

U.S. MISSION  
GERMANY

ADDRESSES & CONTACT  
INFO:

- **BERLIN:**  
Clayallee 170  
Tel: 030-8305-0  
0830-1200 M-F
- **FRANKFURT:**  
Giessenerstr. 30  
Tel: 069-7535-0  
0730-1130 M-F
- **MUNICH:**  
Königinstrasse 5  
Tel: 089-2888-0  
1300-1600 M-F

[For more information,  
click here.](#)

INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

<a href="#">Welcome</a>	1
<a href="#">Thanksgiving: An American Holiday</a>	1
<a href="#">Electronic Travel Authorization</a>	2
<a href="#">Understanding the New Passport Card</a>	3
<a href="#">Preparing for an Avian Influenza Pandemic</a>	4
<a href="#">Post Specific Page</a>	5

# American Citizen News

QUARTER 4, 2008

## Season's Greetings

A warm welcome to all newly registered Americans, and greetings to those of you already living in Germany. This time of year can be a joyous time of fellowship with family, friends and colleagues but it can also be a stressful time as well. We would like to help reduce potential stress where possible so we have included some general information along with a few gentle reminders in this edition. Warmest best wishes to you and yours for a great year ahead.

## Thanksgiving: An American Holiday

While thanksgiving celebrations in Germany have a long tradition, they are quite different from what we know as Thanksgiving in the United States. Erntedankfest, *the harvest festival of thanks*, is traditionally more of a rural and religious celebration in Germany. And while Thanksgiving is a national holiday in the United States, Germany has no specific set national Thanksgiving holiday.

Customarily in the United States, Thanksgiving was celebrated on the last Thursday of November because this was the day in 1863 on which President Abraham Lincoln had declared a national day of Thanksgiving. During the Great Depression however, business leaders petitioned President Roosevelt to officially move Thanksgiving to the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of November. Many business leaders argued that this would help to always guarantee a longer shopping season between Thanksgiving and Christmas. In 1939 President Roosevelt finally agreed to the change. His decision proved to be quite controversial; several states refused to recognize the Presidential Proclamation and declared that Thanksgiving would instead be celebrated on the last Thursday of November.

According to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, FDR carved his Thanksgiving turkey in Warm Springs, Georgia on November 23, 1939. Ironically, millions of Americans in other towns and cities around the country would not celebrate Thanksgiving until the following Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup>. The year 1939 became known as *the year of two Thanksgivings*. Although the problem persisted for two more years, the U.S. Congress later solved "the crisis" by passing legislation in 1941 which declared that our national holiday of Thanksgiving would be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November each year.

**As the holiday season approaches, many of you will be travelling back to the states or to other countries outside of Germany to join your families and friends. Please help us help you during this busy travel time by remembering these important tips:**

- Always check passport validity to ensure that your passport is not expired.
- Please **double-check** passport validity to make certain that your passport will not expire while you are travelling.
- If your passport is expired or will expire prior to your travel date, please mail your renewal application to us OR visit the Embassy or your local Consulate to have it renewed. Remember to allow 2 to 3 week for the renewal process.

## Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

For those of you with non-citizen friends and family traveling to the United States in the new year, enrollment in the ESTA program will be a requirement for travelers using the visa waiver program. **It does not apply to U.S. citizens traveling overseas.**

ESTA is a new online system that is part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and is required by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. Travelers will log on to the ESTA web-based system and complete an application online providing the biographical and eligibility information currently required on the paper I-94W form.

**Once ESTA is mandatory, all citizens or nationals of VWP countries, including accompanied and unaccompanied minors, who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure must have an individual ESTA approval prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the United States under the VWP. VWP travelers who fail to obtain an ESTA confirmation after January 12, 2009 will be denied boarding, experience delayed processing, or be denied admission at a U.S. port of entry.**

Travelers are not required to have specific plans to travel to the United States under the VWP before they apply for an ESTA authorization. Department of Homeland Security recommends that an ESTA approval be obtained as soon as a VWP traveler begins to plan a trip to the United States, and no later than 72 hours before departure. Additionally, if applicants' destination addresses or itineraries should change after their authorization has been approved, they may easily update that information through the ESTA website.

In most cases, ESTA will provide an almost immediate determination of eligibility for travel under the VWP. An approved ESTA travel authorization is: 1) valid for up to two years or until the traveler's passport expires, whichever comes first; 2) valid for multiple entries into the U.S.; and 3) not a guarantee of admissibility to the United States at a port of entry.

Possible responses include: **Authorization Approved**, **Travel Not Authorized**, or **Authorization Pending**. ESTA approval **only** authorizes a traveler to board a carrier for travel to the U.S. under the VWP. In all cases, Customs and Border Patrol officers make admissibility determinations at our ports of entry. In the event that an ESTA applicant is denied authorization to travel to the United States under the VWP, he or she will be referred to [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for information on how to apply for a U.S. visa.

