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Printed:
Thu Mar 28 2013 12:57:17 GMT-0400 (Eastern Daylight Time)

CBP Reminds Travelers to 'Know Before You Go' this Spring Holiday Travel Season

03/27/2013

Washington — As the busy spring holiday travel season kicks-off, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is reminding travelers to be prepared by educating themselves on the rules and regulations relating to international travel.

“CBP strives to make our entry processes as efficient as possible while maintaining the highest levels of security,” said CBP Acting Chief Operating Officer Thomas S. Winkowski. “The traveling public can assist by being aware of the requirements when getting ready to travel to the United States.”

CBP reminds travelers that certain traditional items may be prohibited or subject to CBP regulations. For example, traditional Easter/Holy Week agriculture items, such as colorful eggshells known as cascarones, are regulated: travelers can legally import up to 10 cascarones, but they must be completely clean and be presented for inspection.

CBP is undergoing modernization efforts to streamline the traveler’s inspection process, increase officer efficiency and reduce operating costs in order to provide better services and a more welcoming environment for all travelers entering the United States. Advances in technology and automation in the passenger processing environment and increased participation in trusted traveler programs such as Global Entry, SENTRI and NEXUS will help make entry into the U.S. faster and more efficient for travelers.

CBP continues to experience longer wait times than usual due to sequestration, and is working to minimize these impacts, while maintaining the highest standards of security.

Travel Requirements for U.S. Citizens

Individuals traveling abroad must have approved travel documents when returning home. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requires U.S. and Canadian citizens, age 16 and older to present a valid, acceptable travel document, such as a passport, a U.S. passport card, a trusted traveler card (NEXUS, SENTRI, Global Entry or FAST/EXPRES), permanent resident card or an enhanced driver’s license that denotes both identity and citizenship when entering the U.S. by land or sea. U.S. and Canadian citizens under age 16 may present a birth certificate or alternative proof of citizenship when entering by land or sea. All travelers must have a passport book for international air travel.

Travel Requirements for Visitors to the U.S.

All nationals or citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries are required to have an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization, or ESTA, prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the U.S. under the VWP. (ESTA) ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, and once approved, generally will be valid for up to two years or until the applicant’s passport expires, whichever comes first. Authorizations will be valid for multiple entries into the United States. CBP recommends ESTA applications be submitted as soon as an applicant begins making travel plans.

AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 13032849. (Posted 3/28/13)

Travel Checklist

- Have all the required travel documents for the country you are visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the United States. Passports are required for air travel. Visit travel.state.gov for country-specific information. (travel.state.gov)
- For citizens of Visa Waiver Program countries, make sure that you have an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before boarding. For those traveling by air or sea on a visa, CBP has automated the Form I-94 removing the need for travelers to fill out a paper copy. Travelers will still be able to obtain their I-94 number and/or a copy of their I-94 at CBP.gov/I94. (CBP.gov/I94) (**Please note: this website will not be live until after April 30, 2013**)
- Have a completed Customs Declaration form (6059b) upon reaching CBP processing. Declare everything you are bringing from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. Know that things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts may be eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they are not.
- Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (which is forbidden by law to enter the U.S.) and restricted merchandise (items needing special permit to be allowed into the U.S.). For more information, please visit the Restricted/Prohibited section of the CBP website. (Restricted/Prohibited)
- Do not attempt to bring fruits, meats, dairy/poultry products and/or firewood into the United States without first checking whether they are permitted. For more information, please visit the Bringing Agricultural Products Into the United States section of the CBP website. (Bringing Agricultural Products Into the United States)
- Build additional time into trips due to increased wait times under sequestration and understand that CBP must conduct a thorough inspection of the nearly one million travelers entering the country each day in order to maintain the highest standards of security.
- Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your personal belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
- Monitor border wait times for various ports of entry. Travelers are encouraged to plan their trips during periods of lighter traffic or to use an alternate, less heavily traveled port of entry. For more information, travelers can find up to date wait time information on the CBP website. (BWT)
- If you are a frequent international traveler and haven't already become a member of a trusted traveler program, sign up now. For more information, please visit the Trusted Traveler section of the CBP website. (Trusted Traveler)

Familiarize yourself with the "Know Before You Go" brochure or section of CBP.gov. (CBP.gov)

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

see also:

on cbp.gov:

Travel

travel.state.gov

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Restricted/Prohibited

Bringing Agricultural Products Into the United States

BWT

Trusted Traveler

CBP.gov

ESTA

CBP.gov/I94

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