

## TRAVEL DURING OPT

You can; however, there are some risks involved and precautions to take.

### TRAVEL WHILE WAITING FOR OPT APPROVAL

ISS recommends caution when traveling outside of the United States after you have graduated, while you are waiting for your OPT authorization. Your U.S. immigration status is determined by your I-94 card, and because the I-94 information is no longer available each time you depart from the United States, establishing your F-1 status while outside the country will be difficult if USCIS has questions about your application. If USCIS sends a request for additional information about an aspect of your application and it is not resolved in a timely fashion, your application will be denied.

We also recommend caution if you need to renew your visa while abroad. Since OPT is optional, the consular officer may not feel it's necessary for you to return to the U.S., especially if they feel you have any intention of immigrating.

If you do decide to travel outside the U.S. while waiting for your OPT to be approved, make sure to carry:

- Your passport
- A signed I-20
- A valid F-1 visa stamp
- An I-797C (receipt notice from USCIS)

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It can be very difficult to apply for an F-1 visa stamp while you are on OPT. If your visa stamp is expired, or will soon expire, keep this in mind. Please feel free to discuss your plans with the International Student Services Coordinator at ISS before you travel.

If you are traveling while on OPT, you are advised to carry the following:

- Your I-20, signed for travel (remember that each travel signature is valid for only six months during the period of OPT)
- A valid F-1 visa stamp
- A passport valid for at least six months into the future from the date of re-entry to the United States
- A valid OPT (EAD) card
- A job offer or confirmation letter. If you are traveling for business or on a vacation from the job, ensure that the letter clarifies this.

### Individuals with a CAP-GAP Extension

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) strongly recommends that you not travel during your cap-gap extension. USCIS may consider your application to change from F-1 to H-1B as abandoned and deny the change.