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IMMIGRATION
PROJECT**

Lawyers for the Movement

DON'T GET CAUGHT OFFSIDES:

What to Know About Travel to the United States During the World Cup



Between June 11th and July 19th, the United States will co-host the biggest sporting event in the world, the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup. An [estimated](#) 1.2 million people will travel internationally to the U.S. for the event and hundreds of thousands are expected to travel domestically.

There are 11 host cities in the U.S. (Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; East Rutherford, New Jersey, Philadelphia, PA; San Francisco Bay Area, CA; and Seattle, WA) where 78 of the 104 matches of the World Cup will be played.

Due to increased hostility towards non-U.S.-citizens (who we will refer to as “noncitizens”) and extreme immigration enforcement under the Trump administration, fans who are not citizens of the U.S. or who are coming from abroad for the games now also need to prepare for what to expect during travel to and within the U.S. The risks for noncitizens vary depending on your immigration status, country of origin, mode of transportation, and location.

Todd Lyons, the Director for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has publicly stated as recently as February of this year that ICE will play a “key part” in security for the 2026 World Cup. As of the publication of this resource, there have been no other public statements by the U.S. government regarding ICE's role in security at the World Cup games.

For International Travelers¹



For people traveling from other countries to the U.S., expect an increase in security at airports in the U.S. An increase in security generally also leads to longer wait times as people pass through the security checkpoints enforced by the Transportation and Security Administration (TSA).

The U.S. Constitution prohibits U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents from performing stops, searches, detentions, or removals based solely on religion, race, national origin, gender, ethnicity, or political beliefs. However, in practice, such profiling is very hard to prove, and CBP does not face much accountability for its actions. If you are questioned by federal officials (TSA, ICE, or CBP) upon entry into the U.S., remember:

- You may be required to provide your fingerprints upon entry into the U.S. from other countries.
- You do not have to sign any documents that you do not fully understand.

¹ “Know Your Rights: U.S. Airports and Ports of Entry,” ACLU Northern California, March 23, 2026, <https://www.aclunorcal.org/know-your-rights/know-your-rights-us-airports-and-ports-entry/>

- Although you have a right to remain silent, refusing to answer questions asked by airport or border officials could cause delay and might also lead to officers denying your entry into the country.
- If you are a **green card holder** returning to the U.S. for the games, you only have to answer questions that have to do with proving your identity and permanent resident status (in addition to customs-related questions). If you refuse to answer other questions, it will likely cause delay, but officials may not deny you entry into the U.S. just because you refused to answer questions. Lawful permanent resident (green card) status may be revoked only by an immigration judge.
 - Note that if you are a green card holder and you have been absent from the U.S. for six months or more, you may be subject to additional questions from CBP when you return to determine whether you have “abandoned” your permanent residence or did not intend to live in the U.S. permanently when you received it.
 - If you have been absent from the U.S. for more than a year, your risk of being found to have “abandoned” your status greatly increases.

DO NOT GIVE UP YOUR GREEN CARD VOLUNTARILY!

- Customs officers have asked travelers to provide their laptop passwords or unlock their mobile phones when they are entering or leaving the United States.
 - For green card holders, if you are concerned about having your devices searched, you should consult with an immigration lawyer about your circumstances before traveling.
 - Noncitizens or visa holders run the risk of being denied entry if they refuse to provide a password, and should consider that risk before deciding how to proceed.
 - **If officials search or confiscate your electronic devices, write down the name, agency, badge number, and contact number for the agency and [ask for a receipt](#).**
- Strip searches are possible, but not common practice, as the officer must have “reasonable suspicion” that you are involved in criminal activity before conducting one. The officers must do the search in a private area.
- If you are wearing a religious head covering, you can assert your right to wear it if asked to remove it before going through airport security screening. If an alarm goes off, however, airport security officers may require you to undergo a pat-down of your head covering and a chemical residue test (a TSA officer will rub your hands with a small cloth and put the cloth in a machine). You have a right to have an officer who is the same gender conduct the pat-down in a private area.

Travel Ban Countries



A World Cup ticket is not a visa nor does it guarantee that a visa will be approved. The U.S. has issued a number of immigration and travel [bans](#) for 39 countries, including some participating in the World Cup (Haiti, Iran, Senegal, Ivory Coast), meaning fans from these countries will face partial or complete restrictions on travel to the U.S. to watch their teams play.

The Trump administration has issued [visa restrictions](#) for several participating countries, including Algeria, Cape Verde, and Tunisia. Fans from these countries will be required to post a bond between \$5,000 - \$15,000 in order to enter the U.S.

If your country of citizenship is on the “travel ban” list, please note:

- The ban does not impact your immigration status if you are currently in the U.S.
- If you are currently in the U.S., there may be some risk in leaving the U.S. on a valid visa to attend games in Canada or Mexico. We recommend consulting an attorney before traveling.
- While the ban technically exempts those holding a valid, unexpired visa, you should at a minimum expect additional scrutiny at the border, and possible denial of entry to the U.S.

For Domestic Travelers



For immigrants in the U.S. who are undocumented, hold a temporary status, or are noncitizens - especially those with contact with the criminal legal system - there may be some risk to traveling domestically.

