

Welcome to the latest issue of our quarterly newsletter the **Hyderabad Herald**, a publication intended solely for the American citizens residing in or visiting our consular district which includes the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. We hope you find this informative and encourage you to send us your feedback. We also encourage you to submit items of general interest to our community.

While we can't accept advertising, we welcome other pieces of interest including events, meetings, or other activities. We also welcome your questions or suggestions on consular themes you would like us to address. To submit any contributions or to add or remove your name from our mailing list, just drop us an e-mail at: HydACS@state.gov and include "Herald" in the subject line.



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Increase in Passport Fees

As of December 27th, 2021, the Department of State increased the passport security surcharge by \$20 from (\$60 to \$80). The new fee is applicable to all applicants except those who are statutorily exempted from paying passport fees. The surcharge includes costs associated with passport application processing that support enhanced border security such as the secure book and card materials, passport printers, and costs associated with passport adjudication. Please note the new fees below:

	<u>Old Fee</u>	<u>New Fee</u>
DS-82 application:	\$110	\$130
DS-11 application:	\$115	\$135
Firs time adult		
DS-11 application:	\$145	\$165

Please remember to always have a valid U.S. passport during your time in India. The Government of India has the right to impose fines of up to ₹50,000 for gaps in passport validity, even to OCI cardholders. To schedule an appointment to renew your passport, please visit our [website](#).

Adult U.S. Citizens using the form DS-82 to renew their passports can either courier their application to the consulate or use the drop box located at the front gate to leave your application in a sealed envelope.

COVID Update: The Rise of Omicron

As COVID-19 cases increase across India, the demand for COVID-19 testing has also increased. In some cases, this can result in delays in test reporting times. While same-day results for COVID-19 RT-PCR tests are still available via many labs in India, these results may not be available until late in the evening on the day of testing. While this does not impact the ability to provide timely patient care, this may cause unexpected delays for travelers.

We strongly encourage travelers to the United States to contact their local labs well in advance of their travel to schedule an appointment for testing and to confirm that results will be available in time for the traveler to check-in at the airport. Individuals needing to locate a testing facility can review the list of COVID-19 testing labs on the Indian Council of Medical Research website - www.icmr.gov.in.

Please visit the [CDC website](#) for the latest information about U.S. travel requirements and visit the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare [website](#) for the latest information on COVID-19 management, vaccination, and travel guidelines in India.

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Presidents' Day: Origins, Traditions, and Meaning

Presidents' Day is a holiday in the United States celebrated on the third Monday of February to honor all persons who served in the office of president of the United States. The federal holiday specifically honors

George Washington, who led the Continental Army to victory in the Revolutionary War, presided at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and was the first president of the United States.

The day is a state holiday in most states, with official names including Washington's Birthday, Presidents' Day, President's Day, Presidents Day, and Washington's and Lincoln's Birthday. The various states use 15 different names. Depending upon the specific law, the state holiday may officially celebrate Washington alone, Washington and Lincoln, or some other combination of U.S. presidents (such as Washington and Thomas Jefferson who was born in April).

Washington's Birthday was celebrated on February 22 from 1879 until 1971, when the Uniform Monday Holiday Act moved it to the third Monday in February, which can occur from February 15 to the 21st. The day eventually also became known as Presidents' Day (though the placement of the apostrophe, if any, varies) and is most often an occasion to remember all U.S. presidents, or to honor Abraham Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays together.

Until the late 1980s, corporate businesses generally closed on this day, similar to present corporate practices on Memorial Day or Christmas Day. However, after having been moved to the third Monday, most businesses remain open with many offering sales and other promotions. Federal and state government services.

Since 1862 there has been a tradition in the United States Senate that [George Washington's Farewell Address](#) be read on his birthday. Citizens asked that this be done in light of the ongoing Civil War.



Ask the Consul

In each newsletter, we will attempt to answer a question commonly asked by citizens living in our district. If you have a one you would like to submit, please send it to HydACS@state.gov with the subject line "ask the consul."

Q1: Can I renew my passport if it is still valid?

A1: Yes. Your passport does not have to be expired for you to renew it. If you want to renew both a valid passport book and passport card, you must submit both documents. For example, if you can submit a passport book, but you lost your passport card, you cannot renew the passport card. If you want to renew either a valid book or a card, you must submit the specific document you want to renew.

We recommend renewing your passport well ahead of any planned international travel, even if it still has a few months validity left on it. Some countries require that your passport be valid at least six months beyond the dates of your trip. Learn more about your [destination's entry requirements](#).

Please note: Some countries require that your passport be valid at least six months beyond the dates of your trip. Some airlines will not allow you to board if this requirement is not met.

Check our [Country Information](#) to learn about entry and exit requirements for the country or countries in which you are traveling.

Visa News: Expansion of Interview Waiver Program



Effective immediately, the Department of State has authorized consular officers to waive the in-person interview requirement for certain categories of visa applicants through 31 December 2022. This new authorization applies to travelers applying for F, H-1, H-3, H-4, non-blanket L, M, O, P, Q, and academic J visas who were previously issued any type of visa, if they are applying for a visa in their country of nationality or residence. This authorization does not apply to applicants who have a previous refusal that was not subsequently waived or overcome. Adjudicating consular officers also reserve the right to require an in-person interview if additional information is required from applicants.

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U.S. Government Introduces the Next Generation Passport

What is the Next Generation Passport?

The new passport is a modernized U.S. passport book which we started issuing in 2021. While our previous electronic passports (ePassports) are secure, the Next Generation Passport book (NGP) uses new technologies to produce a more robust passport with enhanced security features, such as a polycarbonate data page, laser-engraved personalization, and updated artwork.

We are only issuing the NGP for passport books. We will soon upgrade and modernize our other document, the passport card.

What is the difference between the Next Generation Passport and the ePassport book?

The most noticeable changes to the new passport book are the polycarbonate data page and the location of the endorsement

updated with detailed linework and ink colors that showcase imagery of U.S. architecture, history, culture, landscapes, and traditions.

Do changes to the U.S. passport require current travelers to change or upgrade their book or card?

No. Passport books and cards remain valid for international travel until their date of expiration. You may continue to travel with your current ePassport book or card without a problem.

How can I request a Next Generation Passport?

You cannot request a specific version of the passport book, and we cannot guarantee that you will receive a Next Generation Passport. We are gradually replacing existing ePassport printers with NGP printers at our passport agencies and centers.

Since ePassports continue to meet and exceed international passport security standards, both ePassports and the NGP can be used for international travel.

Useful Websites



US Government

- Embassy website: <http://www.in.usembassy.gov>
- U.S. Citizen Services: <https://in.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/>
- U.S. State Department: <http://www.state.gov>
- Travel information: <http://www.travel.state.gov/>
- Ordering vital records: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2we.htm>
- Voting information: www.fvap.gov

Indian Government

- Foreigner Regional Registration Office (FRRO): <https://indianfrro.gov.in/eservices/home.jsp>
- Bureau of Immigration: <https://boi.gov.in/>
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: <https://main.mohfw.gov.in>



Meet the Next Generation Passport

Smarter. Safer. Better.

Improved security features to help protect your identity.



Enhanced security features make counterfeiting or altering more difficult.



More secure document streamlines the entry and exit process.



Laser engraved black and white photo image

Optically variable feature



New perforated alphanumeric passport book number throughout

Multi-layered plastic data page strengthens document durability and integrity



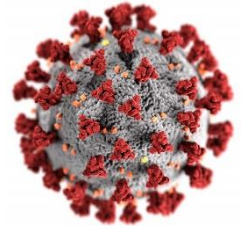
Upcoming Holidays

Please note that the Consulate will be closed on the following days:

2022

- 17 January: Martin Luther King Day (US)
- 26 January: Republic Day (India)
- 21 February: Washington's birthday (US)
- 18 March: Holi (India)
- 14 April: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's birthday (India)
- 15 April: Good Friday (India)
- 03 May: Eid-ul-Fitr (India)
- 30 May: Memorial Day (US)
- 20 June: Juneteenth (US)

COVID Update – Cont.



Since the situation across India is dynamic and rapidly changing, we encourage you refer to your individual State's websites for more information on mitigation measures, such as curfews, lockdowns, etc.

