

TRAVERSING THE GLOBE

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by Debbie Gulliver, University Travel Manager

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NSCIS Immigration Alert:

US Citizenship and Immigration Services Clarifies Biometrics Requirement for Reentry Permit Applicants...

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is now advising permanent residents applying for reentry permits not to leave the United States before having their biometrics collected at a USCIS Application Support Center appointment, according to a recent agency press release. Individuals applying for a reentry permit must be physically present in the United States when they file the application, and applicants may not have their biometrics collected through a U.S. consulate or USCIS office abroad. Applicants may request expedited processing by submitting an email address and fax number, two pre-paid, self-addressed express mailers, and a written explanation of the need for expedited processing along with the permit application form.

While USCIS advises reentry permit applicants not to leave the United States before providing biometrics, doing so will not result in an automatic denial of the permit application. An individual with a pending reentry permit application who leaves the United States before providing biometrics may be able to return for a biometrics appointment if they do so before a reentry permit becomes necessary. Typically, a permanent resident may reenter the United States after a trip abroad simply by presenting his or her Permanent Resident Card. However, a reentry permit is needed if the permanent resident seeks to reenter after being outside of the United States for more than one year but less than two years. In March, USCIS began to require permanent residents applying for reentry permits to provide biometrics.

From the TSA:

Revisiting the carry-on bag security checkpoint restrictions...

Many travelers handled the liquids-gels-aerosols-sharp-objects restrictions for carry-on bags by simply packing them in their checked luggage. Now that additional charges are being applied to checked bags, more and more passengers are attempting to travel with a carry-on bag only. Following is a reminder from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration's Website on the applicable rules.

Air travelers may carry liquids, gels, and aerosols in their carry-on bag when going through security checkpoints by doing the following:

1. All liquids, gels, and aerosols must be in three-ounce or smaller containers. Larger containers that are half-full or toothpaste tubes rolled up are not allowed. **Each container must be three ounces or smaller.**
2. All liquids, gels, and aerosols must be packed in a single, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag. Gallon-size bags or bags that are not zip-top such as fold-over sandwich bags are not allowed. **Each traveler can use only one, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag.**
3. Each traveler must remove their quart-size, zip-top bag from their carry-on and place it in a bin or on the conveyor belt for X-ray screening. X-raying separately will allow TSA security officers to more easily examine the declared items.

There are exceptions for certain items including prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines for which the Website lays out detailed instructions. Items such as corkscrews, cuticle cutters, eyeglass repair tools, eyelash curlers, tweezers, nail clippers and files are now allowed in a carry-on as well.

The TSA Website includes extensive information on all manner of items. It also includes an email service—follow the simple prompts—that will notify the traveler when there are updates to the page.

With the frequently changing airline regulations regarding luggage and fees, it is best to check the airline Website for size and weight restrictions for carry-on baggage. With more luggage being carried onboard, airlines are insisting on compliance.

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Baggage Fees:

Further increases by major airlines...

Fuel costs are continuing to rise and the airlines are paying over \$140.00 a barrel. With this rise, airline ticket prices will continue to increase. In addition, airlines are finding new and creative ways to charge travelers for services that were once provided as part of the airline service. Preferred seating, snacks, and checking a second bag are just a few of the charges the airlines have introduced in the last year.

Many of the airlines have been introducing new fees to offset the high price of fuel and remain competitive. On domestic flights, most airlines are now charging for that second checked bag. Spirit Airlines, however, charges \$10 per checked bag. Here is a list of the airlines and their current fees for checked baggage:

Air Tran Airways: Effective May 15, 2008, first check bag free; If paid using Online Check-In, the second bag \$10.00; otherwise, \$20.00. The excess baggage charge, for other than sporting equipment, will be \$50.00 for each piece after the first 2 bags.

American Airlines: Effective June 15, 2008, first checked bag is \$15.00 and second checked bag is \$25.00. Fees apply to flights within U.S., U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Canada. Exemptions: AAdvantage Executive Platinum®, AAdvantage Platinum® or AAdvantage Gold® members, oneworld Alliance Emerald, Sapphire or Ruby members, full-fare classes and first class.

Continental Airlines: First checked bag free; Second bag \$25.00 on certain economy fare tickets. Applies to tickets purchased for travel within the U.S., Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada. Exempt are: OnePass Elite, SkyTeam Elite and Elite Plus, any customer traveling on a ticket purchased in "Y" class of service, Continental Airlines Presidential Plus credit card holders, and active military traveling on orders.

Jet Blue Airlines: Travelers may check up to two bags free of charge.

Delta Air Lines: Effective May 5, 2008, first checked bag free; Second bag \$25.00. Exceptions: Business Elite and First Class passengers are allowed 3 checked bags at no charge up to 70 lbs; Active duty military traveling with orders are allowed to check 2 bags.

Northwest Airlines: The fee for the first checked bag is \$15; Second bag \$25.00. Applies to tickets purchased on or after June 10, 2008 for travel commencing on or after August 28, 2008 within the U.S., Mexico, the Caribbean and Canada. Exempt are: Northwest Silver, Gold and Platinum Worldperks elite, SkyTeam Elite, passengers booked in full fare classes ("Y" or "B"), and First Class.

Southwest Airlines: Travelers may check up to two bags free of charge.

Spirit Airlines: Checked baggage fees are based upon when space is reserved for the bags. If done on-line, up to 1 hour before flight departure, via Spirit's web site, the fee is \$10.00 per bag. Day of departure at the airport ticket counters, kiosk locations, or at a skycap position, the fee is \$20.00 per bag. Exemptions persons traveling with assistive devices and military personnel on active duty status (or discharged within 7 days) may check up to 2 bags at no charge.

United Airlines: The fee for the first checked bag is \$15; Second bag \$25.00 (Mileage Plus Premier or Star Alliance Silver status or higher are exempt.) This rule is applicable to flights within the U.S., and to/from Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada.

U.S. Airways: The fee for the first checked bag is \$15; Second bag \$25.00 (First or business class travelers, Dividend Miles Preferred members or Star Alliance Silver status or higher, active military (in uniform with ID), unaccompanied minors, and passengers checking assistive devices are exempt.)

The airlines are weighing your checked luggage. For domestic trips, one piece of luggage should weigh no more than 50 lbs. Otherwise, you will be assessed a fee. Please visit the airline websites for further information regarding checked baggage before you take your next trip.