



# Welcome to the United States

A Guide for  
International Visitors



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

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# Introduction

Welcome to the United States. We are glad that you decided to travel to the United States to visit, study, work, or stay. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) wants to make your experience entering the United States as smooth as possible.

CBP is responsible for a wide-ranging set of missions that protect the United States against terrorists and other criminals while facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

Important note: The information in this brochure was correct as of the date of printing. For the most up-to-date information, please visit our website at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)

## **U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mission Statement**

We are the guardians of our Nation's borders.

We are America's frontline.

We safeguard the American homeland at  
and beyond our borders.

We protect the American public against terrorists  
and the instruments of terror.

We steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States  
while fostering our Nation's economic security  
through lawful international trade and travel.

We serve the American public with vigilance,  
integrity and professionalism.

# Preparing for Your Trip

## Before You Go Checklist

\_\_ Get a passport. See page 3 for more information on passports.

\_\_ Make a copy of your passport and put it in a separate place. Carry your passport—do not pack it in your checked luggage. You must present it to the Customs and Border Protection officer upon arrival in the United States.

\_\_ Get an ESTA. Prior Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) approval is required once every two years for all travelers from Visa Waiver Program countries to the United States. See page 9 for more information on ESTA.

OR

\_\_ Get a visa. Make a copy and put it in a separate place. Carry your visa with you—do not pack it in your checked luggage. For more information, go to <http://travel.state.gov/visa/>

\_\_ Plan your travel. When planning connecting flights in the United States, allow at least two hours between flights. CBP processing must be completed at your first port of entry, so allow adequate time.

\_\_ Carry only medication needed for the trip in its original container. Do not pack it.

\_\_ Carry only the jewelry needed for the trip. Do not pack it.

\_\_ If bringing a dog, have a health certificate and proof of rabies vaccinations from a veterinarian in your country of residence. Prior to your trip, check with your airline for its rules on transporting animals—many airlines require a health certificate.

\_\_ Carry documents for traveling with minor children. See page 3 for more information on traveling with children.

## Passports

Most temporary visits to the United States require passports valid for the period of the intended stay. For visitors from certain countries, passports must be valid for six months beyond that time. Go to [www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel) and click on For International Visitors for more information.

All travelers under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), including infants, must have either:

- 1) a machine-readable passport or
- 2) an e-passport if the passport was issued on or after October 26, 2006. See Visa Waiver Program Visitors on page 5.

## Traveling with Children

- All children, including infants, must have their own passport or Trusted Traveler Program document for U.S. entry. See page 11 for more information on Trusted Traveler Programs.
- All children must have their own visa or, if a resident of a Visa Waiver Program country, their own Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). See page 5 for more information on Visa Waiver Program Visitors.
- A third party, such as a relative or travel agent, may apply for a visa or ESTA on behalf of a child.
- If you are escorting a minor child without the parents, have a letter from both parents indicating that you have permission to travel with the minor.
- If the child is accompanied by only one parent, the parent should have a note from the child's other parent. For example, "I acknowledge that my wife/husband is traveling out of the country with my son/daughter. He/She/ has my permission to do so."
- If a single parent has sole custody, a copy of the court custody document can replace a letter from the other parent.

- Canadian citizen children under age 16, and those age 16 to 18 traveling with a school group, religious group, social or cultural organization, or sports team, may present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card, when arriving in the United States by land or sea from contiguous territory.
- The adult leader of the group of Canadian children should have a letter on organizational letterhead with: the names of the group and supervising adult; a list of the children on the trip; the primary address, phone number, date and place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child; a written and signed statement of the supervising adult certifying that he or she has parental or legal-guardian consent for each child.

## Visa Waiver Program Visitors

Before traveling to the United States, a citizen of another country generally must obtain from the U.S. Department of State a nonimmigrant visa for a temporary stay or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. However, many countries participate in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP).

To participate in the VWP you must be a citizen or national of one of the following participating VWP countries:

Andorra	Hungary***	The Netherlands
Australia	Iceland	New Zealand
Austria	Ireland	Norway
Belgium	Italy	Portugal
Brunei	Japan	San Marino
Czech Republic, the***	Korea, Republic of ***	Singapore
Denmark	Latvia***	Slovakia***
Estonia***	Liechtenstein	Slovenia**
Finland	Lithuania***	Spain
France	Luxembourg	Sweden
Germany	Malta***	Switzerland
Greece	Monaco	United Kingdom*

\* Only British citizens with the unrestricted right of abode in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

\*\*Citizens/nationals of Slovenia must use only the red cover Slovenian passport for admission into the United States under the VWP.

