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[Home](#) > [News](#) > **DHS Announces Chile's Designation Into the Visa Waiver Program**

News

[Blog](#)

[Comunicados de](#)

[Prensa](#)

[Data](#)

[Events](#)

[Fact Sheets](#)

[Multimedia](#)

[Press Releases](#)

[Publications](#)

[Speeches](#)

[Testimony](#)

[Media Contacts](#)

[Social Media](#)

DHS Announces Chile's Designation Into the Visa Waiver Program

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Contact: 202-282-8010

WASHINGTON—Today, Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, joined by Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Heather Higginbottom, Chilean Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno and Chilean Ambassador Felipe Bulnes, announced the designation of Chile into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP)—streamlining travel for thousands of eligible Chilean passport holders, while maintaining strong security standards. Starting May 1, 2014, eligible Chilean passport holders with both an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and an e-passport will be able to visit the United States without nonimmigrant visitor visas.

"This announcement furthers our important partnership with Chile and will benefit the security and the economies of both our nations," said Secretary Johnson. "The addition of Chile to the Visa Waiver Program will enable us to work together to maintain the highest standards of security, while also facilitating travel for Chileans visiting the United States."

"The United States and Chile have a robust partnership – from advancing peace and democratic values in the hemisphere to supporting shared economic growth through trade and investment," said Deputy Secretary Higginbottom. "Today's move will continue to bring our governments – and, more importantly, our citizens – closer together, strengthening the foundation of our enduring partnership for years to come."

Chile will join 37 participants in the VWP—which permits visa-free travel to the United States for eligible travelers visiting the United States for 90 days or fewer for business or tourism. In Fiscal Year 2013, the VWP accounted for about 19.6 million visits to the United States, or approximately 60 percent of tourist and business travelers entering the United States by air.

In accordance with the VWP designation process, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Department of State, determined that Chile complies with key security and information-sharing requirements—such as enhanced law enforcement and security-related data sharing with the United States; timely reporting of lost and stolen passports; and the maintenance of high counterterrorism, law enforcement, border control, aviation and document security standards.

Like other VWP travelers, eligible Chilean passport holders will be required to apply for advanced authorization through the ESTA, a DHS Web-based system.

For more information, visit www.dhs.gov or www.cbp.gov/esta.

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