Telangana: - <https://covid19.telangana.gov.in/> provides an all-in-one information including Government orders and a Daily Bulletin with data on active COVID cases in the state, district wide figures and vaccination data. You can also see them posted with the Twitter handle of I&PR Department (@IPRTelangana)

Andhra Pradesh: - <http://covid19.ap.gov.in/aarogya-andhra/> a comprehensive site with all information for Andhra Pradesh State. You will find the day-today figures, arranged district wise under Daily Bulletin. Updates are also shared with the Twitter handle - Aarogya Andhra (@AarogyaAndhra).

Odisha: - <https://statedashboard.odisha.gov.in/> Like other two states, Odisha has their COVID data updated on this site, including government orders. Updates are shared via Twitter with the handles - @IPRodisha and @HFWOdisha.

Ask the Consul – Cont.

Q2: Can I renew my passport if it's already expired?

A2: Yes, but the passport must have been issued within the last 15 years.

In addition, you must have the passport in your possession, it cannot be damaged, you must have been age 16 or older when the passport was issued, and it must have been issued in your current name or you must show legal proof of your name change.

Q3: What do I do if my child is too young to sign his or her passport book?

A3: A parent or legal guardian may sign the passport if the child is too young to sign his or her own name. To do so, a parent or legal guardian must print the child's name and sign his or her own name in the space provided for the signature. The parent or legal guardian must also write his or her relationship to the child in parenthesis next to the signature (e.g., parent or legal guardian) so we know who signed for the child.

Interview Waiver – Cont.

Applicants renewing any visa within 48 months of expiration also continue to be eligible for interview waiver.

In the coming days, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India will release more than 20,000 additional interview waiver (dropbox) appointments for Spring 2022 to allow qualified applicants to make use of the new interview

waiver authority. Due to reduced staffing and numerous pandemic-related disruptions to our operations since March 2020, appointment demand is high across all visa categories and wait times may be lengthy for most routine nonimmigrant visa appointments at the U.S. Embassy New Delhi and the consulates in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai.

For more information, please refer to our website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/important-announcement-on-waivers-of-the-interview-requirement-for-certain-nonimmigrant-visas.html>

**COVID-19 Travel
December 30, 2021**

New Requirements for Air Travelers to the U.S.

Updated Pre-departure Testing Requirements for Air Travelers to the U.S.

Starting on December 6, air travelers aged two and older, regardless of nationality or vaccination status, are required to show documentation of a negative viral test result taken within one day of the flight's departure to the United States before boarding. You must show your negative result to the airline before you board your flight. That includes all travelers – U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (LPRs), and foreign nationals.

If you recently recovered from COVID-19, you may instead travel with documentation of recovery from COVID-19 (i.e., your positive COVID-19 viral test result on a sample taken no more than 90 days before the flight's departure from a foreign country, and a letter from a licensed healthcare provider or a public health official stating that you were cleared to travel).

Exemptions will be considered on an extremely limited basis. Please visit the CDC for more information about [exemptions](#) and the [requirement for proof of negative COVID-19 test or recovery from COVID-19](#), including types of accepted tests for all air passengers arriving in the United States.

Please see the [CDC website](#) for further information on the Omicron Variant.

CDC Order

The CDC recommends that you do not travel internationally until you are fully vaccinated. International travel poses additional risks, and even fully vaccinated travelers might be at increased risk for getting and possibly spreading some COVID-19 variants. Delay travel and stay home to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. If you do travel, follow all CDC recommendations before, during, and after travel.

U.S. citizens who choose to travel internationally should be aware that they may face unexpected challenges related to COVID-19 as they attempt return to the United States or attempt to travel from one overseas destination to another. If you choose to travel internationally, be sure to make contingency plans, as you may find yourself having to remain in a foreign country longer than originally planned.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) Order, which took effect November 8, 2021, requiring all non-immigrant, non-citizen air travelers to the United States to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of vaccination status prior to boarding an airplane to the United States remains in effect. Travelers should monitor the [CDC website on international travel](#) for the latest guidance regarding testing requirements.

Exceptions to the CDC Order requiring all air passengers to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of vaccination status prior to boarding an airplane to the United States are extremely limited to the following groups:

- children under 18
- people medically unable to receive the vaccine
- emergency travelers who do not have timely access to a vaccine

Humanitarian exemptions to the CDC order are granted on an extremely limited basis.

For additional information, please [visit our FAQs](#) for answers to questions about the requirement for proof of negative COVID-19 test or recovery from COVID-19 for all air passengers arriving in the United States.