\*\*\*Citizens/nationals of these countries must present an electronic passport.



All applicants for admission to the United States under the VWP must:

- Have an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the United States. See ESTA, page 9.
- Be entering only as a visitor for business or pleasure for 90 days or less.
- Arrive by air or sea on a carrier that is signatory to a VWP country, and must possess a return ticket to any foreign place/port other than Canada or Mexico or an adjacent island (unless the traveler permanently resides there).
- Prove economic solvency and a foreign residence to which they intend to return.

## Passports for Visa Waiver Program Travelers

VWP travelers must hold passports valid for the period of their intended stay except for travelers from Brunei, who need a passport that is valid for six months beyond the period of their intended stay.

New passports issued by Visa Waiver Program countries must be e-passports, which include a computer chip with biographic and biometric information and a digitized photo. You can identify an e-passport by this symbol.



If your passport does not have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if yours is a valid passport issued:

- Before October 26, 2005, and includes a machine-readable zone, or
- Between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006, and includes a digital photograph.

If you were issued a passport on or after October 26, 2006, and it is not an e-passport, you will need to obtain a visa.

### Machine-Readable Passports

Valid passports issued by Visa Waiver Program countries before October 26, 2005, must have a

machine-readable zone. Machine-readable passports have two lines of letters, numbers and chevrons (<<<) at the bottom of the personal information page, along with the bearer's picture.

If your passport does not have this feature, you can get a qualifying, new passport from your country of nationality or get a visa.

### **Digital Photographs**

Passports issued, renewed or extended by Visa Waiver Program countries between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006, must include a digital photo printed on the data page. A digital photo is one that is printed on the page, not a photo that is glued or laminated into the passport.

If your passport does not have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if you:

- Were issued a valid passport before October 26, 2005, with a machine-readable zone, or
- You have an e-passport, which includes a computer chip containing biographic and biometric information and a digitized photograph.

If you are issued a passport on or after October 26, 2005, and it does not meet the requirements outlined in this section, you will need to obtain a visa.

### **Passports for Travelers from Austria and Germany**

- Austrian visas issued prior to December 31, 2006, may have a "foil" as an acceptable alternative for the digital photo requirement for VWP applicants.
- The German child's passport or kinderreisepass is valid for visa-free travel only if issued prior to October 26, 2006.

## **Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)**

ESTA is an automated system to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program and whether their travel poses any law enforcement or security risk. All nationals or citizens of VWP countries who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure under the VWP must receive electronic travel authorizations through the ESTA website prior to boarding a U.S.-bound airplane or vessel.

ESTA is accessible online in 22 languages at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>. Each approved ESTA application is valid for two years—a visitor may travel to the United States repeatedly within a two-year period without having to apply for another ESTA approval. Travelers whose ESTA applications are approved, but whose passports will expire in less than two years, will receive an ESTA valid until the passport's expiration date.

A friend, relative, travel agent, or another person may file an application on behalf of the traveler. However, the traveler is responsible for the truthfulness and accuracy of all information submitted on his or her behalf. The traveler must provide (in English) biographical data, including name, birth date, and passport information. The traveler also must answer questions regarding communicable diseases, arrests and convictions for certain crimes, and history of visa revocation or deportation, among other VWP eligibility questions.

For additional information on ESTA go to [www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id\\_visa/esta/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/)

## **For Residents of Canada**

**Air Travel:** Canadian citizens flying to or through the United States must have a valid passport or a NEXUS card for use at NEXUS kiosks only at designated airports. For more information, see Trusted Traveler Programs on page 11.

**Land and Sea Travel:** Documents that Canadian citizens may show for U.S. entry:

- Canadian passport
- Enhanced driver's license, currently available in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.
- Trusted Traveler Card. See Trusted Traveler Programs on page 11.

