

COVID-19 Travel Restrictions and Exceptions

Last updated: June 24, 2021

To protect the public health, there are four presidential proclamations that suspend entry into the United States of all noncitizens who were physically present in any of 33 countries during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States. They are [Presidential Proclamation 9984 \(China\)](#); [Presidential Proclamation 9992 \(Iran\)](#); [Presidential Proclamation 10143 \(Schengen Area, United Kingdom, Ireland, Brazil, and South Africa\)](#); and [Presidential Proclamation 10199 \(India\)](#).

The Proclamations do not apply to:

- U.S. citizens;
- lawful permanent residents;
- spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents;
- parents or legal guardians of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident unmarried minor child;
- siblings of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident child, provided both are unmarried and under the age of 21;
- air and sea crewmembers;
- U.S. noncitizen nationals (not applicable to Proclamations 9984 (China) and 9992(Iran));
- diplomats;
- any noncitizen who is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and any noncitizen who is a spouse or child of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces;
- certain U.S. Government invitees for the purpose of the containment or mitigation of COVID-19; and;
- certain travelers whose entry would be in the national interest, as determined by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or their designees.

The Secretary of State has determined that the entry of the following travelers is in the national interest for purposes of exceptions to all four proclamations. The Secretary may revise these national interest determinations as

circumstances warrant

AILA Doc. No. 20071733. (Posted 6/28/21)

circumstances warrant.

These three categories of travelers are automatically considered for National Interest Exception (NIE) at the Port of Entry and do not require advance approval of a NIE from an embassy or consulate.

- immigrants of all categories (not applicable to Proclamation 10199, which only covers nonimmigrant travel);
- fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens and their dependents (K visas);
- Students (F and M visas) as described [here](#);
- New or returning students present in China, Brazil, Iran, South Africa, or India may arrive no earlier than 30 days before the start of an academic program beginning August 1, 2021 or after, including optional practical training (OPT);

The following categories of travelers may apply for a National Interest Exception (NIE) if subject to one or more of the four proclamations.

Travelers who believe their travel is within one of the below categories should consult the website of the nearest embassy or consulate for instructions on applying for an NIE.

- certain exchange visitors as detailed within [this](#) article;
- exchange students and academics (certain J visas to include those in the professor, research scholar, short-term scholar, or specialist categories);
- new or returning students and academics present in China, Brazil, Iran, South Africa, or India may arrive no earlier than 30 days before the start of an academic program beginning August 1, 2021 or after;
- Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) J visa program participants;
- journalists (I visas);
- travelers providing executive direction or vital support for critical infrastructure sectors, or directly linked supply chains, as outlined at <https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors> 
- travelers providing vital support or executive

AILA Doc. No.: 20071733. (Posted 6/28/21)

direction for significant economic activity in the United States

- pilots and aircrew traveling for training or aircraft pickup, delivery, or maintenance;
- those whose purpose of travel falls within one of these categories:
 - lifesaving medical treatment for the principal applicant and accompanying close family members
 - public health for those travelling to alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, or to continue ongoing research in an area with substantial public health benefit (e.g., cancer or communicable disease research)
 - humanitarian travel, to include those providing care for a U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident, or other nonimmigrant-in-lawful-status close family member
 - medical escorts, legal guardians, or other escorts required by an airline or legally required by a foreign medical or law enforcement entity accompanying a U.S. citizen being repatriated to the United States;
 - national security; and
 - derivative family members accompanying or following to join a noncitizen who has been granted or would be reasonably expected to receive a National Interest Exception (NIE), or is not otherwise subject to the Proclamations and who is engaging in certain types of long-term employment, studies, or research lasting four weeks or more.
- Temporary workers present in South Africa whose travel is essential to food supply chain (H-2A and certain H-2B visas) are excepted travelers as described in this [article](#).

Travelers present in these 33 countries who believe they have an urgent need for travel to the United States that does not fall under any of the categories described above should consult the website of the nearest embassy or consulate for instructions on applying for an individual NIE. If the embassy or consulate supports the granting of an individual NIE in a particular case, they will forward their recommendation to the Department of State for

AIILA Doc. No. 20071733. (Posted 6/28/21)

consideration.