



**Homeland
Security**

US-VISIT: BENEFITS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

Did you know your finger tip has the power to ensure security and facilitate travel?

The way people travel is changing. Biometrics—unique physical characteristics, such as digital fingerprints and photographs—are making this change possible.

Biometrics are being used worldwide to establish and verify travelers' identities, allowing those who wish to visit other countries for pleasure, study or business to do so more easily and securely. At the same time, biometric identifiers are protecting travelers' privacy and making it virtually impossible for anyone else to claim their identity.

You may be aware of the United States' biometric screening procedures at U.S. ports of entry and at visa-issuing posts abroad. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's US-VISIT program began providing these biometrics-based identification services to the U.S. government.

US-VISIT's services enable the U.S. government to meet these core goals:

- Enhance the security of our citizens and visitors;
- Facilitate legitimate travel and trade;
- Ensure the integrity of our immigration system;
- And protect the privacy of our citizens and visitors.

As we achieve these goals, the United States remains a welcoming nation. We want the many law-abiding people, like you, who travel to the United States to continue to do so without difficulty, understanding what to expect and how biometrics benefit you, our valued visitor.

How do you, as an international traveler to the United States, interact with the US-VISIT program?

The most visible part of the program that visitors experience is the collection of digital fingerprints and a photograph when applying for visas at visa-issuing posts and upon entry into the United States.

Through the collection of your biometrics, US-VISIT enables consular officers to establish your identity as part of the visa application process. This information is checked against watch lists and used to determine visa eligibility.

US-VISIT biometric entry procedures are also in place at all U.S. airports and seaports with international arrivals and at all U.S. land border ports of entry.

When you arrive in one of our airports or seaports, an immigration officer will review your travel documents and use US-VISIT's biometric services to verify that you are the same person to whom your visa was issued. To do so, the officer will digitally scan your fingers and take a digital photograph. This process is fast and easy.

At some airports later this year, the officer may ask to scan up to 10 of your fingerprints and will instruct you how to do this. The officer will also ask specific questions regarding your stay in the United States. All of this information is used to assist the officer in determining your admittance into the country.

What about when I leave the United States?

Travelers no longer need to verify their departure at a blue exit station. However, you still need to provide your Form I-94 Arrival-Departure record to an airline or ship representative when you get your boarding pass. This helps us verify that you have complied with the terms of admission for your stay.

It's possible that by your next trip these exit procedures may be enhanced. If so, you may be directed to provide your fingerprints in addition to submitting the Form I-94 to verify your departure.

Why are biometrics used and how do they protect international travelers?

As mentioned above, biometrics protect you from identity theft should your travel documents be lost or stolen.

At the same time, biometrics keep you safe because they deprive potential criminals of the ability to use fraudulent documents to cross U.S. borders and violate immigration laws without detection.

Biometrics make international travel easier and more convenient by making travelers' experiences more similar from one port of entry to the next. This will only improve over time as other nations develop similar biometrics-based systems.

How does US-VISIT ensure my personal information and biometrics are kept private and secure?

US-VISIT is vigilant about protecting the privacy of those whose data we collect and about ensuring the integrity of that data. In fact, protecting the privacy of our visitors is one of the program's four core goals. Our privacy policies extend to non-U.S. citizens most of the same privacy protections we give by law to U.S. citizens.

In fact, US-VISIT has a dedicated privacy officer, who is responsible not only for ensuring compliance with privacy laws and procedures, but also for creating a culture within the program where privacy is inherently valued, treated as a fundamental right and obligation, and fully considered in US-VISIT's planning and development process.

How do I learn more about US-VISIT and remain aware of travel requirements to the United States?

US-VISIT encourages prospective travelers to learn more about key initiatives and program changes. You can sign up to receive US-VISIT Updates—e-mails including important announcements about the program. To subscribe to this distribution list, send an e-mail to *subscribeusvisit@dhs.gov*. You can also learn more about US-VISIT at our Web site, *www.dhs.gov/us-visit*.