## **Students and Exchange Visitors**

**Before leaving your country:**

- Confirm that your passport and nonimmigrant visa are still valid for entry into the United States. The passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
- Check that your visa reflects the correct, intended visa classification.
- Verify on your visa the correct name of the institution or exchange program you will attend, if your visa includes this information.
- When you receive your visa, it will be attached by the consular officer to your passport. You will also receive a SEVIS form – I-20AB, I-20MN or DS-2019. The consular officer will seal this form and any additional immigration documents in an envelope and attach it to your passport. Do not open this envelope! The CBP officer at the U.S. port of entry will open it and review your papers. Any discrepancies or problems may require you to visit the U.S. embassy or consulate to resolve the discrepancies or obtain a new visa to enter the country.

## Carry with you – do not pack in your checked luggage:

- Your passport, including your attached visa and envelope of immigration documents.
- A Form I-797, Receipt Notice, or Internet Receipt verifying SEVIS fee payment if you are a visa-exempt national entering the United States for the first time.
- Evidence of financial resources.
- Evidence of Student/Exchange Visitor status, for example, recent tuition receipts or transcripts.
- Name and contact information for a designated school official or responsible officer at your intended school or program.

## Trusted Traveler Programs

CBP's Trusted Traveler Programs expedite travel for pre-approved, low-risk travelers through dedicated lanes and kiosks.

**Global Entry** facilitates U.S. entry for American citizens or lawful permanent residents and citizens from certain other countries who arrive by air. Global Entry is available to members of SENTRI and NEXUS at no additional charge. Find out more at [www.globalentry.gov](http://www.globalentry.gov).

**NEXUS** expedites U.S. entry via air—at Canadian preclearance sites—or via sea, and at all U.S. land ports of entry for approved citizens or permanent residents of the United States or Canada. Learn more at [www.nexus.gov](http://www.nexus.gov).

**SENTRI** (Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection) expedites travel to approved low-risk travelers entering the United States by sea and at all land ports of entry. Find out more at [www.sentry.gov](http://www.sentry.gov).

**FAST** (Free and Secure Trade) expedites release for approved commercial truck drivers making fully-qualified FAST trips between the United States and Canada or to the United States from Mexico. To learn about applying, go to [www.fastdriver.gov](http://www.fastdriver.gov).

# Navigating Passenger Processing

## Passenger Processing Overview

- If entering the United States by air or sea, you will receive en route a CBP Declaration Form 6059B and, if you are not from a Visa Waiver Program country, a CBP Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. Complete all sections of the forms.
- On your U.S. arrival, go to the primary CBP passport control area. The CBP officer will ask to see all of your travel documents and the completed CBP forms. The officer may refer you for a secondary screening.
- Proceed to baggage claim to pick up luggage. Go to the CBP customs inspection checkpoint and show your declaration to the CBP officer, who may examine your bags and refer you for a secondary inspection.
- Pay duty, if applicable.
- Depart airport or seaport or connect to your next flight. See Connecting Flights on page 16.

## Before Your U.S. Arrival

Review the brochure *CBP Traveler Entry Forms* about completing forms.

**CBP Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record.** If you hold a nonimmigrant visa, you must complete a CBP Form I-94 while en route to the United States. This form has two perforated sections.

- The top is your arrival record. Your CBP officer will collect this when you arrive.
- The bottom is a departure record which must be returned upon exiting the United States. Follow the directions on the back of this portion of the form.

**CBP Declaration Form 6059B**, which is required for each person or family group. You must declare:

- Items you bought in duty-free shops, on the ship, or on the plane. Duty-free items are only duty free in the country you bought them in. You may have to pay duty on them when you arrive in the United States.
- Items you are bringing for someone else.
- Items you intend to sell or use in your business.
- Food, both processed and unprocessed, whether for human or animal consumption. Failure to declare all food items can result in a minimum \$300 fine.
- Plants and all plant products.
- If you and your travel companions together are carrying \$10,000 or more in cash or other negotiable instruments such as endorsed checks, you must declare it. If you do not, it is subject to forfeiture. Your money is not subject to taxation or duty.

You are not required to declare personal items that you are bringing for your use as a visitor except for food, alcohol or tobacco, which must all be declared. You must state how much you actually paid for each item in equivalent U.S. dollars, including all taxes. If you don't know for sure, estimate.

