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January 11, 2012

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How to Avoid US Passport Processing Delays

A guide to preventing delays in renewing or obtaining a first time US passport. [Read more](#)>

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

How to Avoid US Passport Processing Delays

In our last edition we provided tips on how to avoid common visa rejections, today you will receive a few tips on renewing or obtaining your first time US passport without delays.

When you run into problems with your visa request from foreign consulates this is called a "rejection". In case of a rejection the consulate usually sends your documents back to our processing office and ask us to provide additional document or information. Unlike a visa request, when there is a problem with your passport request the US State Department passport office will hold onto your old passport and/or documents while you work on providing the document, information or correcting the problem. This is called to be placed "in-suspense".

When they place a passport in suspense, the Passport Agency provides an official letter explaining the nature of the problem. Depending on the nature of the issue as soon as the required document/info provided or the request has been satisfied and the the passport agency have been notified they will restart your process.

Here is list of things that may lead your passport request to be placed in suspense and eventually may prevent you from obtaining a US passport:

- **Providing Inaccurate /or Incomplete Information**
- **Child Support Arrears**
- **Court Orders**

Stay tuned for the details on each of these categories.

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS - FROM PREVIOUS WEEKLY UPDATES

How to Avoid Visa Rejections

Rejections can be discouraging especially when you cannot make an appeal for your case. Visa issuing authorities are sovereign countries and the visa decisions are entirely at their officers' discretion.

Following are the tips to consider in order to avoid the most common reasons for visa rejections:

- **Follow the requirements:** This looks like stating the obvious but almost in all in all cases rejections are borne from omitted documents deviation from the instructions and yes, even the little details matter. For example, while we all like to conserve paper, some consulates in the US require single side printing on all documents, no double-sided prints allowed. While this may work against "save the trees" principle if you would like to obtain a visa you will need to comply. In perspective of busy visa officers who have to review hundreds of applications double sided printing is a hindrance to review documents in a expeditious fashion. A fast turnaround is high in demand, disregarding the details that may seem superfluous may be a big annoyance for the visa officers and would prompt a fast rejection.
- **Provide complete, accurate and matching information:** While it is unnecessary to volunteer more than the requested information, never provide false information or withhold details inquired by the consulates. If you have to answer a Criminal Records question, and you are unsure of the level of disclosure, consult with your legal service providers.

Some consulates work strictly within their own jurisdiction and they require supporting documents from you to prove your state of residence. You would provide your current address on the visa application therefore, your supporting documents must confirm this information i.e. your Driver's License. In a likely case if you have moved and your official documents are outdated make sure to provide official amendments, or other acceptable documents as advised.

- **Review your official documents:** In a follow-up to providing accurate information this rule goes for supporting documents; if you are a married female or have your name changed by the courts it is likely that your birth certificates or diplomas will be under different names. In these cases, you should either obtain new documents or submit official amendments i.e. court order, marriage certificates as required by the consulates.

Also, always review your passport before each submission and make sure it has enough available visa pages. Please request additional pages or renew your passport if the only pages left are your endorsement & amendments pages. Even if in the past a certain consulate has issued visas on one of your endorsements & amendments pages these do not count as a visa page. Also make sure that your passport is validated by your signature! This is a good tie-up to the next point which is to make sure all your signatures i.e. on your passport, visa application, supporting letters do match! If you realize that you have signed your passport differently than your daily documents please make sure to match the signature on your visa application and all other documents to be included in your visa application package to match the signature on your passport. The next time you renew your passport

you can update your signature to the signature you use daily.

It is not possible to cover all the possible reasons in our update however, aforementioned points are easily and generally missed, although some may be reversed and fixed it cost you the time and effort. We will continue to prepare articles with additional tips to make your visa and passport processes as seamless as possible.

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FEATURED ARTICLES

Establishing an Account with CIBT

Are you a corporate travel manager or other decision maker tasked with evaluating visa and passport services providers? To request a confidential quote or proposal for services, please email CIBT's sales team at: steven.diehl@cibt.com or call us at: 917-304-2407. CIBT can help you navigate through the challenges associated with travel document procurement by delivering proven solutions, value and a customized service approach.

