrees, then the applicant will be called in [for another interview].

Applicants always are able to reapply for a visa. There's nothing to keep them from reapplying. However, we always advise that unless there was a key piece of information that was missing or unless your circumstances have really changed, then it may not be a good idea to reapply sort of from one day to the next. But if you feel that the officer didn't understand your case or the situation, by all means, then the applicant should feel free to reapply.

We also, back here [in the United States], we're not monitoring all of the cases by the posts, but we also pay attention to refusal rates. And if, for example, between two officers at the same post, there's a big discrepancy between refusal rates, then we may ask about that. And also the supervisor, of course, at the post would do that.

**Question:** Is there a way to find out why you were denied?

**Jacobs:** Oh, absolutely. When you're denied, you get a piece of paper that explains which section of the law, whether it's 214(b) or another—it's right in front of you.

**Question:** And what is 214(b)?

**Jacobs:** 214(b) is the most common reason that visas are denied. It means that the consular officer thought that you were an intending immigrant. You were unable to establish the ties to your home country.

**Question:** So for that, if you could provide additional paperwork that showed, you know, some compelling reason why you would come back, then that might be a reason to reapply.

But even if they get in for an interview, isn't there some kind of processing time? ...That seems to be the perception.

**Jacobs:** Well, once—97 percent of the people who come in, once they have their interview, if they're found eligible, they get their visa either that same day or within 48 hours after the interview.

There is a very small percentage of cases that have to be referred back to Washington for further [security] vetting. Those were the cases, really, back in 2002, 2003, that were causing significant delays and that's where we have really made very significant improvement. We've gone from 79 days down to 14 [to complete secondary clearances]. So I think we have made significant progress there.

**Neifach:** DHS and State have been working very closely on further improvements that can be made. How can we rapidly check those folks that we need to [and], not have to check those people when there is already another check happening.

**Johnson:** Janice, can I ask you, on the reapplication, now that—you have to reapply, resubmit an entire application—

**Jacobs:** Right.

**Johnson:** Pay the fee again.

**Jacobs:** Right.

**Johnson:** I just paid a hundred dollars to the Russian Embassy for mine—it's a significant amount for a lot of people.

Is there, though, an internal process by which someone could say, "Look, this guy's not treating me right. I want someone else to look at my file," and sort of reapply and fairly quickly have a second pair of eyes? Is that possible or not?

**Jacobs:** Many posts have that—a procedure whereby, if you have been denied, say, a certain number of times on [the visa] line, say, twice, and you reapply again—the third time, the head of the section would look at the case. It really varies from post to post, depending on the volume and the size of the [consular] section.

**Question:** You talked about a State Department website.

**Jacobs:** Right.

**Question:** But you've also said that there are differences from country to country. How will they—how does one find out about [those differences]? Where's the best place to go to?

**Jacobs:** If you go to our website [<http://www.travel.state.gov>], you can link into all of our embassies and consulates that process visas. And we've asked all of the posts to put on their individual websites the special procedures that they have in place for people getting in on an urgent basis.

**Question:** And there are, through the Foreign Commercial Service or otherwise...there are arrangements for business applicants, specifically business applicants?

**Jacobs:** There are. We have many, many different kinds of programs. We have programs where people can—who are registered with AmCham—can get expedited appointments. At some of our posts, we have someone designated in the consular section who is the business representative. The companies can call that person to set up appointments. Every post handles it a little bit differently.

I think there is a misperception, after 9/11, that, in fact, we are denying more visas under Section 214(b), which is the one that talks about being an intending immigrant. The fact is that our worldwide refusal rate is a little bit lower today than it was before 9/11.

We are finding that the fact that we're sharing more information with other agencies, that we're able to confirm for students, for example, that they have been accepted at a school...all of these things are resulting in a higher rate of visa issuance after 9/11....

The criteria has not changed for a visa. What has really changed is that we have taken steps to know more about applicants. We're interviewing more applicants and looking more closely at documents and things like that, but the criteria for qualifying have not changed.

**Moderator:** I think that's a great place to stop. I want to thank all of you for being here today and for talking about these critical issues. I think the bottom line is that America's doors are open and that we welcome foreign visitors, whether they're coming for business, to study, or for tourism.