- As a non-resident, you are allowed to bring in up to \$100 worth of merchandise, free of duty and U.S. internal revenue tax, as gifts for other people.
- Do not gift-wrap your articles because they must be available for CBP examination and may be opened.



## Arrival

With completed entry forms and travel documents in hand, go to the CBP processing area and select the appropriate line, for example, Visitors, Crew, etc. Please do not use cameras or cell phone cameras in the CBP processing areas.

When you get to the primary passenger processing booth, a CBP officer will:

- Review your documents.
- Run your passport through an electronic reader.
- Scan up to 10 of your fingerprints and take your photograph with a digital camera to establish and verify your identity. This US-VISIT requirement applies to all visitors between the ages of 14 and 79 with a non U.S. passport entering the United States, including visitors traveling under the Visa Waiver Program. US-VISIT does not apply to U.S. citizens.
- Ask you questions regarding your trip.
- Ask you if you have anything to declare.

If the CBP officer has any concerns about you, your travel, or your documents, or if you are selected randomly for additional processing, the CBP officer will direct you to the CBP Secondary Area, where you may be interviewed further to determine whether you are admissible to the United States.

## Baggage Claim

At the baggage claim area, pick up your baggage and proceed to the CBP checkpoint where a CBP officer will review your CBP Declaration Form 6059B, ask you additional questions, and send you to the cashier to pay duty or allow you to leave the terminal. A CBP officer may inspect the items you are bringing into the country. For example, your baggage may be reviewed for agricultural products that are not allowed into the country.

Your CBP processing may include a personal search. If so:

- You should be treated in a courteous, professional and dignified manner.
- You may not be searched on any discriminatory basis, for example, because of your race, gender, religion, or ethnic background. However, a search based on citizenship or travel itinerary is not discriminatory.
- You will receive an explanation of the examination process as it occurs.
- A personal search can include a physical search of you and your belongings as well as verbal questioning. The U.S. Supreme Court has established that this questioning is legal and it not a violation of individual civil rights.
- Usually, you can request that CBP notify someone of your delay if you are detained more than two hours after the personal search has begun.
- If you feel you have not been treated in a courteous manner or for any other reason, you may request to speak to a CBP supervisor.

## Connecting Flights

Travelers must complete all arrival processing and then proceed to a connecting flight because CBP processing must be completed at the first port of entry.

When passengers exit the final CBP checkpoint, most ports of entry have passengers immediately recheck their luggage to connecting flights, sending it through the Transportation Security Administration's required X-ray screening. Before proceeding to your departure gate you also must go through a TSA security checkpoint.

# Returning Home

## Transportation Security Administration

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is a component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Before you board any U.S. flight, TSA must approve you for travel. To reduce your wait time at the TSA security checkpoint:

- Do not pack or bring prohibited items to the airport. Learn about permitted and prohibited items, including liquids, gels and aerosols, on the TSA website, [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov).
- Liquids, gels and aerosols in carry-on luggage must follow 3-1-1 guidelines: 3-ounce (100 ml) or smaller containers, placed in a 1 quart (1 liter) clear plastic bag, and 1 bag per passenger placed in the airport's plastic bin for screening.
- Put jewelry, cash, computers, and other valuables in your carry-on baggage. Tape your business card or identifying information to your laptop.
- Place the following items in your carry-on baggage or be prepared to remove them as you enter the security checkpoint: mobile phones, keys, coins, money clips, hand-held electronics, large amounts of jewelry, metal hair decorations, and large belt buckles.
- Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage. Checked baggage screening equipment may damage undeveloped film.
- Be aware of what you wear to the airport. Clothing, jewelry and accessories that contain metal may set off the alarm on the metal detector.
- You will need to remove your shoes and put them through the X-ray machine.
- If you wish to lock your baggage, use a TSA-recognized lock. See <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/locks.shtm> for more information.

- Do not pack wrapped gifts and do not bring wrapped gifts to the checkpoint, as TSA may have to unwrap packages for security reasons
- Take computers and video cameras with cassettes out of their cases and place them in a bin provided at the checkpoint to go through the X-ray machine separately.
- Remove all outer coats, suit coats, jackets and blazers and place them on the belt to be X-rayed.
- Do not overstuff checked baggage. If TSA screeners must open your checked bag for inspection, they must be able to easily close your bag afterwards.