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Export to Excel in the Manager Log-In

Once you access the manager log-in, the travel manager or primary account user for the CIBT account can now not only view the summary of their travelers' orders, but also export the "Summary of Orders" to Microsoft Excel! The 'Export to Excel' link can be found in the upper right hand corner of your 'Summary of Orders' view. For questions or further details, please contact CIBT Account Management at acctmgmt@cibt.com.

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Verifying Your Visa

Following any type of passport & visa process you will feel great when you finally reunite with your passport along with the necessary visas/travel documents. Here at CIBT our visa specialists are trained to conduct the necessary quality control on all your newly issued visas, passports and other travel documents. Even if unlikely, once your documents are delivered to you best practice is to review your visa or newly issued passport right away to see if anything is amiss.

You should always double check your personal information; verify the type and validity of the issued visa. Sometimes, you may receive a validity shorter or longer than requested this is normally due to the consular regulations and/or case-specific discretion. CIBT cannot dictate the consular decision on these matters. However, if this is the case your visa specialist will notify you of the discrepancies

between your request and what was actually approved by the consulate.

While verifying your personal information in your newly issued passport, which will be written in your native language, is a straightforward task, this isn't always the case for visas. Some countries may use unfamiliar date formats or your personal information may have been written in a different alphabet. CIBT has a great resource for these instances! You can see a picture of a sample visa and a key to understand the different sections of the visa on our website. Please visit our [Sample Visas](#) page which includes samples for popular business & tourism travel destinations when verifying the information on your visa.

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Visa Terminology / Part 1 – Types of Visas

Visa terminology can be mind boggling even for the visa and travel professionals working with visas on a daily basis. Naturally, even frequent international travelers may have questions over the terms used on for the visas.

In order to provide a go to resource to all of our Weekly Update readers we will explain terms such as Type, Entry, and Validity in a series of articles.

Please be advised not all of the types mentioned in the list below may be offered by every consulate. Some consulates may only issue few main types of visas, while some have restrictions on certain types of visas; for example Saudi Arabia does not issue Tourist visas, some others may subject entry restrictions on certain regions/cities within their country such as Urumqi in China.

Type of Visas: Depending on the purpose of your visit you would apply for a certain visa the "Type" is the indicator of that purpose. Please be advised the terms and definition of certain work/employment and residence visas may differ for each country for final determination please consult with the consulate.

You would apply for a:

- **Business Visa:** To conduct business meetings, negotiations, or give presentations.
- **Tourist Visa:** To participate in touristic, sightseeing and leisure activities, or to travel as a part of an organized tour or a cruise.
- **Transit Visa:** To be able take a connecting flight en-route to a third country. Traveler must stay in the designated transit facility if one exists at the airport. Leaving the transit facility or the aircraft may not be permitted.
- **Visa Transfer:** To transfer your valid visa from an old passport to your current passport.
- **Entry Visa:** To visit a country of your former citizenship. (Not to be confused with Transit

Visa.)

- **Employment/Work Visa:** To take up employment in various lengths determined by the visa.
- **Work Permit:** To take up employment with a specific sponsor company within predetermined time-frame.
- **Flight Crew Visa:** To operate or assist in operations of an aircraft.
- **Conference Visa:** To participate in a conference either as a presenter or attendee.
- **Family Visa:** To accompany family members who may be relocating for work. Or, to visit family members who are residing and/or working in the country.
- **Student Visa:** To study in an academic institution.
- **Journalist Visa:** To conduct news research or to film, photograph and report as a journalist, photographer or television professional.
- **Short Stay Visa:** To participate in touristic activities for a period up to 90 to 180 days; a visa type/term used mostly by Schengen countries.
- **Long Stay Visa:** To travel as a tourist within the country between 3 to 12 months; a visa term used by Australia and select countries.
- **Official/Diplomat:** To conduct official, government, or diplomatic business; these will be granted to only authorized people who can obtain and submit a diplomatic or official passport.

Please remember visas are issued by consulates of sovereign states, the final decision on the type, validity, number of entries of the visa being issued is at the discretion of the consulate. Always make sure to apply for the proper visa for the purpose of your visit as the entry is granted at the immigration officer's discretion at the port of arrival.

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Visa Terminology / Part 2 – Entry, Validity & Duration

This week we are reviewing the following terms: Entry, Validity and Duration:

Entry: Visas can be issued for single, double or multiple entries. Some consulates allow you to state your preference but they may still issue the number of entries they deem necessary at their own discretion regardless of your preference. The number of entries reflects the number times you can re-enter the country using the same visa within the period of the validity of the visa; any unused entries will expire at the end of the validity of your visa.

