

New Countries Added to the List of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP)

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The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) added the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Korea, and the Slovak Republic to the list of countries authorized to participate in the VWP. This addition brings the number to 35 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program.

Accordingly, beginning November 17, 2008, citizens and eligible nationals from these newly added VWP countries may apply for admission to the United States at a U.S. port of entry as nonimmigrant aliens for a period of ninety (90) days or less for business or pleasure without first obtaining a nonimmigrant visa, provided that they are otherwise eligible for admission under applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Each new member country has agreed that its citizens must obtain an approved travel authorization from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) via the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and must possess a valid electronic passport.

Beginning January 12, 2009, eligible citizens or nationals from all Visa Waiver Program countries must obtain approval through ESTA prior to traveling to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. ESTA is a new fully automated, electronic system for screening passengers before they begin travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. Voluntary ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel to the United States, and Visa Waiver Program travelers are encouraged to apply for authorization as soon as they begin to plan a trip to the United States.

For additional information on ESTA, visit www.cbp.gov/esta.