

Visa Application Hints

Dear PiTP09 Participant,

The following information on U.S. visas is intended to be helpful as you begin the process of applying. These notes presume that non-U.S. citizens/residents traveling to the U.S. for attendance at this PiTP09 summer program, held at the Institute for Advanced Study, do so for this reason only. The guidance offered may not be appropriate for plans that include visits to other institutions, vacations or other objectives.

Where attendance at PiTP is the only objective, we believe that a B-1 (Business Visitor) visa is appropriate. Dependent on citizenship, the visitor may not need to apply for a B-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate but may be admitted to the U.S. under the equivalent "Visa Waiver Program." It should be understood that regardless of whether a B-1 visa or the Waiver program is used, admission to the U.S. as a Business Visitor is for the same objective and such visitors are subject to the same requirements/obligations. Whichever option is used, visitors should ensure that admission as a Business Visitor (NOT tourist) is correctly noted on their admission document; B-1 if using a visa, WB if using the Waiver program.

Citizens of "Visa Waiver" Countries:

It is suggested that citizens of countries participating in the "Visa Waiver Program" use this option (though a visa can also be applied for as outlined below). Citizens of countries designated as participating in this program (see listing of countries and general rules at http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_novisa_waiver.html) do not need B-1 visas in their passports to be admitted to the U.S. as business visitors if their business objective can be met in 90 days or less.

Please note: All Visa Waiver Program travelers must present a Machine Readable Passport. Travelers should check the State Department web site shown in the paragraph above for current information on this topic.

Please also note: As of Monday, January 12, 2009, all foreign nationals planning to enter the United States under the Visa Waiver Program will be required to register for online travel clearance through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. Travelers should submit their applications well in advance of travel, and no later than 72 hours before departing for the United States.

Those planning to use this approach should check with their local U.S. Consulate or Embassy to verify what items they must take with them when they travel. These items may include:

1. a passport valid for 6 months or more beyond the intended date of arrival in the U.S.
2. a round-trip ticket
3. a letter from their institution stating the reason for the visit to the U.S., and confirming that the institution is sending the person to the PiTP09 program and will continue to pay the person's salary during the trip (as appropriate)

4. a copy of a formal letter of invitation to the PiTP09 program (you must request this letter from Susan Higgins at the Institute).

Citizens of Non-"Visa Waiver" Countries:

Citizens of countries that are not participants in the "Visa Waiver Program" must apply for a visa at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Where an application is made in a country other than the person's home country, this is referred to as a "third country national" (TCN) application. It is strongly recommended that all applicants check the web-site of the Embassy/Consulate at which they intend to apply (<http://usembassy.state.gov/>) to download needed forms, instructions and to be sure of local procedures, particularly in the case of TCN applications.

In addition to required forms, visa applications may also need to contain:

1. a passport valid for at least 6 months beyond their intended date of arrival in the U.S.
2. a letter from their institution stating the reason for the visit to the U.S., and confirming that the institution is sending the person to the PiTP09 program for this purpose and will continue to pay the person's salary during the trip (as appropriate)
3. a copy of a formal letter of invitation to the PiTP09 program (you must request this letter from Susan Higgins at the Institute).

Recent changes in visa application procedures now require personal interviews with almost all visa applicants and, at the discretion of the reviewing Consular Officer, any application can be referred for a security check. Applications made by male citizens of certain countries will usually undergo such a check. Because of the current lengthy processing times for visa applications, it is recommended that program participants start the application process as quickly as possible. The Institute has no means to influence the progress or outcome of any security check.

Those Consular Posts that have installed digital photography/scanning equipment will take a digital photograph of the visa applicant and scans of the two index fingers at the time of visa application/issuance.

Travelers should also have copies of items 2) and 3) of this section with them when they travel since admitting Officers of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) of the Department of Homeland Security (the "Immigration Service"/INS prior to March 1, 2003) may ask for evidence of the objective of the visit.

General Comments:

- 1) You can expect to be asked to provide a full address where you will stay in the U.S., and if you are staying in an apartment at the Institute, the address to report is:

Institute for Advanced Study
One Einstein Drive
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

If also requested, you may indicate the on-site contact as: Susan Higgins, School of Natural Sciences, (609) 734-8198.

2) Introduction of the new "US-VISIT" system requires that a digital photograph and scans of the two index fingers be made of every person at the port of entry to the U.S. Recent experience confirms that this does not add significant time to the admission process. Information about this program may be found at http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0333.xml

3) Citizens and nationals of certain countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria are required to undergo "special registration" procedures on arrival in the U.S. and controlled departure from designated airports. Those subject to the requirement will most likely be notified of it at the time of visa issuance. However, please note that "special registration" may be imposed on any traveler by a Consular Officer at the time of visa issuance or by the USCBP at the time of arrival in the U.S. where deemed appropriate.

(Information on "special registration" procedures may be found at <http://www.ice.gov/pi/specialregistration/index.htm>)

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