

Visa Waiver Program

The United States allows citizens of some countries to travel to the United States **without a visa** through the visa waiver program. However, this privilege comes with some significant drawbacks.

You Can't Stay More Than 90 Days

First, anyone who enters the United States through the visa waiver program cannot stay for more than 90 days. You cannot apply to extend your permitted time here. After 90 days, you must leave the United States. No exceptions.

You Cannot Change Status

Second, people who enter through the visa waiver program cannot apply to change to another non immigrant status. For example, you cannot enter the United States through the visa waiver program and switch to student status. Neither could you switch to being a cultural exchange visitor, a religious worker, nor any other kind of non immigrant status.

You Cannot Work

Third, anyone coming to the United States on the visa waiver is limited to the activities to which all tourists are limited. Which basically means, you can travel and conduct very limited business. **You cannot work for pay.** You can, however, attend a business conference or go to a meeting.

Additionally, people in the visa waiver program are **not allowed to study full time**. You could, for example, take a cooking class for fun, but you could not enter into a full time culinary program.

Strict Immigration Limitations

Filing for a green card, or lawful permanent residency, is exceptionally more complicated if you enter through the visa waiver program. Few people can successfully adjust status or apply for a green card within the United States if they entered through the visa waiver program. It is critically important that you speak to a good immigration attorney to see if you meet one of these very few exceptions. Use our attorney guide to learn more about [hiring a good immigration lawyer](#).

Finally, if you enter through the visa waiver program and find yourself in deportation or removal proceedings, the only defense available to you is an asylum application with the immigration court. No other typical defense, such as cancellation of removal, will be an option.

ALERT: Please, do not make the mistake of thinking that your friends and family can simply come to the United States on the visa waiver program and just figure it all out once you get here.

If you want to learn more about the visa waiver program, the United States Department of State provides more detailed information [on their website](#).

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