



Smart Traveler Enrollment Program: A Must-Have for Safe Travel

Description

Traveling Overseas? Registering for STEP needs to be on your to-do list.

Traveling is one of life's greatest pleasures. If you are reading this, you likely agree. It is one of our happy places and truly feeds the soul. It is both an adventure and relaxation. But as with most things in life, it has inherent risks. It is important not to live in fear of the what-ifs, but it is silly not to do all you can to mitigate those risks. It is always best to be prepared and use whatever tool, especially the free ones at your disposal, such as the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

There are many ways to protect yourself when traveling, such as travel insurance, which we are huge advocates for all ages. It is the first thing we buy after booking our flights. We all carry home insurance that covers fire loss. How many houses burn down? Very few, but if you are that victim of losing your home to a fire, that insurance helps you rebuild your life, whereas, for most of us, it would be financially impossible without that insurance. When traveling, the same rules apply.

If you want to learn more about the importance of travel insurance, check our blog post – [Travel Insurance: Learn How to be a Savvy Consumer](#)

After buying travel insurance, we register for the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). This free service is provided by the U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, and your tax dollars are already paying for it.

It is surprising how few people know about this service, especially when traveling to less stable parts of the world. We make sure to ask everyone we know before they leave for an overseas trip if they have registered for the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**, and 95% of the time, the response is, "What is that?" So, let's chat about why you should register for your next international trip and how quick and easy the process is.



What is the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program(STEP)?

Protecting the lives and interests of U.S. citizens abroad is a core mission of U.S. Embassies and Consulates. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll in their trip or extended stay with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Therefore, they can provide important safety and security information and support during a crisis or emergency.

What are the benefits of enrolling in your overseas trip?

STEP could aid you in many ways before and during your trip.

1. You'll receive the latest safety and security information for your destination country so that you can make informed travel decisions.
2. Emergencies happen at home when you are traveling. STEP will help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency
3. Even in the safest cities, protests and civil unrest can occur. The service provides the latest

information on what areas to avoid in case of strikes, demonstrations, or lockdowns.

4. If you become ill or injured and require hospitalization, they already have all your information and know you are in the country. It will expedite the process of getting guidance on what to do next.
5. Natural disasters or terrorist attacks can occur at any time. The local U.S. embassies and consulates will take steps to verify and confirm the safety of the Americans they are there to represent and protect.
6. Should you run into legal issues or are a victim of a crime while abroad, they are there to assist you in navigating the process.

Check out our [Packing for Success Guide](#)



Why should I register for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)? Can't I figure this out on my own?

One of the benefits of traveling abroad with a United States Passport is the protection your country provides. The United States is a powerful entity in terms of diplomacy and military strength. Civil and political unrest has impacted many countries, making it risky for Americans who are there. If the U.S. Government knows where you are, through the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**, it can plan to offer assistance to you in circumstances where your safety is in danger.

What happens when I enroll?

When you enroll in [the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), you stay informed about the latest information about your destination country, which can take various forms.

- Alerts from the U.S. Embassy about safety and security
- Updates on any travel advisory can be health-related, government instability, impending severe weather, or even crime-related.
- If you live abroad, it provides information about U.S. Embassy events and services, town hall meetings, voting info, federal benefits, and legal obligations to the U.S.
- When enrolled in STEP, you stay connected. The U.S. Embassy contacts you and assists in an emergency overseas. If your family or friends in the U.S. are having difficulty getting you urgent news while you're traveling, the service can use the information in STEP to try to reach you.

Are you tired of Long TSA Airport security lines? Check out our article on [How to avoid them](#).



What can a consulate or Embassy do for me when I am overseas?

Consular officers at Embassies and Consulates can assist U.S. citizens who encounter serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties overseas. For example, if your passport is stolen while traveling, we

can help you obtain a replacement to continue your trip. We can also provide the names of English-speaking doctors or local attorneys, give loans to needy U.S. citizens, and provide information about dangerous conditions affecting your overseas travel or residence.

They also perform non-emergency services such as helping with routine passport applications, absentee voting, selective service registration, receiving federal benefits, and filing U.S. tax forms. Consular officers can notarize documents, issue passports, and register U.S. citizen children born abroad. Most embassies and consulates have websites with more information about their citizen services.

