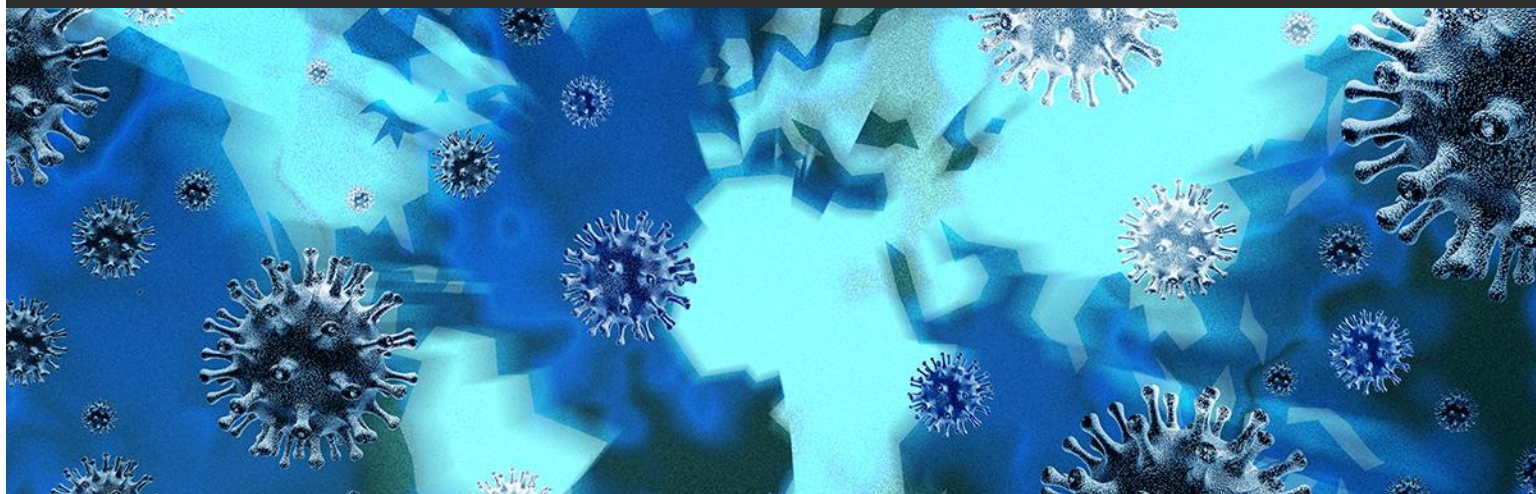


## **Alert** | Health Emergency Preparedness Task Force: Coronavirus Disease 2019



September 2020

### **Fall Travel Advisory: U.S. Embassy/Consular Services and COVID-19 Movement Restrictions**

With the beginning of autumn, individuals who may wish to travel internationally for the holidays should start planning accordingly. With movement restrictions still in place and U.S. embassies and consulates operating at limited capacities, travelers need to be prepared for long processing and wait times. Also, as the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation remains fluid worldwide, travelers need to be prepared to remain flexible. This updated GT Alert provides considerations with respect to international travel amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **1. President Trump's Presidential Proclamations**

Executive order 10052 entitled *Proclamation Suspending Entry of Aliens Who Present a Risk to the U.S. Labor Market Following the Coronavirus Outbreak* suspends the issuance of H-1B, L-1, H-2B, and J-1 visas, as well as the corresponding dependent visa categories, until Dec. 31, 2020, but may be extended further.

Furthermore, depending on where certain immigrants and nonimmigrants are travelling to the U.S. from, they may also need to comply with executive orders 9984, 9992, 9993, and 9996, *Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Novel Coronavirus*. Specifically, certain individuals, unless an exception applies, may not enter the U.S. if they were physically present in Brazil, the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom (excluding overseas territories outside of

Europe), and the Republic of Ireland for a 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the U.S. Individuals planning to re-enter the U.S. from one of these areas may either apply for an exception from the Department of State or spend the 14-day quarantine period in a third country. Individuals who decide to spend required quarantine periods in a third country may need visas to enter those countries, and other movement restrictions may apply, as further outlined below.

## **2. Exceptions to President Trump's Presidential Proclamations**

On Aug. 12, 2020, the Department of State updated its guidance on the National Interest Exception (NIE) available to all of the above-referenced Presidential Proclamations. Notably, H and L visa applicants subject to Presidential Proclamation 10052 may seek to obtain a visa if they are returning to the U.S. to continue previously approved employment with the same employer in the same visa category.