At the airport, keep your airline boarding pass available until exiting the security checkpoint. The absence of proper identification will result in additional screening and delays.

## **Outbound CBP Inspections**

A CBP officer may select you for an interview when you leave the United States. This does not necessarily mean that you are suspected of any wrongdoing. CBP officers choose passengers for an interview for a variety of reasons. In addition to enforcing currency requirements, CBP ensures that all goods and persons leaving the United States comply with all U.S. laws and regulations.

Remember to turn in form I-94 before you leave the country. Failure to do so may record you as an overstay, which means that you could be denied future entry into the United States. If you failed to turn in your form I-94, please send it, along with any documentation that proves you departed the United States, to:

ACS Inc.

1084 South Laurel Road

London, Kentucky 40744

Keep a copy of what you send to ACS Inc. and carry it with you the next time you come to the United States in case the CBP officer has any questions about your eligibility to enter.

## **US-VISIT Exit Procedures**

When you leave the country, you do not currently have to check-out at a biometric exit kiosk. However, at a future date you may be required to provide biometrics, such as fingerprints, when departing the United States.

## Customer Service

If you have concerns or need help understanding CBP regulations and procedures, ask to speak with the passenger service representative on duty when you arrive at the airport, or:

- Write to:  
Customer INFO Center  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Room 3.4A  
Washington, DC 20229
- Call:  
1-877-CBP-5511 (1-877-227-5511).  
Or 703-526-4200

If you believe you are the victim of serious or criminal misconduct by a CBP officer, contact the Joint Intake Center:

- Call 1-877-2INTAKE (1-877-246-8253).
- E-mail [Joint.Intake@dhs.gov](mailto:Joint.Intake@dhs.gov).
- Fax 202-344-3390.
- Write to:  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
P.O. Box 14475  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20044

## **Traveler Redress Inquiry Program**

The Department of Homeland Security's Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) provides a single point of contact for people who have inquiries or seek resolution regarding difficulties they experienced during their travel screening at airports or train stations or crossing U.S. borders, including:

- Denied or delayed airline boarding;
- Denied or delayed entry into and exit from the United States at a port of entry; or
- Continual referral to secondary screening.

To initiate an inquiry, please log onto the DHS TRIP interactive website at [www.dhs.gov/trip](http://www.dhs.gov/trip). You will be asked to describe your concerns and experiences and will be assigned a case number to help monitor the progress of your inquiry.

After filing online, you will be asked to provide supporting documentation within 30 days. DHS TRIP will process your request after the supporting paperwork is received. You may check the status of your request at any time through the DHS TRIP website.



# Prohibited and Restricted Items

CBP restricts products from entering the United States that would injure community health, public safety and domestic plant and animal life.

Before you leave for your trip to the United States, be sure the items you intend to bring with you are not prohibited or restricted by visiting [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)—click on Questions/Comments.

## Absinthe

The importation of absinthe is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Department of the Treasury’s Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Imported absinthe must be thujone free (that is, it must contain less than 100 parts per million of thujone); the term “absinthe” cannot be the brand name or stand alone on the label; and the packaging cannot show images of hallucinogenic, psychotropic, or mind-altering effects. Absinthe imported in violation of these regulations is subject to seizure.

## Alcoholic Beverages

In addition to U.S. laws, the laws of the state in which you first arrive in the United States will govern the amount of alcohol you may bring with you, and whether you need a license. Most states will allow you to bring up to a case of wine, particularly if you are transiting, but you will be charged duty on more than one liter. If you plan to bring alcoholic beverages with you, before you depart, contact the state’s applicable alcoholic beverage control board to determine how to comply with that state’s laws and regulations.

## Automobiles

Cars brought into the United States temporarily (for less than one year) by nonresidents are exempt from restrictions. However, it is illegal to bring a vehicle into the United States and sell it if it was not formally entered on a CBP Form 7501.

## **Biologicals**

You may need a U.S. Department of Agriculture permit to import biological specimens including bacterial cultures, culture media, excretions, fungi, arthropods, mollusks, tissues of livestock, birds, plants, viruses, and vectors of disease.

