

Visitor Visa Guide: Everything You Need to Know About the B1/B2 Visa

The B visa is also known as the tourist or visitor visa. It is a special visa for foreign nationals who wish to visit the United States. Those visiting for business purposes are categorized as B-1. Those visiting for tourism are categorized as B-2.

In this guide, I will discuss what you need to know about the visitor visa. If you have any questions, please email me directly at Info@immigrationlawfirmltd.com. My team of US immigration lawyers and I would be happy to help.

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1. What is a visitor visa?

B visas (or visitor visas) are for foreign nationals who wish to visit the United States. Those visiting for business purposes are categorized as B-1. Those visiting for tourism are categorized as B-2.

Visitor visas allow for stays in the United States of up to 6 months. With a B1 visa, you can perform activities related to your employment in the United States. This could include, but is not limited to:

- completing business transactions,

- consulting with associates,

- conducting research,

- attending conferences,

- and negotiating contracts.

Note that this work must not involve any gainful employment in the United States.

If you have a B2 visa in the United States, you may engage in tourism. This could include, but is not limited to:

- visiting tourist attractions in the United States,

- visiting friends or family,

- receiving medical treatment,
- participating in social events,
- participating in amateur competitions,
- or enrolling in a course of study not for credit.

Our office can help you to determine which visa is the most appropriate for you.

2. What are the benefits of a visitor visa?

Visitor visas have many benefits, which include:

- You do not need a pre-approved visa petition from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);
- You can apply at your nearest consulate;

- You do not need a sponsor;
- One application can permit multiple visits to the US for an extensive period of time (up to 10 years)
- You can receive multiple visitor visas over your lifetime

3. Who needs a visitor visa?

If you are not a permanent resident or do not have a valid visa, you may need to apply for a B visa.

Keep in mind that some individuals are eligible for the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). This program is managed through ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization).

There are 38 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program:

- Andorra (1991)
- Australia (1996)
- Austria (1991)
- Belgium (1991)
- Brunei (1993)

- Chile (2014)
- Czech Republic (2008)
- Denmark (1991)
- Estonia (2008)
- Finland (1991)
- France (1989)
- Germany (1989)
- Greece (2010)
- Hungary (2008)
- Iceland (1991)
- Ireland (1995)
- Italy (1989)
- Japan (1988)
- Korea, Republic of (2008)
- Latvia (2008)
- Liechtenstein (1991)
- Lithuania (2008)
- Luxembourg (1991)
- Malta (2008)
- Monaco (1991)
- Netherlands (1989)
- New Zealand (1991)
- Norway (1991)
- Portugal (1999)

- San Marino (1991)
- Singapore (1999)
- Slovakia (2008)
- Slovenia (1997)
- Spain (1991)
- Sweden (1989)
- Switzerland (1989)
- Taiwan (2012)
- United Kingdom (1988)

Additionally, the VWP is only for people who plan on staying in the US for less than 90 days. You must also have a valid Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).

Some countries are visa exempt. For example, citizens of Canada as and Bermuda, who will be in the US for less than 180 days, do not require a visa.

You are not eligible for a B visa if you are coming to the US to: study, work, be part of a paid performance, as a crew member on a ship or aircraft, for work in foreign press or other information media, or as a permanent resident of the United States. If any of these apply to you, please communicate with our office so we can find the appropriate visa for you.

4. Who is eligible for a visitor visa?

To be granted a visitor visa, you must show evidence that:

You have a valid reason to visit the United States.

To obtain a visitor visa, you must support your reasons for coming to the United States.

Again, some of the acceptable reasons for the B1 include: completing business transactions, consulting with associates, conducting research, attending conferences, negotiating contracts, and observing American business practices.

For the B2 visa, some acceptable reasons include: visiting tourist attractions in the United States, visiting friends or family, receiving medical treatment, participating in social events, participating in amateur competitions, or enrolling in a course of study not for credit.

Our office can help you determine if a visitor visa is the most appropriate visa for your situation.

The purpose of your visit is consistent with the visa requirements.

For a B visa, you must prove that your actions in the United States will not violate any of the visa conditions. B1 visa holders cannot perform hands-on work in the United States nor receive money from a US company in exchange for work.

Individuals employed and paid by a foreign employer, may be eligible to provide services or receive training in the United States while on a B visa.

Domestic Worker B1 Visa: EAD

Additionally, personal employees such as housekeepers, maids, gardeners, or other caretakers may be eligible to work in the United States while on a B1 visa. This is known as a domestic worker B. Here, the B visa holder can apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Here, the requirements are:

- the domestic worker must have worked for his/her employer for at least a year,
- will be paid fairly,
- and they will return to their home country upon termination of their visa.

B2 Visa Exceptions

Those on a B2 visa must be coming for one of the reasons previously discussed and must not engage in employment while in the United States. Although, the B2 visa does have an exception. This is the domestic partner

B2. Here, a B2 visa is permitted for foreign nationals who want to accompany their partner, who is traveling on a different non-immigrant visa, but they are not eligible as a dependent. This could include same-sex or common law partners as well as extended relatives.

