

AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES NEWSLETTER

The U.S. Embassy is transmitting the following monthly newsletter via its warden system as a public service to U.S. citizens in Mongolia. Please feel free to disseminate this message to U.S. citizens in your organizations or to other Americans you know.



Become a fan of
**U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar,
Consular Section** on
Facebook.

American Citizens' Visa Hour

Every **Tuesday at 4:00pm** at the Consular Section except on U.S./local holidays.

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Warden Volunteers Needed!

We are searching for volunteers to act as wardens in Mongolia. If you are interested, please send an email to ulaanbaataracs@state.gov. The United States warden system is not for the benefit of the Embassy, but for the American citizens living in Mongolia. Wardens in each district play an important role in the event of an emergency by contacting American citizens residing in Mongolia to ensure timely distribution of important information. It is a way for Americans to look after each other, which is particularly important in a place like Mongolia due to the distances between cities and difficult travel conditions.

The Embassy would appreciate your consideration for this important role. It also could be a great opportunity for you to take a few hours out of each quarter to become more familiar with American citizen neighbors, which might prove to be a rewarding experience.

Emergency Photo Digitized Passport (EPDP) Passports Issued to U.S. Citizens with Child Support Arrearages No Longer "No Fee"

Under 42 USC 652(k), the State Department is prohibited from issuing a passport to any individual certified by Health and Human Services (HHS) as being in arrears on child support payments by an amount exceeding \$2,500. The statute also provides that the Department may revoke, restrict, or limit a passport issued previously to such individuals. When a U.S. citizen has child support arrearages and appears overseas at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate and expresses an intention to travel to the United States, he/she is authorized issuance of a passport of limited duration for direct return to the United States *only* (Emergency Photo Digitized Passport (EPDP)). However, from February 7, the passport fee exemption for EPDP passports issued to such individuals abroad is no longer "no fee." Effective immediately, the applicable passport fee will be charged and collected for EPDP passports issued to individuals with child support arrearage holds.

True or False

1. To apply for a minor's passport, the Consular Officer does not need to see the baby or child.
2. Both parents must sign the passport application of a minor child.

Answers

1. False
2. True

Passport applications for minors under age 16 must be **submitted in person**. The minor must be present. Minors under age 16 cannot apply for a passport by themselves.

Both parents/guardians must appear in person with the minor and provide consent, authorizing passport issuance to the minor. If one parent/guardian is unable to appear in person, then the DS-11 application must be accompanied by a signed, notarized *Form DS-3053: Statement of Consent* from the non-applying parent/guardian.

Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Information Travel Tips

How to Shop for Travel

The key to planning a good trip is making sure you're buying from travel businesses you know and trust:

Get recommendations

Ask family and friends about the companies they use and like, and look online to see what people are saying about their service and prices.

Call to verify your reservations and arrangements

Get the details about any "five-star" resorts or "luxury" cruise ships they promise — including what other travelers have had to say about them. Some companies market below-average vacation accommodations as "luxury" or "five-star." When you have the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the airlines, car rental companies, and hotels you'll be using, confirm all arrangements yourself. If you can't get a person from the travel company on the phone to answer your questions, consider taking your travel business elsewhere.

Get a copy of the company's cancellation and refund policies before you pay for the trip, and ask "What if...?"

Consider whether some form of travel cancellation insurance is appropriate. Make sure the product you're being sold is a licensed insurance policy. The [U.S. Travel Insurance Association](#) maintains a list of licensed travel insurance companies.

Pay by credit card

It gives you more protection than paying by cash or check. If you don't get what you paid for, you may be able to dispute the charges with your credit card company. However, don't give your account number to any business until you've verified its reputation.

Consider using a travel app

Travel apps can help you search for airfares and hotel rates, get fare alerts and real-time deals, and manage your itinerary.

Ask about mandatory hotel "resort fees"

When you book a hotel room online, you expect that the rate you see is the rate you'll pay. But extra costs often called "resort fees" — for services like fitness facilities or internet access — can add to the per night cost of your stay. More important, the fees are mandatory: you must pay them regardless of whether you use the services. Many people don't find out about the fees until they arrive at the hotel — or worse, when they check out. You can't compare rates for different hotels unless you know all the fees. If you're not sure whether a website is showing you the total price, call the hotel and ask about a "resort fee" or any other mandatory charge. Listing the "resort fee" near the quoted price or in the fine print — or referring to other fees that "may apply" — isn't good enough. If you find out a hotel hasn't told you the

whole story about mandatory fees, in addition to complaining to the company, [file a complaint](#) with the FTC.

Ask questions before joining a travel club

Sometimes, a "free trial" membership can result in monthly charges on your credit card. Find out what you'll get for your money and how you can cancel.

