

FIFA World Cup 2026 is expected to bring a huge wave of international travel into North America, with matches hosted across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. From a U.S. immigration standpoint, the key issue is simple but time sensitive. Many visitors will need a U.S. visitor visa, and visa appointment availability is not something to leave for the last minute.

The U.S. government has already published travel guidance specifically for World Cup fans.

This guide focuses on U.S. entry requirements and the most common visa pathways used to attend World Cup matches in the United States, along with practical timing issues and documentation points that tend to decide cases.

The first question: what travel document is required?

For travel to the United States for the World Cup, most foreign nationals fall into one of these groups:

- 1. Canadian and Bermudan passport holders**
- 2. Citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries traveling with ESTA**
- 3. Everyone else, generally requiring a B1/B2 visitor visa**

Regardless of category, admission to the United States is always determined at the port of entry by [U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#). A visa or ESTA is permission to seek entry, not a guarantee of admission.

Passport validity rules (this trips people up)

The general rule published by the U.S. government is:

- A passport should be **valid for at least six months beyond the intended period of stay** in the United States, **unless** the traveler is a citizen of a country exempt from the six month rule.

That exemption is country specific and handled through CBP guidance. The safest operational approach is still to renew early if the passport expiration date is anywhere near the travel window. Airlines also enforce [passport validity rules](#) aggressively because they can be fined for boarding passengers who are not properly documented.

Canadian and Bermudan travelers

According to U.S. government guidance for World Cup travel:

- **Canadian and Bermudan passport holders do not require additional authorization to seek entry as tourists.**

That does not mean no rules apply. CBP can still ask for a travel purpose explanation, length of stay, ties abroad, and proof of funds. If

the trip includes activities that look like work, long stays, or repeated entries, additional questions and refusals become more likely.

Visa Waiver Program (ESTA) travelers

If a traveler is a citizen of one of the **42 Visa Waiver Program countries**, the usual option is:

- Apply for **ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization)**

Key ESTA points that matter for World Cup travel

- ESTA is for short visits as a visitor, typically up to **90 days** per entry.
- ESTA must be approved before boarding a U.S. bound flight or vessel.
- ESTA can be denied even if there has never been a prior U.S. visa refusal, and a denial usually means the next step is a **B1/B2 visa application**.
- ESTA travel is not extendable in the same way as B1/B2 and has tighter constraints. Overstays and prior immigration issues can make ESTA inappropriate or risky.

ESTA processing can be fast, but relying on “fast” is the problem. If an ESTA is denied close to the tournament, there may not be enough

time left to obtain a visitor visa appointment and complete administrative processing if it arises.

Most other fans: B1/B2 visitor visa

U.S. government guidance states:

- Fans from all other countries are required to have a **valid U.S. visitor visa (B1/B2)** to travel to the United States for FIFA World Cup 2026.

For World Cup attendance, the B1/B2 is usually used as a [B2 \(tourism\)](#) classification, even though the combined B1/B2 sticker is common.

What the B1/B2 visa is (and is not)

A B1/B2 visa is designed for temporary travel such as tourism, visiting family, attending events, limited business activities, and similar short term purposes.

It is not a work authorization. It is not for employment in the United States. It is not for long term residence. And it is not a solution for someone who plans to “see what happens” and stay.

Consular officers evaluate whether the applicant:

- Has a legitimate temporary purpose
- Has the financial ability to fund the trip
- Has strong ties abroad and intends to depart after the visit
- Has an immigration history that supports credibility

The World Cup itself does not change these legal standards. It only changes the volume of applicants and, sometimes, the availability of interview slots.

FIFA PASS: priority visa interview scheduling (what it is and what it is not)

The U.S. government has also referenced a special scheduling pathway:

- The **FIFA Priority Appointment Scheduling System (PASS)** is intended to give certain ticket holders a chance to interview for a B1/B2 visitor visa before the tournament begins.

Important practical points:

- PASS is tied to purchasing tickets directly from FIFA and opting into the program.
- PASS affects interview scheduling priority, not visa eligibility.
- A priority appointment does not override admissibility concerns, prior overstays, prior refusals, criminal issues, or weak ties.

In other words, PASS can help with the calendar. It does not change the legal analysis of the case.

After the visa is issued: entry rules still matter

Even with a valid B1/B2 visa or ESTA approval, [CBP can deny admission if the traveler appears to be intending to work](#), intending to remain, or cannot clearly explain plans.

For World Cup travel, practical border readiness includes:

- A clear itinerary (cities and approximate dates)
 - Proof of return or onward travel
 - Lodging details, even if some bookings are flexible
 - Evidence of funds and ability to cover expenses
 - A credible explanation for time off work or school
- None of this needs to be dramatic. It needs to be consistent.