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Closed Loop Voyages- Frequently Asked Questions

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A “closed loop” voyage or itinerary occurs when a vessel departs from a U.S. port or place and returns to the same U.S. port upon completion of the voyage. Travelers on “closed loop” voyages are not subject to the same documentary requirements for entry to the United States as other travelers.

Q: Is this definition the same as what is being used for the modified processing of cruise passengers?

A: No. The definition was further refined to be in compliance with our statute and regulations.

Q: What is the definition of closed loop in the context of modified processing of cruise passengers?

A: Closed-loop cruises are defined as U.S. based cruises with itineraries that both originate and terminate in the United States, returning from contiguous territories or adjacent islands.

Q: What does contiguous territories or adjacent islands mean?

A: Contiguous Territories are any country sharing a common boundary with the United States. Canada and Mexico are contiguous to the United States.

Adjacent Islands as follows: Anguilla, Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Barbuda, Bermuda, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Marie-Galantine, Martinique, Miquelon, Montserrat, Saba, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Christopher, Saint Eustatius, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Maarten, Saint Martin, Saint Pierre, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and other British, French and Netherlands territory or possessions bordering on the Caribbean Sea.

Q: How was it determined that these locations are “Adjacent Islands”?

A: Adjacent Islands are defined by statutes and regulation. (Immigration and Nationality Act § 101(b)(5) and 8 Code of Federal Regulations §286.1).

Q: Why was the “contiguous territories or adjacent islands” added to the definition of “closed loop” for modified processing of cruise passengers?

A: The modified processing of cruise passengers includes utilizing the I-94W issued as a multiple use document for the readmission of VWP visitors after departure to contiguous territory or adjacent islands. See 8 C.F.R. § 217.3(b).

Q: Which definition is applicable to the Electronic Travel Authorization (ESTA) process for closed loop cruises?

A: It has been determined that the requirement for verification of an ESTA authorization is not required for cruise itineraries meeting the definition of closed loop, as utilized for the modified processing of cruise passengers.

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