

Friday, March 11. 2011

Travel visa applications

On the list of countries that I plan to visit next are two that require me to get a travel visa while in Germany: Cuba and the United States (which includes Puerto Rico). Regular tourists (those that enter and leave the country by plane) don't need a visa for the US. But if you go with a private boat, you need one. And you better take this seriously: First you have to fill out an online form here. It took me almost two hours, but that was only because I could state the following information out of my head: Countries traveled to in the last five years, last five visits to the US, educational history, job history, military service history, contact in the US, parent's details, and of course whether I planned to be a terrorist, money launderer, pimp, etc. So be prepared! And don't forget to save the document regularly or you'll end up entering the information more than once as the time runs out. You also have to upload a picture that complies to US passport regulations (50x50mm, white background, 50% covered by face, max 240kB). Fortunately the online form includes some algorithms to verify the picture. After filling out the form you get a processing number. Then you call the Embassy to make an appointment (tel: 0900 1-850055 in Germany. EUR 2.99 per minute from you mobile phone). A friendly and well-informed person checks your information quickly, then explains the rest of the process. You can choose a date, and you will be assigned a time by the computer. I choose next Thursday, the computer choose 07:30 in the morning (argh!). You will then get a confirmation email, which contains a link to a website where you can register to pay for the visa (105 EUR) and tells you what documents to bring to the interview: • your passport, obviously • color print of the picture you uploaded (50x50mm) • print of the invitation to the interview • print of confirmation of filling out the online form • proof of payment for the visa • copies of documents that state why you want to visit the US • copies of documents that proof that you have sufficient funds to pay for your visit • copies of documents that proof that you will leave the country after a limited amount of time • addressed and postpaid return envelope for the visa Interesting to read is also what not to bring: • any electronic devices, including radios, iPods, mobile phones, USB-Sticks etc • umbrellas • luggage • and obviously weapons and explosives Everything but the umbrellas will be taken away from you and not returned. Overall the process is well organized and documented, and the embassy staff seemed helpful. But it sure takes a lot of time and I was lucky to get an appointment before my return flight next week Friday. If the interview goes well I will receive the visa by mail after a week or so. I only wonder how I can proof that I'll leave the US "after a limited amount of time". Will the mortgage and loan for my house in Ulm be considered "a binding tie to Germany"? Maybe I should apply for a job. Or fix a wedding date In case you wondered what you have to do to get a visa for Cuba: Go to the embassy (no appointment needed), enter your passport details into a document, pay 22 EUR and after 10 minutes you walk out with the visa. I even took my phone and iPod with me

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 08:23

Oh. the complications of a complicated system.
Anonymous on Mar 12 2011, 00:43

did it,
"funny" thing is they take all 10 fingerprints
Anonymous on Mar 12 2011, 01:15

[I choose next Thursday, the computer choose 07:30 in the morning (argh!).]

Heheheh - I guess you aren't allowed to go back a step at that point!
Anonymous on Mar 15 2011, 16:15