Validity: Validity of a visa reflects the period of time a visa is good for travel. Validity is not to be confused with allowed time of stay while in the country which is dictated by the allowed Duration of Stay. Just like number of entries you may state your preference over the validity of the visa you are

applying for, but it is ultimately provided at the discretion of the consulate.

Some visas may come with date-specific validity, meaning the validity will start from a certain date in the future and end at a specific date. In determination of these dates, the consulate may use the dates provided on your travel itinerary or the dates of travel provided on your visa application. This is why it is very important for you to provide complete and accurate information on your visa applications.

Other visas may come with validities that start from the date of issue and be valid for a certain block of time such as, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 5 years etc. Some consulates only issue visas with short validities that are valid from the date of issue, in these cases be careful not to apply for your visa too early as your visa may expire before or during your travels.

Duration: Duration reflects the length of stay that is allowed during a visit to a country. For example you can have a visa that is valid for 10 years for Multiple Entries, it does not mean that you can enter the country and stay there for 10 years, unless the Duration of Stay also states 10 years.

Most common durations are in increments of 30 days. If the Duration of Stay allowed on the visa is only 30 days this means you must exit the country before this period ends, otherwise you may be questioned or even held by the immigration officers while you are attempting to exit.

If you must stay over your visa due to an emergency you may need to contact local immigration authorities to request an extension on your visa.

Exceptions & Notes: Please be advised that Validity, Entry and Duration of Stay may differ among different visa types, and may not be applicable Residence or Work permits.

Visas are issued by consulates of sovereign states, the final decision on the Type, Validity, Entry and Duration of the visa being issued is at the discretion of the consulates.

Some consulates may consider your preferences and some may provide visa specifics at their own discretion; please be advised not to finalize your ticket purchases prior to visa issuance. If your visa application requires a travel itinerary, try to make ticket reservations that can be cancelled or changed at a later date.

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TIP OF THE WEEK

The World of Business Casual

As seasoned international travelers may be aware, business casual attire vary greatly between

countries, cultures, and industries. For business travelers who are about to visit an unfamiliar country for the first time we may be able to offer some assistance in avoiding the stress of figuring out the business casual dress code in their destination. If you would like some insight to business casual formalities in Japan, Australia, or India before you pack remember to review this neat article from BBC [Business Casual Attire Around the World](#) by Chris McGinnis.

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CONSULATE AND EMBASSY UPDATES

US Passport Agencies - US Department of State passport processing centers have severely limited "same-day" processing of passports. Please check with CIBT's Customer Service department before submitting an expedited passport request.

City-Specific Updates

The following may not be a complete list of closures and visa requirement updates as they are subject to change without advance notice.

Atlanta

- **China:** The Consulate of China in Atlanta requires that all visa applications to be printed on single side of the paper; double-sided prints are not acceptable.

Chicago

- **Lebanon:** All applicants are now required to appear in person at the consulate.

Connecticut

- **No updates this week**

Houston

- **Angola:** Visa application photos must clearly show facial features including ears; no glasses to be worn.

Los Angeles

- **Turkey:** New visa fees: Single Entry visa is now \$60 and the Multiple Entry visa is now \$200

Miami

- **Brazil:** The current visa processing time at the Consulate of Brazil in Miami is 25 days.

New York

- **Algeria:** Algeria Consulate in New York will be serving for all of the US states with exception of Delaware, Washington DC, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. The Consulate requires personal appearance or direct mailing of the application material by the applicant. If you have any questions or concerns about your specific account please contact your CIBT account manager for further information.

San Francisco

- **No updates this week**

Washington D.C.

- **Iraq:** All visa requests requires government approval from Iraq. The current processing time is up to 60 business days.
- **United Kingdom:** The Consulate of UK in Washington DC will only accept application forms printed on letter size 8 1/2" X 11" applications printed on other letter measurements including legal size paper will not be accepted.

CIBT Canada

- **China:** The Consulate of China in Toronto & Ottawa will only accept applications that are typed and printed on single side of the paper. All questions on the application must be answered without exceptions, if any of the questions are inapplicable you must enter "N/A" (not applicable.) Applications completed in handwriting or with blank answers will be rejected. If you type in an incorrect response please do not attempt to correct it with white-out post print. White-out alone or hand written responses on white-outed spaces are not accepted by the consulate. CIBT is not allowed to correct applications on behalf of the applicants.

