Current Travel Guidance and Restrictions

Updated January 1, 2022 - President Biden rescinds restrictions on travel from eight African countries.

On December 28, 2021, President Biden revoked Presidential Proclamation 10315, which had suspended entry of certain individuals physically present in countries where the Omicron variant of COVID-19 had been detected.

DOS subsequently issued guidance on the rescission of the travel restrictions on Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe is effective December 31, 2021, at 12:01 am (ET). Vaccine requirements will remain in effect.

- Presidential Proclamation Revoking Proclamation 10315 [2]
- DOS Guidance on Rescission of Travel Restrictions on Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe [3]
- CBP Guidance to Carrier Liaison Program on Revocation of Presidential Proclamation 10315 [4]

New Presidential Proclamation Restricting Travel From 8 African Countries

On November 26, 2021, citing the appearance of the COVID Omicron variant, President Biden issued a Proclamation [5] that suspends the entry to the U.S. of noncitizens who have been physically present in any of the following countries during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States:

- Botswana
- Eswatini
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Zimbabwe

The Proclamation is effective as of November 29, 2021 and will remain in effect until it is terminated by the President.

This Proclamation does NOT apply to the following individuals:

- U.S. citizens,
- any lawful permanent resident (Green Card holder) of the U.S.,
- any noncitizen national of the U.S.,
- any noncitizen who is
  - the spouse of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident,
  - the parent or legal guardian of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident, provided that the U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident is unmarried and under the age of 21,
  - the sibling of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident, provided that both are unmarried and under the age of 21,
- any noncitizen or group of noncitizens whose entry would be in the national interest, as determined by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or their designees,
Current Travel Guidance and Restrictions
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There are also few other exemptions as identified in Section 2 of the Proclamation [5].

If you have been in any of the eight countries affected by the Proclamation in the past 14 days or have made plans to travel to these countries soon, we recommend that you revise your travel plans. You can always discuss your travel plans with your designated OISS adviser [6].

National Interest Exception (NIE)

Please note that the current Proclamation, like previous ones, includes possible “national interest exception (NIE)” for certain noncitizens, however neither the Department of State nor the Department of Homeland Security have made any announcements whether certain visa categories (such as F-1 and J-1 students, J-1 scholars, or H-1Bs) would be automatically considered for an NIE or published the eligibility criteria for NIEs under Proclamation 10315. NIEs approved under the four prior, now revoked, geographic proclamations [7] are now void and will not work under Proclamation 10315 of November 26, 2021. A CBP Carrier Liaison Program bulletin [8] published on November 28, 2021 clarifies that “Any NIE granted to a noncitizen under previous proclamations are void with respect the Proclamation of November 26, 2021”. If you need to apply for a new visa at any of the eight countries covered by the Proclamation, we recommend that you contact the relevant U.S. Embassy or Consulate to inquire whether you would be eligible for an NIE specifically for the Proclamation 10315. In the absence of a new NIE, any individual who has been physically present in one of the designated countries within the past 14 days would need to travel to a third country that is not subject to the restrictions, and stay in that third country for at least 14 days before they would be allowed to enter the U.S.

Revocation of Regional Travel Bans & Institution of Proof of Vaccination and Negative COVID-19 Test Result

Proof of Vaccination

Pursuant to a presidential proclamation issued October 25, 2021, Advancing the Safe Resumption of Global Travel During the Covid-19 Pandemic [9], the four geographic travel ban restrictions that have been effective until November 8, 2021 have all been revoked. Instead, now all noncitizens who are nonimmigrants traveling to the United States by air are required to show proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19. If you are not a U.S. citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident and are fully vaccinated, please make sure your vaccine [10] and proof of vaccination [11] are acceptable to board a flight to the United States.

Exceptions

If you are not fully vaccinated, you might be eligible for limited exceptions [12] if you have a valid visa [excluding B-1 (business) or B-2 (tourism) visas] and are citizen of a foreign country with limited COVID-19 vaccine availability. If you travel by air to the United States under an exception, you will be required to meet additional conditions and restrictions including vaccination within 60 days of arrival, testing and quarantine. You can learn more about the requirements for travelers who will be admitted to the U.S. based on an exception [13].

Entering the U.S. Through a Land Border or Ferry Terminal

Starting November 8, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has also announced that non-citizen travelers who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and have appropriate documentation will be allowed to enter the United States via land ports of entry and ferry terminals [14]. Non-citizen travelers should be prepared to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination and verbally attest to their reason for travel and COVID-19 vaccination status during a border inspection. You can find more information about entering the U.S. through a land border or ferry terminal in this FAQ published by DHS [15].

Yale’s Vaccine Requirement

The above is related to federal travel requirements. Yale also requires all students, faculty, and staff to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Please refer to Yale Health’s COVID-19 Vaccination FAQ for International Students and Scholars [16] for more information. If you have a question please call the Campus COVID Resources Line at 203-432-6604.
If you have already received your full vaccination (both doses in a 2-dose series or one dose of a single-dose vaccine) be sure to update your vaccination record [17].

Negative COVID-19 Test Result

Effective December 6, 2021, all air passengers, regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before travel to the United States. More details about negative testing may be found here [18]. The CDC has also prepared a quick reference guide to help explain requirements and restrictions [19].

It can be challenging to obtain a negative COVID-19 test 24 hours prior to your travel, so please make sure to understand how you can obtain this test result within the given time frame at your destination well in advance of your scheduled return flight to the U.S. We recommend that you contact your airline to inquire what the exact requirements are and what kind of tests they would accept. Some airlines only accept certain type of tests or from certain vendors, so make sure that you are informed and can obtain proof of negative tests to avoid any delays in your return.

Limited Visa Appointment Availability & Visa Interview Waivers

Unless you are a Canadian citizen, you must have a valid visa to enter the U.S. Some U.S. Embassy and Consulates have not still resumed normal operations, causing delays in visa processing in certain parts of the world. The Department of State announced that U.S. embassy or consulates can waive the visa interview requirement [20] for those who are applying for a nonimmigrant visa in the same classification and whose visa has expired within 48 months. This policy is in effect until 12/31/2022.

Additional Travel Issues

Chinese Institutions and Funding

Presidential Proclamation 10043 [21] effects “entry into the United States as a nonimmigrant of any national of the PRC seeking to enter the United States pursuant to an F or J visa…” who “…receives funding from or who currently is employed by, studies at, or conducts research at or on behalf of… an entity in the PRC that implements or supports the PRC’s ‘military-civil fusion strategy” or in the past “has been employed by, studied at, or conducted research at or on behalf of… an entity in the PRC that implements or supports the PRC’s ‘military-civil fusion strategy’” There is a lot that is unknown about this policy. Please contact your OISS adviser [6] if you have questions.

U.S. Embassy in Russia

On May 12th the U.S. embassy in Moscow issued a statement that many visa services will be temporarily cut or very limited [22]. Please review their website for any updates.

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[6] https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss