

PUBLICATION

Visiting Canada? Better Pack Your eTA or Visa!

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Canada has a new entry requirement. Effective March 15, 2016, visa-exempt foreign nationals must now have an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) to fly to or transit through Canada. A result of the Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness Action, the eTA program largely mirrors the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, which became mandatory in January 2009 for travelers to the U.S.

During the upcoming months (through fall 2016), travelers who do not have an eTA can still board their flights as long as they have appropriate travel documents (valid passport and meet other basic requirements to enter Canada – good health, no convictions, temporary intent). Despite this leniency period, during which border services officers can allow entry, travelers should go ahead and complete the eTA process now to eliminate potential travel delays and risks of being turned away by a border official if unable to separately evidence that all travel requirements are otherwise met.

Who Needs It:

Visa-exempt foreign nationals who fly to or through Canada. Note that the eTA is not required if entering Canada by land or sea. Visa-exempt countries include: Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Japan, Ireland, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Note: U.S. Citizens and visitors with a valid Canadian visa do NOT need to apply for an eTA.

Other Exceptions: Canadians with dual citizenship (with a valid Canadian passport), Canadian permanent residents (who must travel with their valid PR card or PR travel document), passengers on a flight that makes an unscheduled/emergency stop in Canada, certain crew members, accredited diplomats, members of armed forces of certain designated countries and other limited groups.

How to Apply:

The eTA online application process generally takes only a few minutes to complete, requires access to the Internet (can be completed on a mobile phone), a valid passport, credit card and an email address. The eTA is electronically linked to the applicant's passport and is not a physical document. Although not recommended, a last minute application can be submitted by mobile phone while waiting at the airport. The application fee is \$7 CAD, and typical eTA applications are processed in minutes. The application form collects basic biographic, family, and employment details, residential addresses, countries of citizenship, previous Canadian visa applications, approximate funds available for the trip, listing of prior arrests or convictions, disclosure of contact with tuberculosis and a summary of any ongoing health/medical conditions requiring regular treatment. The applicant is given additional space to provide notes or comments regarding the trip and must consent to collection of information by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Depending on the responses, an applicant may be required to provide further information, which could delay the streamlined processing. Once approved, the applicant should receive an email confirmation of approval, and the eTA will be electronically linked to the traveler's passport and valid for five years or until passport expiration, whichever is first.

Currently, the application is available only in English and French, but descriptions of the various form fields are accessible in multiple languages.

Apply Now:

If you are planning or considering travel to Canada by air in the near future and require an eTA, apply now! For individuals with multiple passports, it is critical that the traveler use the same passport used to apply for eTA to board the flight to Canada.