

What is an ePassport?

An ePassport is a passport which features microchip technology. An integrated circuit (chip) within its pages contains the data that are essential in verifying the identity of the passport holder. These data include the personal data found on the data page of the passport, the biometrics of the passport holder, the unique chip identification number, and a digital signature to verify the authenticity of the data stored on the chip.

The chip technology allows the information stored in an ePassport to be read by special chip readers at a close distance.

What are Biometrics?

Biometrics are the unique and measurable physical characteristics of an individual that include face recognition, fingerprints, and iris scans.

The Philippine Electronic Passport (or Philippine ePassport) uses the digital image of the passport photograph that can be used with face recognition technology to verify the identity of the passport holder.

It captures the fingerprints of the passport holder, for identification using the Automated Fingerprint Verification System (AFIS).

What are the special features of the Philippine ePassport?

The Philippine ePassport allows information stored on the chip to be verified with the information visually displayed on the passport.

It uses contactless microchip technology that allows the information stored on the chip to be read by special chip readers at a close distance.

It contains an integrated photograph of the holder, a digitized secondary photo, and an electronic print of the holder's signature.

It contains overt and hidden security features such as Invisible Personal Information (IPI), letterscreen, microprinting, and UV reactive ink, among others.

What is the difference between the existing maroon machine readable passport (MRP) and the ePassport?

An MRP is a passport that contains a machine-readable zone (MRZ) printed in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard. It is capable of being read manually and with the use of a machine.

An ePassport has an embedded IC chip where the photograph and personal information of the bearer are stored in accordance with ICAO specifications. These information can be read by chip readers at close distance.

An ePassport also contains a machine-readable zone.

What advantages does the Philippine ePassport offer?

The ePassport is highly secure, hence avoids passport reproduction and tampering. The ePassport database is enhanced with AFIS that guards against multiple passport issuances to the same person and enhances imposter detection.

It facilitates fast clearance of travellers at immigration checks.

ePassports provide travellers benefits such as use of automated border clearance or “E-gates”, automated issuance of boarding passes, and faster travel arrangements with airlines.

For countries, the use of electronic passport also provides better border protection and security.

Why do we have to use ePassports now?

The MRP has the minimum ICAO standards in travel documents. The ePassport is the world standard in travel documents. As member of ICAO, the Philippines has an international obligation to enhance the security of its travel documents.

The issuance of ePassports will allow the Philippines to offer world-class consular services to its nationals.

Countries have greater confidence and acceptance of the ePassport since it is enhanced with biometric technology.

ePassports are already being used in more than 60 countries worldwide. In ASEAN, five countries have already issued e-passports (Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia).

Who can avail of the Philippine E-Passport?

The ePassport will initially be made available in limited number. Regular issuance will start sometime in October 2009 from whence all applicants who can comply with the documentary requirements may avail of the ePassport.

How much does an ePassport cost?

The ePassport is available for 60 euros. For replacement of lost Green Passport or MRP, 90 euros, for lost ePassport, 150 euros.

Why is the ePassport more expensive than the current passport?

The added security features of the ePassport are factored into the production cost. Comparative prices of ePassports from different countries, however, show that the cost of the Philippine ePassport is among the lowest in the world.

What other countries use ePassports?

ePassports are already being used in more than 60 countries worldwide. In ASEAN, five countries have already issued ePassports (Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia). In the future, all countries are seen to switch to the ePassport due to the increasing need for efficient and better border security.

What is the ePassport logo and what does it mean?

The ePassport logo which appears on the cover of the ePassport is the international symbol for an electronic passport. It means that the passport has an integrated circuit or chip on which data about the passport and passport holder is stored. The logo will alert border inspection lanes at all airports and transit ports equipped with special data readers for ePassports that the passport is an ePassport.

I have a previously issued passport. Can I use it for travel as long as it is still valid?

Yes. Previously issued passports (MRP and non-MRP) are valid until their expiry. It is a good practice to make sure your passport is valid at least six months before intended date of travel to avoid any inconvenience.

Will there be additional requirements needed for the processing of ePassports?

None. Essentially, the requirements for ePassport processing will remain the same as that for the MRP, although personal appearance is required for the taking of biometrics (i.e., fingerprints, photo, and signature). No need to bring passport size photos.

Can existing holders of the maroon MRP simply surrender their passports and have them converted to an ePassport?

As soon as the production of the ePassport comes into full swing, holders of MRPs can have their passport cancelled and apply for ePassport if they so wish.

Where can I apply for an ePassport?

The ePassport is now available at DFA Manila, and some Philippine Embassies and consulates abroad and throughout the Philippines through DFA's regional offices.

What are the standard requirements?

If the passport you wish to renew is issued by the Philippine Embassy in Paris, or is issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs or any of its Regional Consular Offices and contains a Schengen Visa, the basic requirements are the following:

1. Duly Accomplished Passport Application Form;
2. Photocopy of passport pages 1 (data page), 2 and 3, last page (signature page), and all pages containing visa and immigration stamps
3. Personal appearance at the Philippine Embassy in Paris (in order for the ePassport system to obtain the photo and biometrics of the applicant);
4. Applicant should be wearing a collared shirt;
5. Payment of passport fee

For types of passports falling under a special category, please refer to the Passport Application Form for a more detailed enumeration of the requirements.