If you have any questions about your eligibility for a visitor visa, an immigration lawyer, including myself or any member of my team, would be happy to assist.

You have sufficient funds to cover the duration of your stay.

In order to be approved for a B visa, you must demonstrate that you have the financial ability to cover your entire stay. If you lack the ability to pay independently, you can provide evidence that you will be supported by your employer or relative.

You will return to your home country following the expiration of the visa.

In order to be approved for a B visa, you must prove that you have a residence abroad. You must show that you will return following the completion of the activity for which you are seeking a visitor visa. Be prepared to explain your itinerary and discuss your plans to return home in your consular interview.

5. Visitor Visa Process

Getting a visitor visa is a multi-step process. The process may vary depending on the individual US embassy or consulate. An immigration lawyer can help you through this process.

Here is a general outline of the process followed by a more detailed explanation:

- Submit Form DS-160
- Upload photo
- Pay visa fees
- Schedule your US tourist visa interview
- Prepare other documents
- Attend the visa interview
- Arrival in the United States

[Complete the DS-160](#)

The DS-160 is the Online Non-immigrant Visa Application. This form is required for temporary travel to the United States. It should be completed and submitted online. You must complete the DS-160 before you can schedule a consular interview. In addition to completing the application, you must print the confirmation page for your interview.

Upload a photo

You will upload a US Visa photo when you submit your Form DS-160. A complete list of requirements for this photo can be found by clicking [here](#).

Pay visa fees

Before your interview, you must pay the visa application fee. The website of your local US embassy or consulate will provide information about the fees required.

Schedule a visa interview

People between the ages of 14 and 79 years will be required to have an interview with a consular officer. Individuals under 13 and over 80 are not required to be interviewed. Although, you should confirm this with your local consulate. You are responsible for scheduling your visa interview. Completing the DS-160 does not automatically schedule your appointment. Visa interview scheduling can vary depending on the time, location, and visa category. So you should apply as early as possible.

Compile documents

You should prepare several documents for your interview:

- You will need a passport valid for 6 months beyond your period of stay,
- the confirmation page for your Form DS-160,
- your application fee payment receipt,
- and your visa photo.

You should also prepare:

- documentation showing your plans for the trip,
- your ties/intent to return to your home country,
- and ability to pay for the trip.

[Attend your visa interview](#)

You will interview with a consular officer to determine if your visitor visa will be granted. Additionally, fingerprint scans will be taken. This is usually done during your interview, but can vary depending on location.

Arrival in the United States

While visitor visas can be granted for up to ten years (during which the visa holder can visit multiple times), it is common for visas to be granted for a shorter duration and/or a specific number of entries. Each entry to the United States can be for a period of up to one year, although most B2 entries are capped at 6 months.

6. What documents are required for the visitor visa?

When you go to your consular interview, many documents may be necessary. The following is a general list. Please be aware the exact documents you will need to provide will depend on your situation. An immigration lawyer can help you determine which documents you need.

- Valid Passport
- US Visa Photo
- Form DS-160 confirmation page and code
- Receipt of paid visa fees

- Interview confirmation page
- Proof of financial means
- Ties to your home country
- Itinerary for trip
- Letter from family, friend, doctor, or event
- Social media details

7. What are the fees for a visitor visa?

- US Tourist Visa: \$160
- Visa Issuance Fees: vary depending on the country
- Other fees (including photocopying, transportation, etc.): vary on a case by case basis

8. Visitor visa processing time

The overall processing time depends on many factors, including the time of year you apply and the individual consulate. However, the average processing time is between 2 weeks and 2 months.

9. Visa Visitor Interview

As previously discussed, most applicants for a B visa will be required to have an interview with a consular officer. During the interview, the applicant must demonstrate they have a residence in a foreign country with no plans to abandon it, they intend to visit the US for a specific and limited period of time, and they intend to visit the United States to engage in appropriate and permissible business or pleasure activities. An immigration lawyer can help you prepare for your interview.

10. Special situations

Chinese Nationals

Beginning November 2016, all Chinese nationals with a 10-year visitor visa must sign up for the Electronic Visa Update System (EVUS) before being allowed to enter the United States. Chinese nationals seeking more information about this requirement can contact an immigration lawyer for more information.

Canadian and Mexican Nationals

The NAFTA Treaty allows citizens of Canada and Mexico to perform some activities that would be considered “business” for citizens of other countries. Provided that the occupation meets all other requirements for a visitor visa, a Canadian or Mexican businessperson participating in this program can receive an expense allotment or reimbursement. For more information about this program, you click [here](#). An immigration lawyer can also provide more information.

11. Conclusion

The B visa (also called the visitor visa) is a special visa for foreign nationals who wish to visit the United States. You should now have a much stronger understanding of the various aspects of the B visa, including its benefits, two categories (B1 and B2), requirements, and application process.

If you have any questions regarding the information discussed in this guide or about the B visa generally, feel free to email me directly at Info@immigrationlawfirmltd.com. I am very responsive via email and I would be happy to help you.