Signs of a Scam

Scammers may call or use mail, texts, faxes or ads promising free or low-cost vacations. In reality, those vacation offers may end up charging poorly disclosed fees or may be fake, plain and simple. Here are some tell-tell signs that a travel offer or prize might be a scam:

You "won a free vacation" — but you have to pay some fees first

A legitimate company won't ask you to pay for a prize. Any company trying to sell you on a "free" vacation will probably want something from you — taxes and fees, attendance at mandatory timeshare presentations, even pressure to buy "extras" or "add-ons" for the vacation, etc. Find out what your costs are before you agree to anything.

The prize company wants your credit card number

Especially if they say it's to "verify" your identity or your prize, don't give it to them.

They cold-call, cold-text, or email you out of the blue

Before you do business with any company you don't know, call the [Attorney General](#) and [local consumer protection agencies](#) in the company's home state to check on complaints; then, search online by entering the company name and the word "complaints" or "scam" and read what other people are saying.

They don't — or can't — give you specifics

They promise a stay at a "five-star" resort or a cruise on a "luxury" ship. The more vague the promises, the less likely they'll be true. Ask for specifics, and get them in writing. Check out the resort's address; look for photos of the ship.

You're pressured to sign up for a travel club for great deals on future vacations

The pressure to sign up or miss out is a signal to walk away. Travel clubs often have high membership fees and limited choice of destinations or travel dates.

You get a robocall about it

Robocalls from companies trying to sell you something are almost always illegal if you haven't given the company written permission to call you. That's true even if you haven't signed up for the national [Do Not Call Registry](#).

If you think you may have been targeted by a travel scam, report it to the FTC at [ftc.gov/complaint](#). For more on travel scams, visit [ftc.gov/travel](#).

Ask the Consul

What is 214(b) and what does it mean when someone is refused under 214(b)?

When consular officers talk about 214(b) what they are referring to is section 214(b) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, which is the set of laws consular officers follow when adjudicating visas. Section 214(b) states: "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of the application for a visa, and the immigration officer at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to non-immigrant status."

What does this mean? It means that by law, visa officers are required to assume that anyone who applies for a nonimmigrant visa will stay in the U.S. permanently- that they will not return to their home countries. It is then up to each individual applicant to demonstrate to the visa officer at the time of the interview that this is not so. Applicants must show that their trip is actually temporary, not permanent. Or, in more technical terms, applicants have to overcome the presumption of immigrant intent.

So, how does an applicant do this? How does an applicant show that he or she is qualified for the visa they are applying for? Contrary to widespread belief, visa officers do not make a decision based on one single factor. Think of a visa adjudication as a giant puzzle. What the officer is trying to do is assemble as many bits of information as possible in the short time we have with our applicants, to put together a picture of the applicant's situation. It is this bigger picture, that the officer then vets against the law we adjudicate under, to determine if the applicant qualifies for the visa he or she applied for.

Three of the major factors of the many we consider in order to do this are:

1. The purpose of travel – what is the applicant planning to do in the U.S.? Basically the officer is trying to determine if the proposed trip makes sense for the applicant.
2. Finances – is the applicant able to pay for what he/she is planning to do in the U.S. without having to violate visa rules or resort to illegal or criminal activity
3. Ties to the home country – what will motivate the applicant to return to their home country after a temporary stay in the U.S.? Generally we look at family, economic, and social ties.

That is why it is so important to answer the questions we ask as honestly and clearly as possible. The applicant needs to help us put the puzzle together quickly and correctly. Many applicants tell us what they think we want to hear or what they have been told they should say, but they do not actually answer our questions. This makes it harder for us, because on top of trying to gather information, we also have to decide if the applicant is trying to conceal something by evading the question, if they misunderstood the question, or if they are simply "performing" a prepared script



Smart
Traveler
Enrollment
Program

U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Mongolia are reminded to enroll with the U.S. Embassy by entering your travel itinerary and contact information into the

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Don't forget to enter your email address, local address and phone number, if known, as well as your expected departure date from Mongolia. Entering your expected departure date will guarantee that you do not continue to receive ACS-related emails once no longer in Mongolia.

TRAVEL WARNINGS

Ukraine February 28, 2014
Afghanistan February 20, 2014
Saudi Arabia February 11, 2014
Somalia February 7, 2014
Algeria February 6, 2014

TRAVEL ALERT

Ukraine February 18, 2014
Thailand February 14, 2014
Russian Federation February 7, 2014
For additional information about these travel warnings and alerts, please visit this website:
<http://www.travel.state.gov/>

Embassy Contact Information

American Citizen Services
Embassy of the United States
U.S. Embassy
Denver Street #3
11th Micro District
Ulaanbaatar 14190 Mongolia
Tel: 976-7007-6001
Fax: 976-7007-6014
After-hours emergency number: 9911-4168

Upcoming Holiday Closing in March 2014

Friday, March 7 International Women's Day