Furthermore, H-4 and L-2 dependents may also seek to obtain a visa if the primary has a valid visa or is already in the U.S. In addition, the Department of State has provided other criteria that may qualify an individual for an NIE. [For details, see our Inside Business Immigration Blog Post.](#) Consular officers and CBP officers both have the authority to issue an NIE. Each embassy and consulate has implemented its own procedures on obtaining an NIE. Generally, an NIE request is submitted directly to the embassy or consulate, and a decision is issued within 10-20 business days. However, as embassies are getting busier and backlogs are growing due to limited operations, processing times are increasing. Processing times are expected to be significantly longer from November through January.

Effective September 14, 2020, travelers will no longer be required to enter the U.S. through one of 15 airports specifically designated for international arrivals. CBP has also implemented procedures at certain airports on how to obtain an NIE. The NIE request will need to be approved before departing for the U.S. Travelers who believe they qualify for an NIE should contact a U.S. embassy or consulate prior to contacting CBP. An NIE request may be submitted only when the visa applicant has departed the U.S. If an NIE is granted, the NIE is valid for 30 days from the date of approval and is valid for one single entry to the U.S. Upon arrival to the U.S., CBP may determine a traveler is required to quarantine for 14 days. As such, travelers should have a quarantine plan in place. If an individual requires a new visa and the NIE is not granted, the applicant is not entitled to a refund of the visa appointment fee and must complete the DS-160 form again for any subsequent appointments.

## **3. U.S. Domestic Movement Restrictions**

Many states continue to place travel restrictions for anyone travelling from states that have a significant degree of community-wide spread of COVID-19. In addition, municipalities and local governments are also continuing to impose quarantine requirements for travelers from areas with high COVID-19 infection rates. [Check your destination's health websites for more information before you travel.](#)

## **4. European Union Travel Restrictions**

Non-essential travel from countries that have not contained COVID-19 is prohibited. The list of restricted countries includes the U.S. [A complete list of restricted countries, as well as enforcement provisions, can be found here.](#) This list of countries is updated every two weeks. There are certain exceptions, and if an individual is allowed entry into the EU, they may need to comply with [country specific requirements](#), such as obtaining a negative COVID-19 test prior to boarding their flight.

## 5. U.S. Embassies and Consulates Begin to Offer Limited and Emergency Services Worldwide

The Department of State has authorized the phased resumption of routine visa services globally. However, each embassy and consulate determines its re-opening timeline based on local conditions. Some jurisdictions have resumed visa processing for limited categories, such as F and E. For other visa categories, most embassies and consulates are granting emergency visa appointments if an applicant qualifies for an NIE.

If the embassy or consulate calendar is available, visa applicants should schedule their visa appointments as soon as calendars are opened, as there may be long processing and wait times due to case backlog and limited operations. However, these visa appointments may be rescheduled by the embassy with little or no warning, as the COVID-19 situation remains fluid. In most cases, a visa appointment will be re-scheduled at no additional cost, with DS-160 forms remaining valid for one year. If an exception or emergency appointment is required, please follow the instructions of the specific embassy or consulate.

Specific U.S. embassies and consulates are implementing the following:

- **Canada:** The U.S. embassy and consulates in Canada have resumed certain non-emergency nonimmigrant visa services. **However, each embassy and consulate is determining its timeline for fully resuming services based on local conditions.**
- **France:** The U.S. embassy in Paris opened its calendar, and as of the date of this GT Alert, applicants may schedule non-immigrant visa appointments. However, the current wait time for a visa appointment is 60 days.
- **Italy:** The U.S. embassy and consulates in Italy have resumed certain immigrant and nonimmigrant visa services, including routine appointments for students (F and M), exchange visitors (J), investors/treaty traders (E), journalists (I), aliens of extraordinary ability (O), and athletes/artists/entertainers (P). All other visa applicants may request an emergency appointment.
- **Sweden:** The U.S. embassy in Stockholm has resumed limited nonimmigrant and immigrant visa services. The embassy is accommodating appointment requests for humanitarian or emergency travel, and limited employment-based visas who qualify for an NIE.
- **Poland:** The U.S. embassy in Warsaw and consulate in Krakow have resumed nonimmigrant visa services on a limited basis. The current wait time for a visa appointment in Warsaw is two days.
- **Turkey:** The U.S. embassy has resumed nonimmigrant visa services on a limited basis. The embassy is accommodating appointment requests on an emergency basis.
- **Israel:** Routine visa services remain suspended until further notice. The embassy and consulate continue to provide emergency and mission-critical visa services as resources and local conditions allow.
- **Mexico:** **Certain consular posts have resumed visa services as local conditions allow.** Applicants should schedule an appointment if able as wait times are significant. For example, the current wait time for a visa appointment in Hermosillo is 99 days. Visa applicants should also remain flexible as visa appointments may be cancelled unexpectedly. All other visa applicants may request an emergency appointment.