And I hope that we will quickly correct some of the challenges that we've heard about today and I think that, you know, we've heard that some of the myths out there are not actually true and are, in fact, myths and that there are things that the business community and the applicants can do to help smooth the whole process.

So thank you again for coming and we look forward to seeing you in the U.S.A. Thanks. ■

1 Ingersoll-Rand is a diversified industrial manufacturer with more than 40,000 employees and over 80 manufacturing facilities worldwide.

2 The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) is the world's largest not-for-profit business federation, representing 3 million companies, with 102 overseas chapters, which represent U.S. corporations and small businesses in various countries.



# “I Enter and Leave Without Problems”

CARLOS VANNI  
Business Development Manager for Chile  
Bac Florida Bank N.A.  
Santiago, Chile



As a business development manager for Chile, I promote the growing market of U.S. capital goods by guaranteeing U.S. bank loans to Chilean buyers. I specialize in providing financial support to clients in the areas of energy, environment,

and transportation. The United States is essential to my business because it provides my clients with the goods and services they need to participate successfully in today's highly competitive market.

Due to the nature of my business, I travel to the United States two to three times a year and have done so for the past seven years. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, I have noticed fundamental changes in the U.S. security system.

The perception exists that the tightened airport security is a deterrent to doing business in the United States—in my case, however, inconveniences have been minimal.

The principal changes I have noticed have to do with the increase in airport security. The United States now employs stricter security measures with passengers boarding flights and the inspection of passengers and luggage is more thorough.

When I travel to the United States, they take my photo and fingerprints upon entering. While passing

through airport security, I am asked to remove my shoes, and frequently a member of the security personnel conducts a physical inspection. My luggage passes through the security camera and, sometimes, a security staffer searches my bag.

These security procedures have caused me to be more conscious of the way I pack my luggage. On a few occasions, I have had to leave behind a pair of small scissors packed within my carry-on bag, but I have had no other difficulties.

Obviously, these measures make the lines a little bit longer, and I have to allow more time at the airport to pass through security. However, as a foreigner entering the country, I have never been treated poorly or with disrespect. I am merely asked the purpose of my visit and how long I plan on staying. I enter and leave without problems.

As far as the way I conduct business, the events of September 11 have not caused me to make any drastic changes. My business in the United States is carried out in the same way it was before the attacks, and I have not had to make any changes in business plans. Not only does the U.S. market continue to be vital to my ventures, but the September 11 attacks have not changed the sense of personal safety and security I feel when traveling there.

The extra security measures are not a burden, and personally, I have not experienced any great inconvenience. It is a pleasure to do business in the United States.

Yes, it takes longer to get through the security checkpoints and I have to arrive at the airport two hours early, but I feel these changes are to be expected and are necessary. I don't mind waiting in line a bit longer because in the end I feel safer.

The security enhancements indicate that the United States is working hard to protect both its citizens and all visitors from potential terrorist attacks. ■

# More Safety, Minimal Inconvenience

JIMMY CHAN  
RJP Limited  
Hong Kong



Like many Hong-Kong Chinese business people, I need to undertake international travel from time to time for my import-export company. Last May, I visited the United States for one week to meet with some business contacts.

The flight from Hong Kong to Chicago was smooth although long, and I landed early in the morning Chicago time, which by then was nighttime in Asia. I went to the passport control area and queued up at the visitors' entry counter. There were about 30 to 40 visitors in front of me so I needed to wait patiently for my turn.

I saw that we were organized one behind another with two officers directing us to the proper counter. Everything moved along and it was not chaotic at all. A female Asian-American police officer was among the security personnel assigned to the area.

A sign warned us not to turn on our mobile phones and that anyone who broke that rule could have their phones confiscated! Since I was no longer aboard the aircraft, I was a bit puzzled about this restriction and

couldn't imagine why using a cell phone would be a problem. I have since learned this is another security precaution.

It took about 15 minutes for me to reach the front of the line and be directed to an immigration officer who asked me a few questions. Being satisfied with my responses, she asked me to put my right and left index fingers on a screen, one at a time, for electronic fingerprint scanning. I followed the instructions, she put a stamp on my HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administration Region) passport and granted my entry into the United States. The whole process took only two to three minutes and I did not experience any problems.

Although when traveling to other countries it has not been necessary for me to go through fingerprint scanning, my personal feeling is that the extra measures now required by the United States cause me only a little extra inconvenience. I don't believe that the personal data the U.S. authorities obtained from me will pose any risk of harm to me personally or to my country and, by requiring it of all visitors, it helps them to ensure the safety of their homeland.