## **Cultural Artifacts and Property**

Most countries have laws that protect their cultural property to include art, artifacts, antiquities, and archaeological and ethnological material. Such laws include export controls and/or national ownership of cultural property. Even if purchased from a business in the country of origin or in another country, legal ownership of such artifacts may be questioned if brought into the United States. Therefore, although they do not necessarily confer ownership, you must have documents such as export permits and receipts when bringing such items into the United States.

While foreign laws may not be enforceable in the United States, they can cause certain U.S. laws to be invoked. For example, under the U.S. National Stolen Property Act, one cannot have legal title to art/artifacts/antiquities that were stolen—no matter how many times such items may have changed hands.

Other countries may request that the United States impose additional import restrictions. It is wise for prospective purchasers/importers to visit the U.S. State Department cultural property website, <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop/>.

## **Caviar**

You may bring in no more than 125 grams of caviar. If you bring in more than that, ALL of the caviar will be seized.

## **Cuban Cigars**

NO products of Cuba can be brought into the United States if purchased in a country other than Cuba.

## **Defense Articles or Items with Military or Proliferation Applications**

Some items that have both commercial and military or proliferation applications, or that are considered defense articles, require a license before exporting abroad. Such items may include software or technology, blueprints, design plans, and retail software packages and technical information. If CBP officials suspect that a regulated item or defense article has been exported without a license, they may, for example, examine files and software on your laptop computer as well as your baggage. A list of U.S. government agencies and departments with regulatory authority over exports is available at [www.bis.doc.gov/about/reslinks.htm](http://www.bis.doc.gov/about/reslinks.htm).

## **Dog and Cat Fur**

It is illegal in the United States to import, export, distribute, transport, manufacture, or sell products containing dog or cat fur.

## **Drug Paraphernalia**

It is illegal to bring drug paraphernalia into the United States unless they have been prescribed for authentic medical conditions such as diabetes. Drug paraphernalia is any equipment or product designed for use in manufacturing, compounding, injecting, ingesting, or inhaling a controlled substance, the possession of which is unlawful.

## **Firearms**

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) regulates and restricts firearms and ammunition and approves all import transactions involving weapons and ammunition. U.S. visitors (with a few exceptions) must obtain an import permit (ATF Form 6, <http://www.atf.gov/forms/download/atf-f-5330-3a.pdf>) to temporarily import firearms and ammunition for hunting or other lawful sporting purposes. If the firearm is controlled as a U.S. Munitions List article and it is temporarily imported to the United States, or it is temporarily exported, it may require a Department of State license.

## **Fish and Wildlife**

Certain fish and wildlife, and products made from them, are subject to import and export restrictions, prohibitions, permits or certificates, and quarantine requirements. CBP recommends that you contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ([http://www.fws.gov/le/impexp/info\\_importers\\_exporters.htm](http://www.fws.gov/le/impexp/info_importers_exporters.htm)) before you depart if you plan to bring any of the following into the United States:

- Wild birds, land or marine mammals, reptiles, fish, shellfish, mollusks, or invertebrates.
- Any part or product of the above, such as skins, tusks, bone, feathers, or eggs.
- Products or articles manufactured from endangered wildlife or fish.

Endangered species, and products made from them, generally may not be imported. You will need a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to import virtually all types of ivory.

Some states have fish and wildlife laws and regulations that are stricter than federal laws and regulations. If you are traveling to such a state, be aware that the stricter state laws and regulations have priority. Similarly, the federal government does not allow you to import wild animals into the United States that were taken, killed, sold, possessed, or exported from another country if any of these acts violated foreign laws.

## **Food Products (Prepared)**

You may bring many prepared foods into the United States, including bakery items and certain cheeses. As a general rule, condiments, vinegars, oils, packaged spices, honey, ground coffee and tea are admissible. Foods in packaging that appears unsafe or contaminated may be refused entry. See the entry below on Meats, Livestock and Poultry.

### **Fruits, Vegetables, Nuts and Dried Grains**

It is best not to bring fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts or grains into the United States. CBP will inspect them to ensure that dangerous insects and pests are not introduced into the United States. The additional inspection could add to your CBP processing time.

### **Game and Hunting Trophies**

If planning to import game or hunting trophies, please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before you leave. Contact information is on page 32.