- **Argentina:** The U.S. embassy in Argentina is resuming visa services for F, M, and J student visa applicants. The embassy is also accommodating emergency appointment requests submitted 20 days prior to planned travel.
- **Brazil:** The embassy and consulates have cancelled all routine visa appointments but continue to provide emergency and mission-critical visa services as resources and local conditions allow.
- **Chile:** Visa services remain suspended. The embassy is only accommodating emergency appointment requests.
- **India:** Consular posts in India began processing student and academic exchange visitor visa applications. The embassy is also accommodating emergency appointment requests for other visa categories. However, operations are limited and wait times are increasing.
- **Japan:** Certain consular posts in Japan are resuming visa services on a limited basis. The posts are also accommodating emergency appointment requests. However, operations are limited and wait times are increasing.

## 6. Country-Specific Entry Requirements and Movement Restrictions

As the COVID-19 situation remains fluid on a global scale, all international travelers should remain flexible with their travel plans. Current travel bans and restrictions notwithstanding, most nationals can return to their home countries. In some cases, a non-immigrant visa applicant may not be required to appear for a visa appointment in their home country. However, if it is decided that the applicant will travel to a third country (not their home country) to obtain a visa, consider that the country may be restricting foreigner entry. If allowed entry, the applicant may be required to self-quarantine for 14-30 days before being permitted to appear for a visa appointment. Also, depending on the visa applicant's nationality, the visa applicant may be required to obtain a visa to enter the third country. Some embassies and consulates are also **waiving** the in-person appointment requirement for certain individuals. Following are select country-specific entry requirements and movement restrictions:

- **Canada:** The U.S. and Canada announced a mutual agreement to extend restrictions on non-essential travel through Oct. 21, 2020. In addition to restrictions on non-essential travel between the U.S. and Canada, a number of provinces and territories have **implemented specific restrictions** for travel across their borders, including for domestic travelers.
- **France:** Broad restrictions on non-essential travel from many countries outside the European Union, including the U.S., remain in place. **Air passengers arriving from certain countries**, including the U.S., must present "results of a negative virology COVID-19 test" (a PCR test for example), carried out less than 72 hours before the flight, or they will not be allowed to board their flight to France. Furthermore, foreign nationals arriving in France from certain countries are subject to a two-week quarantine. **Countries subject to entry restrictions and quarantine** are reviewed regularly and can change with little notice.
- **Italy:** The Italian government extended its state of emergency to Oct. 15, 2020. Broad restrictions on non-essential travel from many countries outside the European Union, including the U.S., remain in place. The Italian government periodically updates these restrictions based upon changing conditions, and all travelers should refer to the most current Italian health **decree** when making travel plans. Furthermore, all individuals traveling to Italy from any foreign location are required to provide their airline or Italian law enforcement officials with a **self declaration form** prior to travel. All travelers arriving in Italy from abroad must self-isolate for 14 days, unless they are traveling from an exempted country or for a purpose that falls under current exceptions.



