



U.S. EMBASSY PRAGUE AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES NEWSLETTER

Trziste 15, 118 01 Prague 1

February 2013

Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Residing Abroad

Income earned abroad is typically subject to taxation, and citizens or resident aliens earning income overseas are responsible for the same filing requirements as individuals living in the U.S. Citizens and resident aliens residing overseas are still required to file U.S. income taxes on an annual basis, even if they qualify for the [Foreign Earned Income Tax Exclusion](#).

Living abroad carries with it some special rules for tax deductions and credits. Workers may be eligible to exclude a certain portion of their incomes from taxation, as well as deduct part of their housing expenses from taxable income.



The Internal Revenue Service publishes a number of online resources which outline the tax rules for U.S. citizens or resident aliens earning income in a foreign country.

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Greetings from ACS

Each year the Czech Republic hosts thousands of U.S. study abroad students, inviting them to explore and learn about this wonderful culture and country we all have come to love.

There is little surprise that the Czech Republic remains one of the top European destinations for U.S. study abroad participants.

I would like to welcome those newly arrived students to the Czech Republic and wish them a safe and rewarding experience this academic semester.

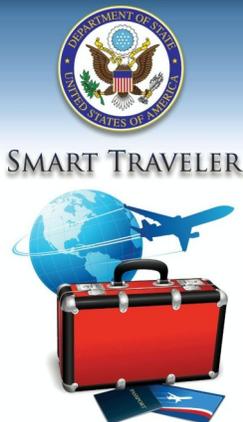
Charles Jess
Consul General

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**The Embassy will be closed on Monday, February 18, 2013
in recognition of President's Day**

Smart Traveler Day “Travel Smart and Stay Connected”



The U.S. Department of State has designated February 21, 2012, as **Smart Traveler Day**, an occasion dedicated to promoting safe international travel and encouraging U.S. citizens to use the Department's many online resources when traveling overseas.

U.S. Embassy Prague would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of these resources and encourage the U.S. citizen community in the Czech Republic to take advantage of these tools when preparing for trips abroad.

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International Financial Scams

One of the primary missions of the Department of State is to protect the welfare of U.S. citizens overseas. U.S. citizens and non-citizens alike are often the targets of scam artists. Our aim is to highlight the latest trends in fraudulent activity so that you can protect yourself from international financial scams.

Scammers looking for victims make no exceptions for age, gender, race, or socio-economic status. They lurk in internet chat rooms, on well-known dating websites, and on special interest sites to access your personal information. Some scammers will play on your fears, claiming to be a relative in trouble overseas. Others will appeal to your empathy and generosity by professing love while others will try to tempt you with offers of an “easy” way to obtain financial security.

Further information on the types of international financial scams perpetrated against U.S. citizens is located in the State Department’s [International Financial Scam Brochure](#) and on the [International Financial Scams](#) and [Resources for Victims of International Financial Scams](#) web pages.



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Effective **February 1, 2013**, all applicants issued immigrant visas overseas must pay a **\$165.00** U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Immigrant Fee prior to traveling to the U.S.

This new fee covers the costs associated with processing, filing, and maintaining immigrant visa applications in addition to producing and issuing Green Cards. The only exemptions to this fee are children adopted under the Orphan (IR-3s/IR-4s) or Hague Processes (IH-3s/IH-4s), Iraqi or Afghan special immigrants who were employed by the U.S. Government, returning residents (SB-1s), and those issued K visas.

All immigrant visa recipients must submit the \$165 USCIS Immigrant Fee online after receiving their visa package from the Embassy and before departing for the U.S. Immigrant visa holders will not be issued Green Cards until this payment has been received.

Individuals who need to pay the new USCIS Immigrant Fee will be instructed to do so when they are issued their immigrant visa at the Embassy. Please visit the [USCIS Immigrant Visa Fee](#) website for further information on this new requirement.

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Smart Traveler Day “Travel Smart and Stay Connected”

"Smart Traveler" App

Smart Traveler, the official State Department app for U.S. travelers, invites you to see the world with easy access to frequently updated official [country specific information](#), Travel [Alerts](#) and [Warnings](#), maps, [U.S. embassy locations](#), and more. With *Smart Traveler*, users can also set up customized e-itineraries to keep track of arrival and departure dates and make notes about upcoming trips. The app also provides quick access to the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) and to the Department’s Consular Affairs Facebook and Twitter pages.



Smart Traveler is available free for iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad in the [iTunes app store](#) and for [Android](#) compatible devices [here](#).

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

We believe that a well-informed traveler is a safer traveler. Through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (formerly known as “Travel or Embassy Registration”) you will automatically receive the most current information compiled by the State Department regarding your foreign destination.