As a Chinese citizen living in Hong Kong, I remember that we also suffered drawbacks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I feel that it is in our interests as well to see that the United States remains a safe and prosperous country for its citizens. The cost that I, a visitor, now pay for doing my part for better security is minimal, and one which I am quite happy to bear. ■

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Fulbright Programs for Visiting (Non-U.S.) Scholars  
[http://www.cies.org/vs\\_scholars/](http://www.cies.org/vs_scholars/)

The Institute of International Education, Inc.  
<http://www.iie.org/>

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U.S. Chamber of Commerce: American Chambers of  
Commerce Abroad (AmChams)  
<http://www.uschamber.com/international/directory/>

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<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/fulbright/>

U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Educational and  
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Leadership Program  
<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/ivpl/>

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Offices in the United States  
<http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco/>

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Programs: Diversity in the United States  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/us/diversity/>

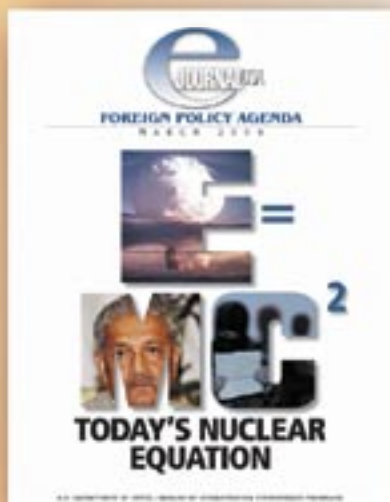
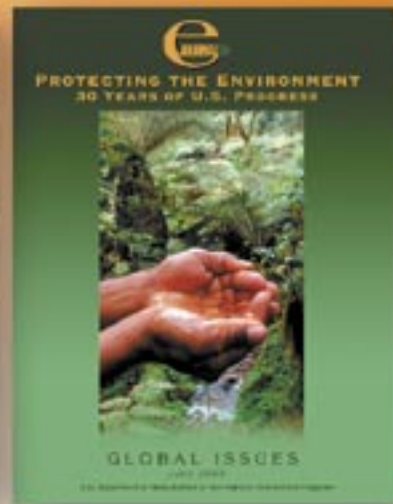
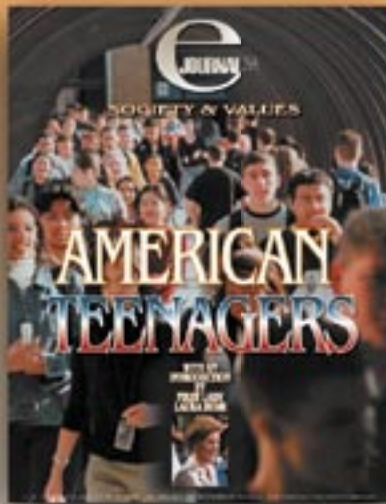
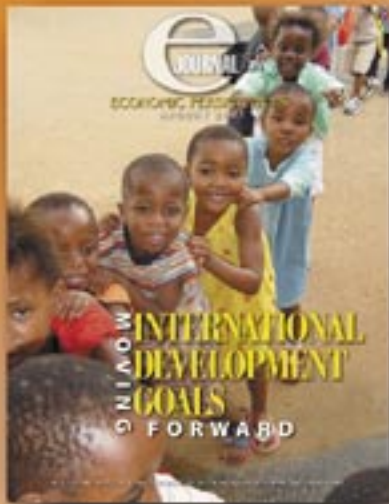
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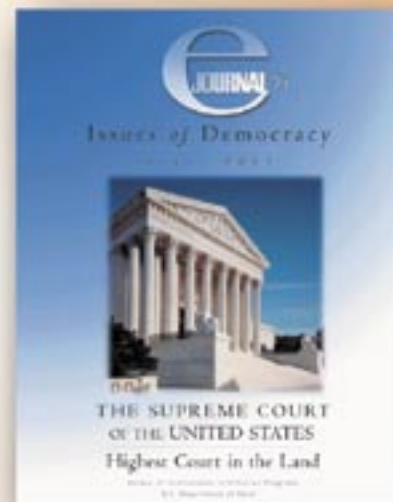
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