

VISA INFORMATION

United States Entry Requirements

Since September 11, 2001, applicants have been subject to a greater degree of scrutiny than in the past. The timeframes for visa processing today are difficult to predict with accuracy for any individual applicant, and could vary significantly by country. Participants are encouraged to check their visa status, and if a visa is needed, apply for a visa as early as possible, but not later than 90 days in advance of their arrival in the United States. For many applicants, an interview will be required at the embassy as part of the visa application process.

Passports: Must be current - make sure that your travel will be completed six months before your passport expiration date. If you do not have a current passport, you should contact your Ministry of Foreign Affairs for application materials. Please also read carefully the information regarding Machine Readable Passports for visa waiver travellers eligible to enter the United States without a visa (http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html).

Visas: See <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/> for general visa guidance. Information about countries participating in the U.S. visa waiver program can be found at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html. Applicants should apply at the American Embassy or Consulate with jurisdiction over their place of permanent residence. It is recommended that visa applicants attending IWC59 include the following with their application background materials:

- Letter of invitation to the Commissioner (for national delegates) or head of organization (for observers) from U.S. organizers of IWC59 (original or copy);
- National delegates: documentation from the national IWC Commissioner's office or other relevant government authority indicating that the applicant is part of the country's delegation to the Scientific Committee, subcommittee week, and/or plenary (government officials, see below regarding application interviews);
- Observers: documentation that applicant is representing the observer organization at IWC59;
- Curriculum vita, if available (for attendees of the Scientific Committee meeting)

Visa applicants should also refer to the Embassy Consular Section web site (<http://usembassy.state.gov/>) to determine visa processing timeframes and instructions, learn about interview scheduling, and find out if there are any additional documentation items required.

NOTE: Proof of purchase of an airline ticket is not an item requested by the embassy to document your itinerary for your trip. No assurances regarding the issuance of visas can be given in advance. Therefore, final travel plans or the purchase of non-refundable tickets should not be made until a visa has been issued and you are in receipt of the passport.

Foreign Government Officials - Ministers and Delegations

Heads of government, Ministers, and other government officials generally do not require interviews when applying for visas, if their travel is official. However, a consular officer can request an interview. Ministers, delegates, and government officials supporting the delegation must present a diplomatic note from their governments requesting a visa for the purpose of attending IWC/59. There is no fee for these visas. Travellers should apply as soon as possible to the U.S. Embassy in their country of residence.

For additional information on U.S. visas, contact the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction in your place of permanent residence. Contact details can be found at <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.