

ESTA FEE: Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the new fee charged to travelers?

It is \$14.00. Since the implementation of ESTA, DHS has had discretion to charge a fee to cover administrative costs. DHA determined that cost to be \$4.00 per registration. The TPA fee adds an additional \$10.00, if your application is approved and you receive authorization to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. If your electronic travel authorization is denied, you are only charged the administrative costs of your application.

Q. When will the fee go into effect?

ESTA registrations on or after September 8, 2010, will be subject to the fee.

Q. How do travelers pay the fee?

At this time, payment is required through the following credit cards: Mastercard, Visa, American Express, and Discover. Payments can also be made with a debit card that holds the Visa or Mastercard symbol. Please check with your bank on the compatibility of your debit card. You may also have a third party, such as a relative or travel agent, pay the associated fees for each application. Your application will not be submitted for processing until all payment information is received. We are continuing to explore other payment measures. The ESTA registration form already in use will walk users through the payment process.

Q. What types of privacy protection exist on the website?

"Pay.gov" uses advanced encryption to protect transactions while applicants are logged in. In addition, any account numbers set up in a profile are encrypted before being stored in our database. When accessing a profile, any account numbers entered will be masked on-screen.

Q. How long are ESTA approvals valid?

Each approved ESTA application will be valid for a period of two years unless the traveler's passport expires sooner. It allows for multiple visits to the United States within that application.

Q. If I have a valid ESTA, will I have to re-register when the new fees go into effect?

No, existing ESTA registrations remain valid for travel through their expiration date. The fee will only be required for new registrations on or after September 8, 2010. Travelers who renew their ESTA after September 8, 2010 will need to pay the same fees for a renewal.

Q. Is ESTA approval like a visa?

An ESTA approval is not a visa under U.S. law, nor does it confer the same benefits as a visa.

Q. Will this attract more international visitors to the United States?

Oxford Economics, a leading economic forecasting consultancy, estimates that the TPA program will generate \$4 billion in new visitor spending, and lead to the creation of 40,000 new jobs. The purpose of the Travel Promotion Act is to increase international travel to all areas of the United States, communicate United States travel policies overseas, and make entry procedures into the United States more efficient and welcoming.

Q. Why do VWP countries have to fund this travel promotion program through ESTA fees?

Some countries fund tourism promotion through airline or hotel taxes. However, these fees are

largely unseen because they are included in the taxes and fees attached to airline tickets. The Travel Promotion Act legislation specified that the U.S. government fund this program through a \$10 fee added to ESTA registration.

Q. There are third-party entities already working in VWP countries that charge a processing fee to assist travelers in completing the ESTA online form. The implementation of a government-based fee for ESTA is likely going to result in additional confusion to international travelers. How can this be mitigated?

DHS and industry will continue to promote the official U.S. government ESTA website and discourage travelers from using the third-party organizations to complete the easy ESTA application. This will increase the likelihood that VWP travelers will know where to find the correct internet address for the official U.S. government ESTA website and that the only ESTA fees required will be those collected during the online application process. The U.S. Embassy Vienna homepage at: <http://austria.usembassy.gov/> provides a link to the ESTA website.