In a crisis, such as a natural disaster or severe political instability, the Department of State provides information and assistance to U.S. citizens in the affected area.

Did you know there is a 24-hour number to reach the U.S. Embassy in emergencies for U.S. citizens traveling abroad? Some U.S. Embassies within the country may be reachable 24 hours a day, but if not, the main number is available at all times.

From the U.S. or while using a U.S. cellphone

1-888-407-4747

From overseas

Dial 001 or +1, then 202-501-4444

Privacy Risks?

We all worry about what happens to the information we share with others. The information you provide to the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** is pretty basic but still personal. There are laws in place to protect the information you give. One concern I hear is that then they will know where I am. Here is the bottom line: If you use your passport, the system knows where you are. The closest Embassy may not know, though, and you are unaware of what is occurring in that country.

Let's share some real-life stories.

1. On our last trip to Iceland, an exceptionally peaceful and safe country, a work stoppage to protest conditions for workers in the service industry was scheduled. Except for management, all workers were absent from work for 48 hours. This occurred during two of the three days we were there. Some hotels were not as prepared as others. We verified with our hotel they had a contingency plan and what would occur. Restaurants were closed, and no housekeeping was available. It was a bare-bones staff, but they would stay open and do their best. It was not the case at all hotels or restaurants.

2. Before our travels to Spain, we received an email from the State Department warning us of a new crime directed at tourists. It was unique, and we could have easily been victims, not knowing what to avoid and how to prepare.

3. A couple from one of our hometowns was traveling overseas for an extended month. Shortly after departing, their son was in a severe accident. The Embassy assisted in getting the couple home very quickly and escorted them until they were on the plane. Once they arrived in the U.S., they were greeted and expedited through customs to immediately be transported to the hospital to be with their son in the last hours of his life.

4. During the terrorist attacks in Paris, many families desperately tried to reach their loved ones traveling or living in Paris. The families there struggled to get word to their loved ones that they were ok. The U.S. Embassy was able to facilitate the tracking of U.S. citizens and their status. It also guided Americans in Paris on what to do during the crisis.

There are even more great examples.

5. While visiting Barcelona, Joelle was there during the annual Catalonia freedom protests seeking independence from Spain. She was there in the heart of it. Though usually peaceful, we were warned there was a potential for violence. Many streets and highways would be blocked and impassable. Details were provided on what areas to avoid. On the morning of her flight, road blockages on the airport route were planned. Due to the advisory, Joelle left early for her flight before the protests began.

6. Some friends were in the Caribbean when a massive hurricane was approaching. There were frequent updates on evacuation plans, where to go for safety, and the services available. Once the storm passed, assistance on how to get off the devastated island was provided.

7. Once in Paris, we received an email warning us of demonstrations likely to get violent. It provided the location, which was where we were planning to be that day. We avoided the area and stayed safe.

8. Transportation strikes are pretty common in Europe. It could make getting to an airport or other destination very problematic. An advanced warning can allow you to have contingency plans.

Traveling soon? Check out our [Country Travel Guides](#).



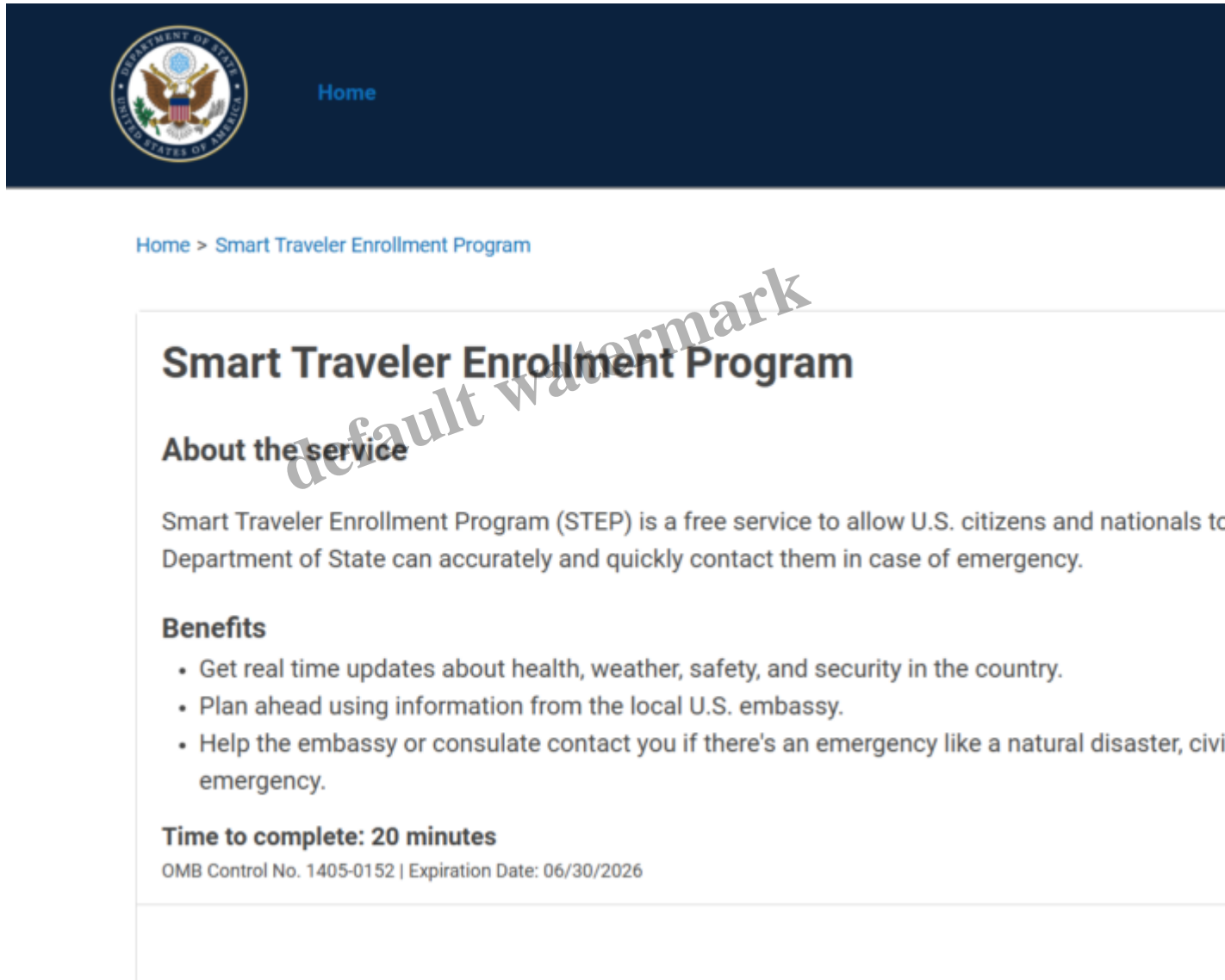
Registering for [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

Now that we have discussed why you should get this valuable service let's talk about what is involved in registering, which is not surprising. Recently streamlined, it is quick and easy. It can be done via a computer or a mobile app. We chose the computer as it is faster and easier to navigate. We find the process user-friendly and well-presented. You will first need to set up an account, and after that, the process will only take a few minutes.

*If you choose the mobile app, it can be found in your APP store under **Smart Traveler**.

A Walk Through the Registration Process

[Home Page](#)



This will be your opening page. Click START. If this is your first visit, they will start by offering to set up an account. It is a quick process, but have your passport ready to enter your passport number.

1. This is the screen you will use to create an account the first time, or if you have an account, you can sign in here. You will be sent a code to your phone to confirm that it is you.



Home

Home > [Create Account or Sign In](#)

Sign in or create an account

Sign into your Login.gov account to use the full benefits of the Smart Traveler Enrollment

Making an account allows you to:

- Share your travel plans so the Department of State can contact or locate you if there's
- Get real-time updates about health, weather, safety, and security in the country.
- Manage trip information and message preferences.

If you used a previous version of STEP.

- You will need to use Login.gov to access this version, rather than your previous STEP
- You will need to re-enroll any trips you have and re-subscribe to travel messages that account.