Free STEP enrollment also enables the State Department to better assist you in emergencies such as natural disasters, unrest in foreign countries, or lost/stolen passports overseas. During your travels, STEP can help your family and friends reach you in an emergency. You only need to sign up once, and then you can add and delete trips from your account based on your current travel plans!

You may enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program [online](#), or through our [Smart Traveler app](#).

Travel Warnings

Travel Warnings are issued when long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable lead the State Department to recommend that Americans avoid or consider the risk of travel to that country. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or due to a drawdown of its staff.

Travel Alerts

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, either transnational or within a particular country, that pose significant risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Conditions that may generate a Travel Alert include natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, demonstrations, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sporting event.



Country Specific Information

The Department of State maintains Country Specific Information pages on every country in the world. On these pages you will find important travel information such as the location of the U.S. embassy and any consular offices; whether you need a visa; crime and security information; health and medical conditions; drug penalties; and localized hot spots. This is a good place to start learning about where you are going.

Information for U.S. Study Abroad Participants



The number of U.S. students participating in study abroad programs has grown significantly over the last decade. The following tips are intended to help you remain safe while studying and traveling overseas. A more comprehensive list of travel tips may be found at: studentsabroad.state.gov

◆ **Don't Be an Easy Target**

To avoid being a target of crime, don't wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry, don't carry excessive amounts of money, and never leave purses/backpacks unattended when out in public. It's also a good idea to have copies of important documents (passports, credit cards, visas, etc.) at home and with your family back in the U.S. in the event the originals are lost or stolen. Adhering to these simple rules can save you a great deal of time and money in the long run.

◆ **Avoid Underage and Excessive Alcohol Consumption**

Many arrests, accidents, and violent crimes involving students abroad have occurred as a result of alcohol abuse. When traveling overseas, it's important to obey the laws and regulations of the country you're visiting. In some countries, drinking on the street or on public transportation may be considered criminal activities. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, be informed.

◆ **Don't Import, Purchase, Use, or Have Drugs in Your Possession**

Drug charges can carry severe consequences, in some countries including imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is tried, and sentences ranging from fines and jail time to years of hard labor. Contraband or paraphernalia associated with illegal drug use can also get you in trouble.

◆ **Medical Insurance**

Even if you have medical insurance in the U.S., it doesn't mean you are necessarily covered overseas. Don't wait until you have a medical emergency before finding out that you do not have coverage. Whether your insurance is in your name, under your parents' plan, or through your school, confirm exactly what is covered and where. If necessary, look into purchasing a short-term international policy that guarantees coverage in case of an emergency. Even if you have international insurance coverage, some hospitals and clinics may insist on cash payment for treatment. Check with your insurance provider on how they handle these situations.

◆ **Medications**

Do you have a prescription for a medication you literally cannot live without? When traveling, make sure to bring a back-up supply in case you are delayed during your trip. This is important because your medication may not be available in some countries. Keep it on you when you travel in case you and your luggage get separated. All prescriptions should be clearly marked in their original containers. In fact, you should contact the embassy of the country you are visiting to get a list of drugs that are considered illegal narcotics—*just to make sure your medication is not included*. Also, consider getting a letter from your doctor listing your medications and explaining why you need them and always carry instructions for treating any allergies or other unique medical conditions you might have.

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◆ **Contact Home Periodically**

It's a good idea to periodically contact your family and friends back in the U.S. and inform them of your activities and whereabouts while overseas. It's especially important to contact home if there's been an emergency in the country you're visiting letting everyone know that you're okay.

◆ **Research, Research, and More Research**

When traveling, it's a good idea to thoroughly investigate the country you will be visiting. Familiarize yourself with local conditions, laws, and culture by reviewing the State Department's [Country Specific Information](#), [Country Fact Sheets](#), [Travel Alerts](#), and [Travel Warnings](#) available at www.travel.state.gov.



Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Residing Abroad (continued from page 1)

The following IRS publications and online resources explain how to determine if a tax return should be filed, how to report earnings if they are paid in a foreign currency, whether estimated taxes should be paid, and how to file the return itself. These recourses also indicate how to treat contributions to foreign organizations and how to take foreign taxes into account.



Online Resources for U.S. Taxpayers Residing Abroad

[2012 Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad](#) - IRS Publication 54

Available online at the IRS website at: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p54/index.html>

[Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Living Abroad](#) - IRS Publication 4732

Available online at the IRS website at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4732.pdf>

[Foreign Earned Income Tax Exclusion](#) - Information available online at the IRS website at:

<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97130,00.html>

In order to avoid problems related to non-filing or non-payment of taxes, please consult directly with the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov or with your tax advisor.

Contact American Citizen Services

ACSPRG@state.gov

Open 8:30AM -12:00 PM Monday through Friday

By appointment only (except for emergencies)

<http://prague.usembassy.gov>

420-257-022-000