

Fact Sheet

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Carrying a passport when traveling in Europe



Do I need a passport when crossing European country borders?

Members of the U.S. forces community in Europe who are non-EU citizens need a valid passport when traveling to European countries not specified on their official DoD assignment orders.

Why must I carry my passport if there are no border crossings or passport checks between European Union countries? Aren't the borders open to everyone?

Just as one is required to carry a driver's license while driving although it may not be checked, the same applies for carrying a passport when crossing European country borders, even when there are no checkpoints. Federal police in some European countries have the right to pull vehicles over without suspicion of wrongdoing simply to check passports.

Some countries that are members of the European Union's Schengen zone allow EU citizens to cross their borders freely without a passport, however the agreement does not extend to U.S. or other non-EU citizens.

What will happen if I travel without a passport outside the European country where I am assigned?

If you are caught traveling without a passport in a European country where you are not assigned you may be charged with illegal border crossing, be searched and detained.

Are there other benefits to carrying my passport?

There is definite benefit to having a passport while traveling, especially if you find yourself in a situation that requires aid. Because a passport establishes nationality it may generate a quicker response from a consulate or embassy than another form of I.D.

Where can I find information about passport requirements when traveling to other European countries?

Contact your garrison or community passport office, or visit the following sites:

- The U.S. State Department passport page at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html has information on passports, as well as links to up-to-date information on other international travel requirements, restrictions and warnings.
- The European Union website's passport page at http://europa.eu/travel/doc/index_en.htm outlines passport and documentation requirements for EU and "non-EU" citizens traveling in Europe.
- Links to European embassies and travel advice by country:
http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/national-contact-points/embassies/index_en.htm
- Other information about travelers' rights in Europe:
http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/index_en.htm