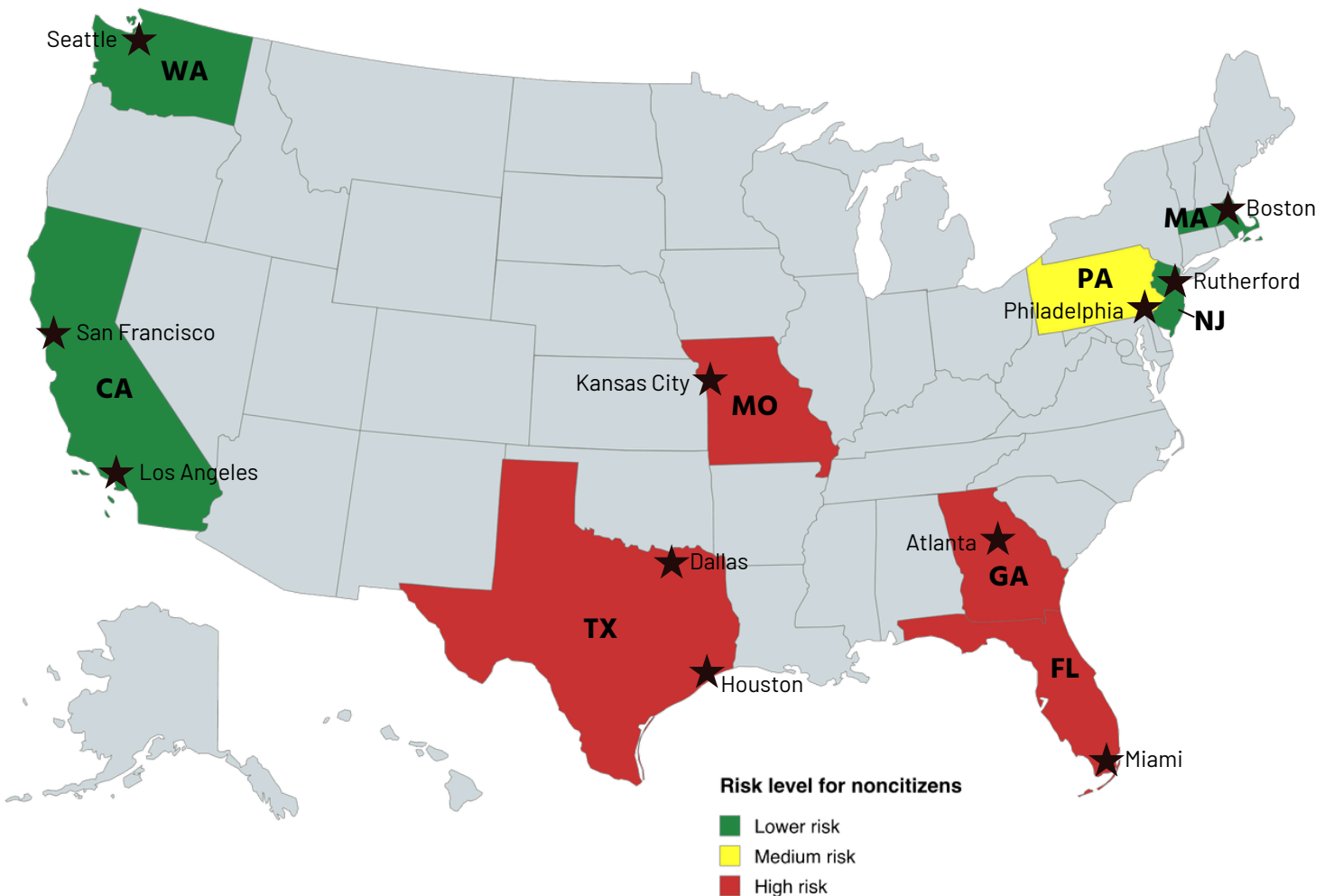
If traveling via air, it's important to know that the TSA is part of DHS, which includes ICE. Air passenger information is often shared among these agencies. There are still some airports in the U.S. where ICE is present at security and elsewhere around the airport.

Traveling by car could pose its own risks. CBP has highway checkpoints along the southern border, and sometimes conducts roving patrols, usually within 100 miles of a border (which includes the coastline). Additionally, through a federal program called 287g, some local and state law enforcement are able to question people about their immigration status during routine police activity. Driving through states where local or state law enforcement actively collaborate with ICE could make a traffic stop more serious and could lead to detention. Some host cities are in states where this collaboration happens; others are in states that have more welcoming policies. Here is a [complete list](#) of where 287g agreements exist.

The map below shows which host states have active local law enforcement collaboration with ICE that increase the level of risk for noncitizens driving through these states, as well as states with protective policies. Some states, like Texas, have gone as far as to pass laws *requiring* local police and sheriffs to collaborate with ICE, while others, like Florida, Georgia, and Missouri encourage collaboration, which has led to an increase of 287g agreements in those states.

Meanwhile, California, New Jersey, and Washington all have laws that prohibit local law enforcement from entering into 287g agreements or sharing information with ICE apart from in limited circumstances; Boston also has protective measures in place at the city level. Based on these local and state policies, we have divided the host cities/states into three levels of risk:

- Green = lower risk; these states limit ICE/local law enforcement collaboration
- Yellow = medium risk; these states have some ICE/local law enforcement collaboration
- Red = high risk; these states have strong agreements between ICE/local law enforcement



Your Rights in Public Spaces



You have rights in public spaces, including on the street or driving in a car, regardless of your immigration status. In public spaces, ICE does not need a judicial warrant to arrest someone in public or to stop a car. But ICE does need reasonable suspicion that an individual is in violation of immigration law before they can legally stop someone and probable cause, a higher degree of evidence, before they can legally arrest someone. **If you have a visa or other form of lawful status, you must show proof of it upon request.** Showing a document is not the same as answering questions, and **everyone has a right to remain silent.** Remember:

- Ask if you are free to go (and calmly leave if you are).
- Never present a false document.
- Do not give them permission to search.
- Do not escalate interactions with law enforcement.

