

ESTA

Information for bookers and travellers

Travel permission United States no longer free of charge

Travellers to the United States belonging to one of the so-called Visa Waiver Program countries (VWP) are, as of 2009, obliged to register electronically through the ESTA-system. Up to now, this was free of charge, but from 8 September onwards ESTA will charge costs. In this document, you will find a summary of the most important information on this subject.

A reminder: ESTA, what is it?

The electronic system for travel permits ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) was introduced in 2009. Since then, all citizens of a country participating in the so-called "Visa Waiver Program" (VWP) have to register at least 72 hours before their departure to the US. The application form for the travel permit has to be filled in online. Thus, personal and other data are gathered, that, up to September 2009, were collected by means of entry form I94W. ESTA's internet address is: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>.

Why is ESTA charging costs now?

The United States House of Representatives already agreed to the introduction of this charge in September 2009. The original sum of USD 10 was raised to USD 14. The raise of four US dollars is to cover ESTA's costs. The remaining ten US-dollars will go to the "Travel Promotion Fund", a fund that aims to stimulate tourism to the US.

When do these costs have to be paid?

The costs will be collected from 8 September 2010 onwards and will have to be paid when the traveller registers with the American authorities through the ESTA online system. Payment of the costs has to be met by credit card. Master Card, Visa, American Express and Discover are accepted at the moment. Your registration will only be processed when all credit card data have been completed.

Who has to pay this charge?

- All citizens of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP).
- Every traveller travelling to the US without a visa. VWP-travellers wanting to stay in the US for longer than 90 days need a visa.

The purpose of the trip (holiday, business) is irrelevant.

Is the arrangement permanent?

The costs and their amount are part of a transitional arrangement. The EU has expressed criticism on this procedure and will check, after introduction of the permanent arrangement, whether or not this complies with the visa exemption agreements made between Washington and the EU.

Does the charge have to be paid for every trip to the US?

The permission granted through the ESTA-procedure is valid for two years and does not need to be renewed during this period. The same goes for the costs. You have to bear in mind though that your online registration has to be updated before each trip (for example, with the hotel's name). There are no costs associated with this. In case of a new passport, a completely new ESTA-registration needs to be done and the costs need to be paid as well.

Note: Everyone who received an ESTA-permit for the US before 8 September 2010 does not need to pay the charge.

Information for travellers

BCD Travel employees point out to their travellers during booking that they need an ESTA-permit for the US. After booking, each traveller receives an e-mail message from BCD Travel containing the itinerary. In it the traveller is once again reminded of the ESTA-registration by means of a link to ESTA's official registration page.