

NEW U.S. RULES FOR TRAVELING



There are new rules on traveling in the U.S. Starting January 23, all air travelers entering or re-entering the U.S. will have to have passports. This includes travelers from Mexico, Canada and Bermuda who nowadays can pass through the U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspection stations using only driver's licenses and birth certificates.

Travel agencies and tourism experts are worried that this change can hurt the international travel since only some 27% of the U.S. citizens own a valid passport. Peter Tarlow, a sociologist specializing in tourism and security says: "There will be a little confusion and frustration, and maybe some delays." but he thinks that it will be only a short-term problem. Bigger issue is the so called e-passports. Those have a chip that contains personal data including biometric information. However, the e-passports pose a possible threat to security. There could be problems with identity theft and other kinds of misuse of the e-passports. Barry Steinhardt, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Technology and Liberty program, says that experts in the U.S. and Europe claimed that they have managed to hack the chip.

Mr. Tarlow claims that the negative impact on international travel will not last long. He even says that the new rules can encourage people to go to countries they have never been before. Now with a passport they will be able to go to many countries. Next year (2008) the sea and land travelers will also have to carry a passport. Kemper Morrow, manager of an automotive plant in Reynosa, says that it will result in a standstill at the border. He also said: "There will be hundreds, if not thousands, of people who show up along the border without the proper documents. It's just going to clog up the system." The sea travelers are not required to have a passport by law but many cruiser lines have already started requiring passports beginning Jan. 1 this year

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