### **Gold**

Gold coins, medals, and bullion, formerly prohibited, may be brought into the United States. However, under Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) regulations, such items originating in or brought from Cuba, Iran, Burma (Myanmar) and most of Sudan are prohibited entry without a license or other OFAC authorization. Copies of gold coins are prohibited if not properly marked by country of issuance.

### **Meats, Livestock and Poultry**

You may not import fresh, dried, or canned meats or meat products from most foreign countries into the United States. Also you may not import food products that have been prepared with meat. Commercially canned meat is allowed if the inspector can determine from the label that the meat was cooked in the can after it was sealed. Some meats may enter if they have appropriate health certificates. The regulations on importing meat and meat products change frequently because they are based on the animal disease status in different areas of the world.

If you question whether particular agricultural products can be brought into the United States, contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture—contact information is on page 32.

## Medication

A general rule: Bring only the medicines you will need, no more, no less.

If you bring medicines that contain potentially addictive drugs or narcotics, (for example, some cough medicines, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, antidepressants, or stimulants):

- Declare all drugs, medicines, and similar products to the appropriate CBP official.
- Carry drugs, medicines and similar products in their original containers.
- Carry only the quantity of such substances that a person with that condition (e.g., chronic pain) would normally carry for his/her personal use.

Only medications that can be legally prescribed in the United States may be imported for personal use. Possession of certain substances may also violate state laws. (The U.S. Food and Drug Administration generally does not allow the import of prescription drugs purchased outside the United States. Go to <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/> for more information.

For specifics about importing controlled substances, go to <http://www.fda.gov/ForIndustry/ImportProgram/ucm173743.htm> or call 202.307.2414. For additional information about traveling with medication, write to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Division of Import Operations and Policy, Room 12-8 (HFC-170), 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

## Merchandise from Embargoed Countries

Generally, you may not bring in any goods from Cuba, Iran, Myanmar (Burma), and most of Sudan. To bring in merchandise from any of these countries you will need a license from the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control, known as OFAC; visit [www.treas.gov/ofac](http://www.treas.gov/ofac). You may, however, bring in information and informational materials—books, magazines, films, posters, photographs, microfilms, tapes, CDs, records, works of art, etc. Blank tapes and blank CDs are not informational materials.

- Gifts up to \$100 U.S. may be imported from Sudan.
- Prohibited are certain Iraqi cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical/cultural, rare scientific and religious importance illegally removed from the Iraq National Museum, the National Library and other Iraq locations.
- To import merchandise from North Korea you must have a letter of approval issued by OFAC.

The commercial U.S. import of the following Iranian-origin items is prohibited:

- Foodstuffs intended for human consumption that are classified under chapters 2-23 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the U.S. at <http://hts.usitc.gov>.
- Carpets, other textile floor coverings, and carpets used as wall hangings that are classified under chapter 57 or under chapter 97, heading 9706.00.0060, of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the U.S. at <http://hts.usitc.gov>.

Non-commercial import of the above Iranian items is also prohibited unless authorized by OFAC at [www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/iran.aspx](http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/iran.aspx), or call (202) 622-2490.

Imports of household goods and personal effects are allowed provided they comply with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (31 CFR 560.201)—available at <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov>—and applicable CBP regulations at [https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/354](https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/354)

## **Money and Other Monetary Instruments**

You may bring into or take out of the United States, including by mail, as much money as you wish. However, more than \$10,000, must be declared to CBP. Families traveling together must declare currency if the total combined amount is over \$10,000. For example, if you have \$10,000 with you plus a couple of coins in your pocket, you are in violation of the Currency Reporting statute. It is better to be safe and declare it—ask the CBP officer for the Currency Reporting Form (FinCEN 105). The penalties for non-compliance can be severe.

“Money” means monetary instruments and includes U.S. or foreign coins currently in circulation, currency, travelers’ checks in any form, money orders, and negotiable instruments or investment securities in bearer form.

This reporting requirement does not impose any restriction or payment of duty or fees.

## **Pets**

If you plan to bring your pet with you to the United States, please see the CBP brochure *Pets and Wildlife* at <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/publications/travel/>. Also check with state, county, and local authorities, especially in Hawaii, to learn their restrictions on pets.

Importing animals is closely regulated for public health reasons and also for the well-being of the animals. There are restrictions and prohibitions on bringing many species into the United States.

