The Smithsonian Institution J-1 Visitor Exchange Program

As an official sponsor of the Department of State J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, the Smithsonian hosts hundreds of international visitors each year for internships, fellowships and other academic and cultural exchanges. You can learn more about the J-1 Program here: https://j1visa.state.gov/

J-1 Category Information & What it means for you

You can find your J-1 Category in Box 4 of your DS-2019 Form

- **Research Scholar** – 5 Year Maximum program participation
- **Short term Scholar** – 6 Month Maximum program participation
- **Specialist** – 1 Year Maximum program participation
- **Intern** – 1 Year Maximum program participation

*Waiting periods may apply to individuals who have previously held J-1 status, or plan to obtain J-1 status in the future. Please contact OIR with questions*

Understanding Your J-1 Visa Status

There are 4 documents that prove J-1 status!

1. **Form DS-2019**
   Your DS-2019 is the form you receive in the mail from the Smithsonian. It is the document that authorizes you to engage ONLY in the activities described on the form.
   On your DS-2019, you can find:
   - **Your SEVIS ID** (found in box in top right-hand corner)
   - **Your Program Start and End Dates** (Box 3 on the left-hand side) *You should initiate program extensions 2 months before program end date
   - **Travel Validation Signature** (box in the lower right-hand corner) *You should obtain a Travel Signature before traveling outside U.S.

2. **Passport** (which must be valid for 6 months into the future!)

3. **J-1 Visa** (You will receive your J-1 Visa when you visit the U.S. embassy or consulate for interview. Canadian citizens are visa exempt.) Visa acts ONLY as an ENTRY TICKET to the U.S. and:
   - Must be valid at date of entry
   - Can expire while you are in the U.S.
   - Will need to be valid/renewed for RE-ENTRY during program

4. **Proof of I-94 / J-1 Entry Stamp**
   (I-94 records are electronic. You may access and print a copy of your I-94 proof of entry at: http://www.cbp.gov/I94.)
   You will receive the J-1 entry stamp at your port of entry.
**J-1 Program Specifics**

- Maintain valid immigration documents at all times and report changes (program extensions, transfers, etc.) **before program end date**
- Report change of address within 10 days to OIR
- Engage only in activities on your DS-2019 (no outside employment, unless pre-authorized for "incidental employment")
- Maintain valid health insurance
- 30 day J-1 grace period: authorized 30 days before DS-2019 start date and 30 days after DS-2019 end date

**How long can I stay in the US?**

J-1 and J-2 visitors may remain in the U.S. until the DS-2019 form’s program completion date (Box 3), plus a 30 day Grace Period.

**During the 30 day grace period, you may:**
- Travel in the U.S.
- Attend to personal affairs
- Not begin work or another fellowship/internship

**What is 212(e)?**

212(e) is known as the "Two Year Home Residency" requirement and exists because the J-1 visa program is an exchange program - visitors are meant to gain skills in the U.S. and then return home to share those skills in their country.

All J-1 visitors to the Smithsonian are subject because they are sponsored by a U.S. government institution (regardless of funding)

212(e) means...

You **can** return to the U.S. in any non-immigrant status (tourist, student, scholar, etc.) any time, but you **must** live for two years (24 months) in your home country (or receive a waiver) before you are eligible for some immigrant visa classifications including:
- H, L, K, and Legal Permanent Residency status

**J-1 Travel Info**

Check for:
- Passport validity (6 months into future)
- Visa entries (single or multiple) and expiration date
- DS-2019 end date
- Valid travel authorization signature on your DS-2019 (Box in lower right corner of form)

*Special visa exceptions apply for travel to and return from Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. Please contact OIR with questions.

**Additional Resources**

Learn more about:
- Smithsonian Museums
- Navigating the DC area (getting a driver's license, local transportation)
- Information for families
- Practical Information
- Local entertainment
- US Cultural Basics

...in our helpful arrival guide found [here](#).

Information about **ID badges, Social Security Cards, health insurance requirements**, and other FAQs can be found on our Office of Fellowships and Internships Website under "International Appointees" found [here](#).

**For Questions, Contact:**

Meri Price, International Exchange Specialist (and J-1 Responsible Officer), Office of International Relations: 202-633-4797, pricem@si.edu

Information for the **U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program**: Jvisas@state.gov or visit [https://j1visa.state.gov](https://j1visa.state.gov).