

Agent4VIPs Travel Resource Library
Book #001 • The Smart Traveler's Passport & Travel Documents Guide

Chapter 3

REAL ID vs. Passport

Many travelers assume a REAL ID can replace a passport—but that's one of the most common travel misconceptions. While both are government-issued identification, they serve very different purposes. Understanding the difference can help you avoid surprises at the airport or cruise terminal.

REAL ID and Passport Comparison

Travel Activity	REAL ID	Passport Book
Domestic Flights (U.S.)	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
International Flights	✗ No	✓ Yes
International Cruise Travel	✗ No	✓ Yes
Closed-Loop Cruises	May be used with other acceptable documents on eligible itineraries	✓ Recommended
Proof of U.S. Citizenship	✗ No	✓ Yes
Best Overall Travel Document	Good for U.S. identification	Excellent

When Do You Need a Passport?

A passport is required for international air travel and is strongly recommended for nearly all international cruises. Even if your cruise qualifies as a closed-loop sailing that allows alternative documentation, a passport provides the greatest flexibility if you must unexpectedly fly home because of a medical emergency, weather disruption, or missed ship.

Common Misconceptions

- A REAL ID does **not** replace a passport for international travel.
- A driver's license with a star is still not valid for international flights.
- Cruise line document requirements can differ depending on the itinerary and your citizenship.
- Entry requirements are set by governments and may change over time.

Aimee's Pro Tip

If you're planning an international vacation, I recommend obtaining or renewing your passport even if you think you may not need it. Having a passport provides peace of mind and can make a huge difference if your travel plans change unexpectedly.