



U.S. Department of Homeland Security

DHS Announces Start of Applications for Visa-Free Travel to U.S. for Eligible Israeli Citizens and Nationals

Release Date: October 19, 2023

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is announcing the start of visa-free travel for short term visits to the United States for eligible Israeli citizens and nationals following Israel's admission into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. Starting today, Thursday, October 19, eligible Israeli citizens and nationals can start applying for authorization to travel to the United States through the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).

On September 26, 2023, DHS, in consultation with the Department of State, designated Israel into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, which allows eligible travelers to apply online for authorization to travel to the United States through ESTA. These authorizations allow successful applicants to travel to the United States for tourism or business purposes for up to 90 days without first obtaining a U.S. visa. Israeli citizens and nationals with valid B-1/B-2 visas may continue to use them for business and tourist travel to the United States.

Participation in the VWP requires that any citizen seeking to enter the United States visa free be from a country that extends to U.S. citizens and nationals the privileges we would extend to their citizens and nationals. Israel has committed in writing to the United States that all U.S. citizens traveling with a U.S. passport may seek to enter Israel without regard to national origin, religion, or ethnicity. The United States continuously monitors implementation of program requirements by all Visa Waiver Program countries, including Israel, to ensure that they remain in good standing with all program requirements.

Eligible Israeli citizens and nationals must have a biometrically enabled passport book. Travelers who possess non-biometric, temporary, or emergency travel documents, or travel documents from a non-Visa Waiver Program designated country, are not eligible for travel under the Visa Waiver Program and may instead apply for a U.S. visa. ESTA applications may take up to 72 hours for processing. The ESTA application will be available in English only at this time and will be available in other languages no later than November 1, 2023.

ESTA is an automated system that assists in determining eligibility to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program and whether such travel poses any law enforcement or security risk. Upon completion of an ESTA application, travelers are notified of their eligibility to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. DHS uses the application data to vet travelers before granting authorization to travel to the United States. As part of this vetting process, information that identifies suspected or known violators of the law and other persons of concern will be provided to the appropriate law enforcement, national security, and/or counterterrorism agency.

Individuals traveling under the Visa Waiver Program for an intended stay beyond 90 days may be determined to be inadmissible to the United States. Individuals determined to be inadmissible will be refused admission to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. In addition, individuals admitted under the Visa Waiver Program who overstay their authorized period of stay will be removable under the Visa Waiver Program and ineligible for future Visa Waiver Program travel.

Traveling on a visa may still be the best option for some travelers such as those who would like to stay in the United States longer than 90 days or those who think they may wish to extend their stay or change their status once in the United States.

ESTA applications may be found at esta.cbp.dhs.gov (<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>) or download the "ESTA Mobile" app through iOS App Store or the Google Play Store.

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Last Updated: 10/19/2023