The consulate of China in Toronto & Ottawa is now requesting that 1.11 (Local ID Card Number) on the Chinese Visa Application to be filled out with one of the following: Drivers License, Social Insurance #, or Citizenship ID # and number marked with the following: DL#, SIN#, CID#

Tourist Visa- For all China Tourist Visa requests in Ottawa and Toronto, you must provide

either a copy of your flight itinerary, hotel confirmation or a cruise itinerary.

Business Visa- If you are applying for a business visa with a new passport and have been to China in the past, you must provide a copy of a previous business visa from your old passport.

New Chinese Visa Application Service Centers (CVASC)

The Chinese Consulates in Canada has decided to introduce The Chinese Visa Application Service Center (CVASC). CVASCs are responsible for receiving visa applications of ordinary passport holders for visiting mainland China, collecting visa fees on behalf of the Chinese Consulate General and returning passports back to visa applicants. CVASC Vancouver & CVASC Toronto will begin operation as of Monday, December 19, 2011. Future openings of CVASCs in Ottawa and Calgary are in process.

** CVASC service fees are applicable in addition to CIBT service fees and China Visa Fees.

You may find information on the new processing times, visa fees, requirements, procedures and retrieve updated application forms mentioned in this announcement by visiting [CIBT Canada](#) website for Canadian updates and [CIBT](#) website for the US updates.

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CONTACTING CIBT

The CIBT website and Customer Service Specialists are available to help you with your travel document needs. CIBT's National Customer Service Center hours are **Monday through Friday 7:30AM to 7:00PM CST** (with the exception of holidays).

Contact CIBT by email at customerservice@cibt.com. We aim to respond to your email within 24 hours except during holidays. West Coast clients: Routine emails received after 4:00PM Pacific time will not be responded to until the next business morning. Please type URGENT in the subject field if you require a response before the next business morning.

YOUR CIBT ACCOUNT

To ensure that you receive visa and passport instructions and pricing tailored to your particular account, please be sure to reference your company's four or five digit CIBT account number when you seek information through the [CIBT](#) website or customer service center. Referencing your account number also helps ensure accurate reporting of travel document processing data for your company or agency. Here are some tips for ensuring that your travelers reference your unique CIBT account

number every time they access information through CIBT:

- Advise all employees of your 4 or 5 digit account number. (Post it by the water cooler!)
- Post a link on your company's intranet that will take employees straight to your company's portal on the [CIBT](#) website.
- Include a reminder to check visa and passport requirements along with a link to your portal of the [CIBT](#) website on all international itineraries.
- Automatically send a post-booking email reminder including a phone number and link to the [CIBT](#) website to all travelers who have made an international booking.

Knowing your CIBT account number and using it every time you submit an order to CIBT can help your company save \$\$\$!

SHIPPING TO CIBT

When you call CIBT for travel document forms and instructions, the CIBT Customer Service Specialist will offer an overnight shipping label to use when sending documents to us. As a convenience to you, the inbound shipping label can be purchased at the time of your call and can help ensure that your order arrives at the correct processing office on time!

*****CIBT offices are not open on weekends and cannot accept weekend deliveries unless special arrangement has been made with the processing office.*****

VISA APPLICATIONS

Visa applications and requirements change frequently. To avoid processing delays, please download the most current paperwork from our website when you are ready to apply for your visa. It is not advisable to store paperwork for future use.

Please also be advised that different documents may be required by the same country's consulates operating in different cities. For example: Chinese Consulate in New York may have different requirements for a business visa than the Chinese Consulate in Houston.

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

If you would like to review current travel advisories for US, please visit the [US Department of State](#) website or contact them at (202) 647-5225 and for Canada please visit [Canada Foreign Affairs and International Travel](#) website.

INTERNATIONAL PHONE RENTAL – US Only

Many US cell phones do not work overseas. Please contact [Global Phoneworks](#) for reduced rate mobile phone rentals.

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This update is designed to keep our clients more informed about consulate and embassy changes. Please circulate it among your staff. If you have any comments or would like to add or delete a name to the distribution list, contact us at: acctmgmt@cibt.com.

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