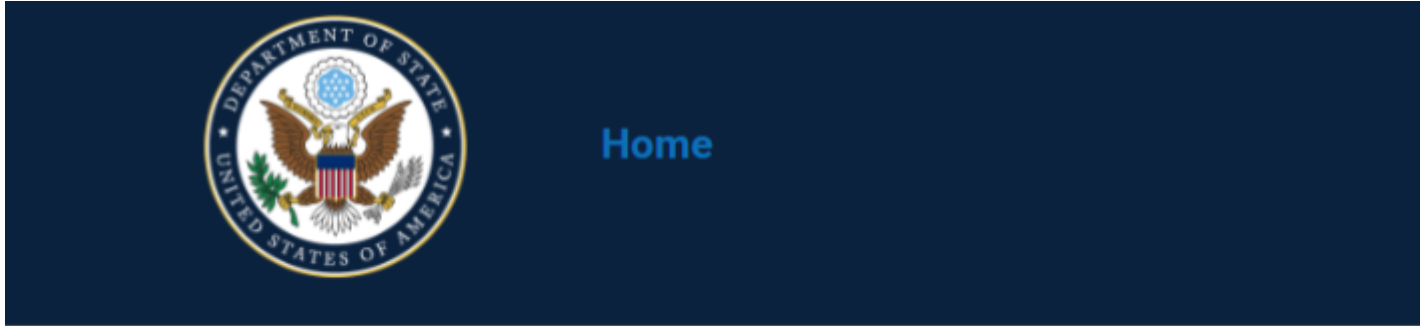
[Sign in or create account](#)

Continue as Guest

Only interested in real-time updates? Continue as a guest.

2. The next screen will give you two options: to subscribe to Travel Messages only or to Enroll Your Time Abroad and Subscribe to Travel Messages.

If you have set plans, you should enroll in your trip. The other option can be used if you have someone overseas and you wish to keep track of any events that could be occurring.



[Home](#) > [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#)

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Select a service

Subscribe to Travel Messages only

Subscribe to one or more countries and posts for the latest travel information.

Enroll Your Trip Abroad and Subscribe to Travel Messages

3. You will get the disclosure screen you must read and check off before proceeding.

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Policy Review

Personal Information

Emergency Contact

Travel Plans

Step 1: Read and Acknowledge the Policy Review

The U.S. Department of State is committed to ensuring that any personal information received and consulates pursuant to the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) process, which is safeguarded against unauthorized disclosure. The data that you provide the U.S. Department of State is protected by the provisions of the Privacy Act (5 USC § 552a). This means that the U.S. Department of State will not disclose the information you provide us in your STEP application to any third parties unless you have given us written consent or the disclosure is otherwise permitted under the Privacy Act.

AUTHORITY: The information solicited in this form is requested pursuant to provisions in 4802(b) of the U.S. Code and 22 C.F.R. § 71.1 and 22 C.F.R. § 71.6 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

PURPOSE: To notify and assist U.S. nationals in the event of a disaster, emergency, or other crisis and for coordination.

ROUTINE USES: The information solicited in this form will become part of the Overseas Citizen Services Records and may be disclosed to another domestic government agency, a private contractor, a foreign government, or a private person in accordance with certain approved routine uses. These routine uses include, but are not limited to, activities, employment verification, fraud prevention, border security, counterterrorism, litigation, and to meet the Secretary of State's responsibility to protect U.S. citizens and non-citizen nationals. Information may be made available to private U.S. nationals, known as citizen liaison volunteers, designated to assist in communicating with the private U.S. community in an emergency. More information on these uses can be found in the System of Records Notice, State-05, Overseas Citizen Services Records.

DISCLOSURE: Providing the information requested on this form is purely voluntary. Failure to provide information on the form could make it more difficult for the Department to notify and assist the U.S. national in an emergency.

I have read the Policy Review

4. On The next two screens, you will add personal info, emergency contacts



[Home](#) > [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#)

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Signing up for Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) services is a simple process

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Travel Plans

Step 2: Provide personal details

Basic Details
The fields below are populated from your personal information.