## **Plants and Seeds**

Plant and plant products, including handicrafts, must be declared to the CBP officer and must be presented for CBP inspection, no matter how free of pests they appear to be. For more information, go to [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import\\_export/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/index.shtml)



## Soil

Soil is prohibited entry unless accompanied by an import permit. Soil must be declared and the permit must be verified. For more information, go to [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import\\_export/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/index.shtml)

## Textiles and Clothing

In general, there is no limit to how much fabric and clothing you can bring into the United States as long as it is for your personal use or as gifts. If you have exceeded your personal duty exemption, you may have to pay duty on the items. Personal shipments, however, may be limited if they are in quantities that could be considered commercial. Textiles in any amount can be considered commercial.

## Trademarked and Copyrighted Articles

U.S. law prohibits the importation of goods that violate a trademark or copyright that is protected under U.S. law. CBP seizes counterfeit and pirated merchandise imported by travelers and may levy a fine on the importer. CBP may refer counterfeit or pirated commercial imports for criminal investigation. Exceptions may allow a traveler to import no more than one article that infringes a U.S. trademark in a 30-day period, provided that the article is for personal use, not for resale, and is contained in the traveler's personal baggage.

The import of articles intended for sale or public distribution bearing counterfeit trademarks may subject an individual to a civil fine if the registered trademark has also been recorded with CBP.

Articles bearing marks that are confusingly similar to a CBP recorded registered trademark, and restricted gray market articles (goods bearing genuine marks not intended for U.S. importation for which CBP granted gray market protection) are subject to detention and seizure. However, travelers arriving in the United States may be permitted an exemption and allowed to import one article of each type, provided that the article is for personal use and is not for sale. This exemption may be granted not more than once every 30 days. If the article imported under the personal exemption provision is sold within one year after the

date of importation, the article or its value is subject to forfeiture.

You may also bring in genuine trademarked and copyrighted articles (subject to duties). Products subject to copyright protection most commonly imported include software on CD-ROMs, sound recordings, toys, stuffed animals, clothing with cartoon characters, videotapes, DVDs, music CDs, and books. Products subject to trademark protection most commonly imported include handbags, accessories, and clothing.

## Helpful Websites

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security** –  
[www.dhs.gov/](http://www.dhs.gov/)

- Traveler Redress Inquiry Program –  
[http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/gc\\_1169676919316.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/gc_1169676919316.shtm)

**U.S. Customs and Border Protection** –  
[www.cbp.gov/](http://www.cbp.gov/)

- Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) – <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>
- Free and Secure Trade (FAST) –  
[www.fastdriver.gov](http://www.fastdriver.gov)
- NEXUS – [www.nexus.gov](http://www.nexus.gov)
- Global Entry – [www.globalentry.gov](http://www.globalentry.gov)
- Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) – [www.sentri.gov](http://www.sentri.gov)

**Transportation Security Administration** –  
[www.tsa.gov/](http://www.tsa.gov/)

US-VISIT – [www.dhs.gov/us-visit](http://www.dhs.gov/us-visit)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

- I-551, Permanent Resident Card (“Green Card”) –  
[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

**U.S. State Department**

- Passports –  
[www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)
- Visas – [www.travel.state.gov/visa/visa\\_1750.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html)
- Visa Waiver Program –  
[www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without\\_1990.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html)

## **U.S. Department of Agriculture**

- Birds – [www.aphis.usda.gov/subjects/animal\\_health/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/subjects/animal_health/index.shtml)
- Plants and seeds – [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/index.shtml)

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

- Permits – [www.fws.gov/permits/](http://www.fws.gov/permits/)

## **U.S. Department of Justice**

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives – [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov)

## **U.S. Department of Treasury**

Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau

- Personal importation of alcoholic beverages – [www.ttb.gov/importers/personal\\_importation.shtml](http://www.ttb.gov/importers/personal_importation.shtml)
- Contact information for State alcoholic beverage control boards – [www.ttb.gov/wine/control\\_board.shtml](http://www.ttb.gov/wine/control_board.shtml)

## **U.S. Department of Commerce**

Bureau of Industry and Security – [www.bis.doc.gov](http://www.bis.doc.gov)



U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Washington, D.C. 20229

Please visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Web site at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)

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