To apply for  
ESTA authorization:

<http://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>

Visit the following  
website for additional  
information:

“Know Before You Go”  
[www.CBP.gov/travel](http://www.CBP.gov/travel)

### IMPORTANT DATE:

Jan 12, 2009

ESTA becomes  
mandatory for all visa  
waiver travel to the  
United States



Homeland  
Security

## Understanding the New Passport Card

What's the size of a credit card and used by U.S. citizens to re-enter the United States through land and sea ports of entry from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda? No, it's not a visa. Here's another hint: It cannot be used if you're traveling internationally by air. Give up? It's the U.S. Passport Card! The Bureau of Consular Affairs started accepting and adjudicating applications for the passport card on February 1, 2008 and began producing it domestically on July 14. This new travel document offers a convenient way for American citizens to re-enter the United States through land and sea ports of entry **from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda** after June 1, 2009.

The new passport card, a less-expensive and more portable alternative to the passport book has the same validity period: 10 years for adults and five years for children. **The passport card is designed for the specific needs of residents of the northern and southern border communities who frequently cross the border into Canada and Mexico, and IS NOT a globally recognized travel document as in the traditional passport book.** The cost of the Passport Card is \$45 for first-time adult applicants and \$35 for children under 16. Adults who currently have valid passports can apply for the passport card by mail for \$20. For more information about the new passport card, please visit [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

**NOTE: Overseas production to begin soon. Please continue to check the Consulate or Embassy websites for the exact dates.**



## Preparing for an Avian Influenza Pandemic

The Department of State (DOS) recently refined and clarified preparedness guidance for Americans living abroad in the event of an influenza pandemic. Because it is unknown whether international travel would be possible due to infection control measures that could be implemented under emergency conditions, it is recommended that Americans living abroad plan for the possibility that they will need to remain in the host country where they are living during a pandemic. Specifically, DOS recommends that all Americans overseas maintain twelve-week stockpiles, including countries in the developed world such as in Europe.

Stockpiled food should primarily consist of non-perishable items that do not require refrigeration or larger volumes of water for preparation (such as canned food, energy bars and freeze-dried meals), and should include adequate items for family members with special dietary restrictions, such as the elderly or infants who require formula. Due to the housing size limitations in Germany, it is understood that most families cannot stockpile quantities of water to last 12 weeks. Therefore, at a minimum, families are advised to store a three day supply of one gallon of water per person per day. Water should be stored in clean plastic containers, avoiding containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. Also it is recommended to have on hand items that could be needed for water purification, such as camp stoves and pots, chlorine tablets and water filters.

DOS recommends that Americans living overseas consult the following websites to aid in their pandemic preparations:

<http://www.ready.gov/america/>

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

## Recommended Reads/Travel Tips



For more information and great tips on international travel, please visit:

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)



For more information on the Visa Waiver Program, please visit the Department of Homeland Security website at:

[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

**Sending money across borders has become a huge industry as more people travel, live and conduct business abroad.** Figuring out the ins and outs of using money-transfer services can be a daunting journey of its own. Read more about this:

[http://biz.yahoo.com/wallstreet/080821/sb121927679430558581\\_id.html](http://biz.yahoo.com/wallstreet/080821/sb121927679430558581_id.html)

**Add blank pages to your passport to be on the safe side.** “Question: My adult son, traveling with his wife and child, was recently refused permission to board a flight from England to South Africa because he had only one blank page in his passport. How do you know which country wants more than one blank page?”

<http://travel.latimes.com/articles/la-tr-spot9mar09>

**New Law Makes Escape Tougher For Tax Exiles.** “It’s been called ‘the ultimate estate plan’: moving to a desert island or other far-off locale to escape the clutches of the Internal Revenue Service. Indeed, hundreds of Americans do formally renounce their U.S. citizenship every year, many in order to protect their wealth from income, estate and gift taxes. But Congress may have made life less rewarding for tax exiles.”

[http://online.wsj.com/public/article\\_print/SB121193252276024279.html](http://online.wsj.com/public/article_print/SB121193252276024279.html)

**Tips to avoid being victimized on vacation.** “No one knows better than the police which tricks criminals are using to prey on unsuspecting tourists.”

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/TRAVEL/traveltips/06/24/security.tips/index.html>

Additional travel tips can be found at: <http://www.travel.state.gov>

## VISA Waiver Program Expansion

President Bush announced the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) on Friday, October 17, 2008. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Department of State, will begin to admit the new countries into the VWP in the coming months. Citizens of these countries will immediately be required to use the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) in order to take advantage of visa waiver travel privileges.

**The new Visa Waiver Program countries include:**

<b>The Czech Republic</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	<b>The Republic of Korea</b>
<b>Hungary</b>	<b>The Slovak Republic</b>
<b>Latvia</b>	

There are currently 27 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program:

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.