A progress bar with three steps. The first step is a green arrow pointing right with a white checkmark inside. The second step is a blue arrow pointing right with the text "Personal Information" in white. The third step is a grey arrow pointing right with the text "Emergency Contact" in grey. Below the progress bar, the text "Travel Plans" is followed by "Step 2: Provide personal details" and "Basic Details". Under "Basic Details", it says "The fields below are populated from your personal information."



Home

Home > Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Signing up for Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) services is a simple process!

Travel Plans

Step 3: Provide emergency contact information

Providing an emergency contact is optional but can be extremely important if something happens while you are traveling. Your emergency contact should be someone who is not usually traveling with you.

First Name

5. This step is where you enter your travel plans. Click Add Travel Plans and then complete the next screen. Make sure to have the address of your accommodation ready.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Signing up for Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) services is a simple process! We



Travel Plans

Step 4: Enroll travel plans with Consular Affairs

To best assist you, we recommend adding each travel destination. That way, we can coordinate your location.

[Add Travel Plans](#)

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Home > Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

Signing up for Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) services is a simple process! We'll guide you each



Travel Plans

Step 4: Enroll travel plans with Consular Affairs

To best assist you, we recommend adding each travel destination. That way, we can connect you with consular location.

Duration of Stay

This information will help us know when you are abroad in the event of an emergency.

* Arrival Date

Complete this field with format Dec 31, 2024.

* Departure Date

Indefinite stay

Destination

This information will help us locate you in an emergency.

* Country / Location

Location Name (e.g., hotel, convention, facility, neighborhood, area)

Location Type

- Hotel / Rental
- Friend / Family
- Organization / Government

Address

Footer Tagline

6. Once complete, hit submit, and you will receive the security level (see levels below) of the country you are visiting. You will also receive an email within seconds confirming your trip enrollment.

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) uses a four-tiered Travel Advisory system to rate countries based on their security risk to U.S. travelers:

- **Level 1:** Exercise standard precautions
- **Level 2:** Exercise increased caution
- **Level 3:** Reconsider travel
- **Level 4:** Do not travel

Consular Affairs

STEP-New Travel Plan(s) (DO NOT REPLY)

You have created the following Smart Traveler Enrollment

Consular Affairs

STEP-New Travel Plan(s) (DO NOT REPLY)

You have created the following Smart Traveler Enrollment

7. You can access your personal information and travel plans at any time to make changes.



[Home](#) > [My Account](#)



My Account

<p>Personal Information</p> <p>Update your name and address.</p> <p>Manage Personal Information</p>	<p>Travel Plans</p> <p>Edit, duplicate, or delete your enrolled travel plans or view past plans.</p> <p>Manage Travel Plans</p>	<p>Travel History</p> <p>Edit or delete your travel history. You have 1 travel plan that has expired.</p> <p>Manage Travel History</p>
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That is it. You are done. Once you are in the system, it may take 5-10 minutes or less. If you are visiting several countries on one trip, it will take a bit longer.

Final Thoughts

U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crimes, accidents, or illness or whose families need to contact them in an emergency. When an emergency occurs, or if a natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your international travel, the closest U.S. embassy or consulate can be your source of information and support. By registering your travels with **STEP**, you are helping the Embassy locate you when you might need them the most.

Using the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) is like having insurance. **STEP** is voluntary and costs nothing. You hope you'll never have to use it, but it's good to know it will be there if an emergency occurs.

Ready to Register Your Trip? Click link below

[Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

TIP

Have the Embassy location and contact details for any country you are traveling in and your passport number on you at all times. We try not to carry our passports when sightseeing, but we always have a photocopy of the passport. That said, check the specific country regulations before you go, as some do require you to have a passport on you at all times.

We carry a card with all the above information, travel insurance, and medical information. In a crisis or severe injury or illness, you may not want to waste time googling the information or returning to the hotel to get it.

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Novigrad, Croatia

Planning a trip in the near future? Use our links below to start researching accommodations and flights

Check out our other **Tips and Resources** posts



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[How to Stay Healthy During Travel](#)

Staying healthy during travel is about preparedness. We will guide you on what you...

March 15, 2021



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