

SEVEN COUNTRIES SET TO JOIN VISA WAIVER PROGRAM



by

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President Bush announced that 7 new countries are set to join the Visa Waiver Program. The 7 countries are South Korea, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia. According to President Bush, these 7 countries will officially join the Visa Waiver Program within about 30 days.

The Visa Waiver Program allows nationals of designated countries to travel to the United States without a visa in order to visit for purposes of tourism or business. Visits are limited for a period of 90 days. The Visa Waiver Program allows nationals of these designated countries to visit without having to obtain the traditional B1/B2 Visitor Visa. Foreign nationals seeking to enter the United States on the Visa Waiver Program must prove that they are nationals of one of the countries designated for the Visa Waiver Program, must be admissible to the United States (the grounds of inadmissibility set forth at Section 212 of the Immigration and nationality act still apply), must have a machine-readable passport and must have a round-trip ticket (as evidence of their intention to depart the United States within 90 days). Additionally, before traveling to the United States, VWP travelers traveling on or after January 12, 2009 must first register online via the Department of Homeland Security's "Electronic System for Travel Authorization" (<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>) and be pre-screened for security purposes.

Presently, twenty-seven (27) countries have already been admitted to the Visa Waiver Program. They are (in alphabetical order): Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

As noted above, seven (7) additional countries are expected to become official members of the Visa Waiver Program within the next thirty (30) days: South Korea, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

Finally, six (6) other countries are in a process called the "visa waiver roadmap", meaning they are in the process of becoming members of the Visa Waiver Program, although they have not yet officially been admitted. These "visa waiver roadmap" countries are: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland and Romania.

For additional information on the Visa Waiver Program, visit http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/business_pleasure/vwp/vwp.xml.

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This article should not be taken as legal advice for any individual case or situation. This information is intended to be general and should not be relied upon for any specific situation. For legal advice, consult an attorney experienced in immigration law.