The Expert Traveler Passport and Visa Checklist

A calm, official-path checklist for adults, kids, renewals, and the visa check you should do before you book. Fees and times change, so confirm the linked .gov pages when you apply.

Official starting point: travel.state.gov/passports · Facility appointments: passportfacilitylocator.travel.state.gov · Online renewal only at opr.travel.state.gov · Never pay a lookalike .com middleman for a "government" renewal.

First-time adult

FORM DS-11 · APPLY IN PERSON

- ☐ Confirm you need DS-11 (first passport, or not eligible to renew)
  travel.state.gov/en/passports/apply/adults.html
- ☐ Print DS-11 (do not sign until asked)
- ☐ Bring physical proof of U.S. citizenship (birth certificate, prior passport, CRBA, or naturalization/citizenship certificate)
- ☐ Bring photo ID + front/back photocopy
- ☐ Bring one 2×2 inch color photo (last 6 months, white/off-white background, no glasses)
- ☐ Find an acceptance facility (post office, library, or clerk of court) and book if required; some offer photos
  passportfacilitylocator.travel.state.gov
- ☐ Prepare two payments: application fee to U.S. Department of State + $35 acceptance fee
- ☐ Choose routine (4-6 weeks) or expedited (+$60, 2-3 weeks). Mailing can add up to 2 weeks each way.
- ☐ Traveling in 14 days or less? Book a free passport agency appointment (proof of travel + $60 expedite; never pay a third party to book)
  travel.state.gov/en/passports/apply/get-fast/make-appointment.html

BOOK	CARD	BOTH
$130 + $35	$30 + $35	$160 + $35

Passport cards are not valid for international air travel.

Child under 16

FORM DS-11 · IN PERSON EVERY TIME · 5-YEAR VALIDITY

- ☐ Both parents/guardians appear with the child when possible
  travel.state.gov/en/passports/apply/child/under-16.html
- ☐ Child's proof of U.S. citizenship (physical document)
- ☐ Proof of parental relationship if not clear from the birth record
- ☐ Each applying parent's photo ID + photocopies
- ☐ One parent missing? Notarized DS-3053 + that parent's ID copy (use within 90 days)
- ☐ Cannot locate other parent? Prepare DS-5525 and any custody evidence State may request
- ☐ Child passport photo meeting the same 2×2 rules
- ☐ Book the acceptance facility visit (many need appointments; some offer photos)
  passportfacilitylocator.travel.state.gov
- ☐ Fees ready: book $100 + $35 · card $15 + $35 · both $115 + $35

Ages 16-17: still DS-11 in person for a first 10-year passport; parental awareness required. Adult fee amounts apply ($130 + $35 for the book). travel.state.gov/en/passports/apply/child/16-17-year-old.html

Renewal (adults 16+ who qualify)

MAIL DS-82 · OR ONLINE IF ELIGIBLE · NO ACCEPTANCE FEE

- ☐ Confirm eligibility: most recent passport issued at 16+, within 15 years, full 10-year validity, undamaged, current name (or name-change docs)
  travel.state.gov/en/passports/renew-replace/mail.html
- ☐ Mail renewal: print DS-82, enclose passport, photo, and check/money order to U.S. Department of State
- ☐ Fees: book $130 · card $30 · both $160 · expedite +$60
- ☐ Online renewal? Must meet every rule (age 25+, 10-year passport, no name/sex change, no travel for 6+ weeks, in a U.S. state/territory, passport in hand). Routine only.
- ☐ Apply only at opr.travel.state.gov. After you submit, State cancels the old passport.
- ☐ Not eligible? Apply in person with DS-11 instead.

Stuck close to travel? Check passportstatus.state.gov, call NPIC at 1-877-487-2778, then ask your Representative or Senator for a free inquiry (helps, but does not guarantee speed). house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative · senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm

Many airlines and destinations expect 6 months of passport validity beyond your trip. Schengen short stays often use a 3-month rule. Check your destination page on travel.state.gov.

Before you book & travel day

Before-you-book visa check

DO THIS BEFORE YOU BUY NONREFUNDABLE TICKETS

- ☐ Read your destination page on travel.state.gov
- ☐ Confirm entry rules on the destination's official immigration or embassy site
- ☐ Decide what you need: no visa · eVisa · visa on arrival · embassy visa · ETA-style authorization
- ☐ UK trip? Apply for a UK ETA only via GOV.UK / UK ETA app (£20; valid 2 years or until passport expires) gov.uk/eta
- ☐ Europe short stay? Check whether ETIAS is open yet (official EU site: travel-europe.europa.eu/etias). Do not pay third-party "ETIAS" sites early.
- ☐ If you want help checking requirements or filing a visa application, use a reputable visa service after you read the official rules
- ☐ Save PDF/email approvals offline and note the passport number they are tied to

Travel-day documents

PACK THE NIGHT BEFORE

- ☐ Passport book (and card if you use one for land/sea)
- ☐ Printed or offline boarding passes
- ☐ Visa, eVisa, or ETA confirmation matched to this passport
- ☐ Second photo ID
- ☐ Emergency contacts and copies of your passport bio page stored separately (and/or securely in the cloud)
- ☐ Known Traveler Number added to your airline reservation if you have PreCheck or Global Entry
- ☐ Prescription list / doctor note for liquids or medical devices if needed
- ☐ Return / onward ticket details if your destination asks for proof

While you're at it: TSA PreCheck & Global Entry

OPTIONAL TRUSTED TRAVELER NOTE

- ☐ **TSA PreCheck:** faster security on U.S. departures. About $76.75 for 5 years via the Trusted Traveler program (provider prices may show "$85 or less"). tsa.gov/precheck · ttp.dhs.gov
- ☐ **Global Entry:** faster CBP arrival into the U.S. plus PreCheck included. $120 for 5 years; minors under 18 free when enrolling with an adult. Apply at ttp.dhs.gov
- ☐ Add your TTP PASS ID / KTN to every reservation so PreCheck prints on your boarding pass

This checklist is a planning aid, not legal advice. Always follow the current instructions on travel.state.gov, tsa.gov, ttp.dhs.gov, gov.uk, and travel-europe.europa.eu.

You've got this. Start with the free official pages, check the boxes, and take the trip you keep saying "someday" about. From Jennifer at Expert Traveler.