

I have a visa in my passport that will expire in February, but my passport expires in December and it's not a new "machine readable" one. Will I be able to travel to the US for the holidays?

Stephen in Scarborough

I am pleased that you asked this question because we receive a lot of phone calls and e-mails regarding this issue. As a Trinidad and Tobago national, all you need to travel to the United States is a valid passport, and a valid visa. The United States does not require a machine-readable passport for travelers with a US visa. In addition, your passport issued by the government of Trinidad and Tobago must be valid only for the duration of your stay in the US, not for six months or some other arbitrary period. This passport-validity rule varies from country to country, but as far as Trinidad and Tobago is concerned, the passport does not need to be valid for six months. So, as long as your passport, new or old, machine-readable or not, does not expire *while you are in the US*, you may use it to travel.

It is ok, on the other hand, if your US visa expires while you are in the US. Your visa is valid for entry into the US up until the day of visa expiry. So, as long as you actually arrive in the United States before the day your visa expires, there will not be a problem.

Furthermore, if you have a new, machine-readable passport but your valid visa is stamped in your old passport, that is not a problem either. So long as the biographical information (your name, gender, date of birth) on the new passport matches the biographical information on the visa, you may staple the two passports together and use the new passport and the visa in the old passport to travel. Just make sure to present both the old passport with visa and the new passport to the immigration official when you arrive in the US.

So remember: as long as you have an unexpired US visa, and an unexpired T&T passport, you are good to go!