- **Sweden:** Broad restrictions on non-essential travel from many countries outside the European Union, including the U.S., **remain in place until at least Oct. 31, 2020**. Further, regions update border entry **guidance** on a weekly basis and identify which regions are open for travel to Denmark. This guidance should be reviewed prior to travel, as it can change without notice.
- **Poland:** Broad restrictions on non-essential travel from many countries outside the European Union, including the U.S., remain in place. As of Aug. 8, the Polish government **reintroduced more stringent public health restrictions** in 19 counties with elevated COVID-19 case numbers. Certain travelers who are permitted to enter Poland must undergo a mandatory 10-day quarantine at their place of stay in Poland.
- **Turkey:** The Turkish government has opened the majority of its international air, land, and sea borders. However, the borders with Iran and Syria remain closed. Turkish citizens and residents must request a **HES (Hayat Eve Sigar) Code** for domestic and international flights, train, and ferry travel. This does not apply to foreign tourists.
- **Israel:** The Israeli government announced a **nationwide lockdown** to contain the spread of COVID-19, effective until Oct. 1, 2020. Most foreigners (exceptions apply), who are not Israeli citizens or permanent residents, will not be allowed to enter Israel. Travelers should not board flights to Israel without a pre-clearance letter from the Israel government, as there is no assurance they will be admitted into the country. Certain arriving passengers, including U.S. citizens, may be subject to a health screening and/or a mandatory 14-day quarantine in a government-established quarantine center. Individuals who can maintain proper home isolation (such as a completely separate housing unit with no other occupants) may be allowed to undergo their 14-day required self-isolation at their residence. Land border crossings may be closed with little or no advance notice.
  - **West Bank (Israel-controlled):** The West Bank has been under a state of emergency since March 5, 2020. A negative COVID-19 test (PCR and/or serology) is required for entry.
  - **West Bank (Palestinian Authority):** The Palestinian Authority has extended the state of emergency until Oct. 4, 2020. In addition, the Palestinian Authority may institute local or West Bank-wide lockdowns on short notice in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. This may include closing most businesses; curtailing residents' movements, which may impede movement inside and between cities; a general curfew; and closures of the crossings between the West Bank and Israel. All individuals entering the West Bank via the Allenby crossing are required to take a COVID -19 test. If the result is positive, individuals will be required to quarantine. If the result is negative, no quarantine is required.
  - **Gaza:** Travel in and out of Gaza will only be permitted for urgent humanitarian cases through Erez and Rafah crossings and those coming into Gaza will be quarantined for 21 days.
- **Mexico:** The U.S. and Mexico entered a joint initiative on March 21, 2020, restricting non-essential travel along the U.S.-Mexico land border. **The restrictions are in place until at least Oct. 21, 2020**.
- **Argentina:** Per the latest Argentine government policy, any foreigner who is not a resident in Argentina will not be permitted to enter Argentina. The government of Argentina has also announced that the national quarantine that began on March 20, 2020, has been extended through Oct. 11, 2020. All travelers entering or exiting Argentina must also submit an electronic **sworn statement** within 48 hours of their travel. Travelers should present the confirmation email of the submitted sworn statement in order to board a flight. Furthermore, **domestic travel between cities, departments, and provinces is restricted**. Individual provinces may require additional local permits to enter or transit.

- **Brazil:** Effective July 29, 2020, Brazil is allowing entry of foreign visitors traveling by air. However, Brazil has extended the entry ban on foreigners entering by land (unless for transit) and sea (through at least Sept. 24, 2020). Foreign travelers entering Brazil by air, for a short stay of up to 90 days, must present proof of purchase of health insurance, in English or Portuguese, that is valid in Brazil for the entire period of the trip with minimum coverage of 30,000 Brazilian reais to an airline agent prior to boarding.
- **Chile:** Only Chilean citizens and residents of Chile are allowed entry into the country. All Chileans and foreigners are subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine upon arrival in Chile. Passengers arriving by air in Santiago whose final destination is another city in Chile must complete quarantine in Santiago before continuing to their final destination. There are no exceptions to the quarantine requirement. There is also a daily nationwide curfew from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. In addition, travelers should be prepared for further travel restrictions with little or no advance notice at the local, regional, and national government levels.
- **India:** All international passengers must [submit a self-declaration form](#) here at least 72 hours prior to departure for India. All travelers seeking entry to India must quarantine upon arrival. Quarantine requirements vary based on destination in India.
- **Japan:** All travelers entering Japan, including residents and dual national citizens, are required to take a PCR test at the airport and self-quarantine for 14 days. In some cases, travelers may be asked to quarantine at an airport facility until test results return.

## 7. Bottom Line

Travel restrictions, embassy/consulate closures, and health restrictions are being implemented and updated by governments on a regular basis. If international travel is required, confirm required documentation and information for each country before departure. Also, remain flexible and be prepared for delays. [View country-specific information here.](#)

For more information and updates on the developing COVID-19 situation, visit [GT's Health Emergency Preparedness Task Force: Coronavirus Disease 2019.](#)

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