

CIPANP 2006

Passport and Visa Information

Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth of the United States of America.

Citizens of the United States may enter Puerto Rico without a passport or visa, but carrying proof of U.S. citizenship and identity is advised. Proof of U.S. citizenship includes an expired U.S. passport, a certified (original) birth certificate, Certificate of Naturalization, Certificate of Citizenship, or Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States. A valid driver's license or government identification card containing a physical description or photograph is needed to prove identity.

Information on these pages is current as of August 2005 and is provided as a service to our participants. For the most up-to-date and definitive information, please consult the [U.S. Department of State](#) or the nearest [U.S. embassy or consulate](#).

Do you need a visa? Puerto Rico has the same visa [requirements](#) for citizens of other countries as does the United States, and visas are issued by the [U.S. State Department](#). You may wish to download a [booklet of information](#) that explains the U.S. visa application process. A brief [video](#) is also available that explains new visa policies and procedures for visitors to the United States and Puerto Rico.

Most citizens from the [27 countries](#) participating in the [Visa Waiver Program](#) (VWP) do not need visas to enter Puerto Rico. However, all VWP travelers, regardless of age or type of passport used, must present [machine-readable passports](#) (MRPs); previous one-time exemptions for first-time VWP travelers without MRPs ended June 26, 2005. In addition, depending on when VWP travelers' passports were issued, [other passport requirements apply](#). VWP travelers must also present a completed and signed I-94W Nonimmigrant Visa Waiver Arrival-Departure Record to U.S. officials when arriving in San Juan.

When should you apply for a visa? Obtaining necessary travel documents for travel to the United States has become increasingly difficult for some international citizens. Post-September 11, many scientists and students have had their visa applications referred by consular officials to an interagency panel in Washington DC for additional review, which greatly extends processing time. There also appears to be a great deal of variance in the timeliness of processing visa requests from embassy to embassy. The Department of State lists probable [wait times](#), but their estimates seem wildly optimistic in some cases. We strongly recommend that international conference participants requiring U.S. visas start the process as soon as possible, even **six to nine months in advance of the conference**.

Consular officials often cite an incomplete application as the main cause of delay in granting a visa. Thus, applications must be fully in order before submitting them. Because US immigration law requires that all visa applicants be regarded as potential immigrants (Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act), a consular

official must be convinced the applicant intends to return to his or her country of residence before a visa can be issued. Anything that demonstrates intent or need to return to your home country (so-called "binding ties"), should be included with your visa application. Such binding ties would include:

- Immediate family members or dependents remaining in the home country
- Property ownership
- A bank account
- An employment contract or statement from your employer, attesting that employment will continue after the dates of the meeting

Do you need a letter of invitation to apply for your visa? In many cases, a letter of invitation from the conference organizing committee is helpful in obtaining a U.S. visa. If you need such a letter, please [complete a request online](#) or send the following information in an email message to the [conference administrator](#). Be sure to put "CIPANP Visa Invitation Needed" in the subject line of your email message to ensure prompt handling.

1. Your title (e.g., Dr., Professor)
2. Your first name, middle name or patronymic, and family name
3. Your citizenship (country)
4. The name of your institution
5. Your complete postal address, including country and postal code(s)
6. Your email address (your invitation will be sent to this address as a PDF attachment)
7. Proposed title of your talk(s) or poster(s)

Are you an international student holding an F-1 visa? *CIPANP 2006* strongly encourages the participation of [young scientists](#). If you are currently studying in the United States on an F-1 visa, you will need a [valid SEVIS Form I-20 and a valid unexpired Form I-94](#) to enter Puerto Rico and re-enter the continental United States. Be sure that you do not have a terminated SEVIS record indicating that you are out of status. We earnestly advise you to check with your university's office of international student affairs to ensure that all of your documents are in order *before* traveling to Puerto Rico.

Customs Information

Your luggage will be inspected by U.S. Department of Agriculture officials at the airports in Puerto Rico to ensure that you are not carrying prohibited fruits and plants to the mainland. Articles from Vietnam, North Korea, Kampuchea, or Cuba, lottery tickets, chocolate liqueurs, goods made from endangered species, or pre-Columbian artifacts are among the items that may not be brought into the United States. Travelers carrying undeclared prohibited items are subject to immediate fines, payable on the spot.

There are no customs duties assessed on articles carried between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland.