

What is Clear airport security — and is it worth it?

(Courtesy of Caroline Tanner, The Points Guy)



Editor's note: This post is frequently updated with the latest information.

Since becoming a travel reporter in 2021, I've added many tools to my travel wheelhouse that have greatly improved my experience as a traveler. One way I improved my travel process was by becoming a member of [Clear](#), the private sector's equivalent of [TSA PreCheck](#).

Since 2010, Clear has evolved as an expedited security program at [51 airports with more than 14 million members nationwide](#), including at stadiums and other large venues.

Clear is a secure identity platform that uses member data, including fingerprint and iris scans, to automate the identity verification step in the U.S. Transportation Security Administration screening process. Clear members go through a separate security lane with dedicated kiosks rather than waiting in line for a TSA agent to review their license or passport.

Once your identity is confirmed, a Clear representative will escort you to the front of the line for the traditional security screening machines. If you are enrolled in TSA PreCheck, you'll head to the front of the PreCheck screening lines and proceed as normal. If you don't have TSA PreCheck, you'll use the normal screening lines where you remove your shoes, unload your electronics, liquids, light jacket, etc.

For a year of access, [Clear costs \\$189](#), compared to \$78 for a five-year membership to TSA PreCheck. However, some elite status levels and even credit cards can help decrease that price. For example, the [American Express Green Card](#) has a \$150 annual fee (see [rates and fees](#)) but provides up to \$189 in statement credit toward Clear Plus each year. It also has an increased 60,000-point welcome bonus (after you spend \$3,000 on purchases on your new card in your first six months of card membership) right now, in case you are looking for creative ways to pay for the cost of Clear.

To help you decide whether Clear is worth it, here's what you need to know about the expedited airport security program. This includes its benefits, potential drawbacks and how to get a discounted (or free) membership.

What is Clear?

As mentioned, Clear is an identity validation system based on a secure platform with a database that houses your biometric information, including fingerprints and an iris scan, to verify your identity. It facilitates access through one level of security at locations such as airports and stadiums.

How Clear works

Clear requires passengers to complete two steps: identity verification and security screening. The identity verification occurs in a separate lane for Clear users only. Travelers submit to biometric authentication (a fingerprint or iris scan) at a kiosk instead of waiting for the TSA to inspect their government ID and check their boarding pass. After the scanner verifies a passenger's identity, a Clear representative will escort the traveler to the actual security screening area, bypassing everyone waiting in the first line.

If you're also enrolled in [TSA PreCheck](#), you'll go directly to the TSA PreCheck line. Additionally, if you're traveling with children younger than 18, [they may use the Clear line for free](#) as long as they stay with you or another paid member.

- Denver International Airport (DEN).
- Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW).
- Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL).
- Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport (GSP).
- Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL).
- Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH).
- Houston's William P. Hobby Airport (HOU).
- Kansas City International Airport (MCI).
- Las Vegas' Harry Reid International Airport (LAS).
- John Glenn Columbus International Airport (CMH).
- Long Beach Airport (LGB).
- Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).
- Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (MSY).
- Miami International Airport (MIA).
- Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport (MKE).
- Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP).
- Nashville International Airport (BNA).
- New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK).
- New York's LaGuardia Airport (LGA).
- Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR).
- Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC).
- Oakland International Airport (OAK).
- Oklahoma City's Will Rogers World Airport (OKC).
- Ontario International Airport (ONT).
- Orlando International Airport (MCO).
- Palm Beach International Airport (PBI).
- Palm Springs International Airport (PSP).
- Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX).
- Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU).

- Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).
- Sacramento International Airport (SMF).
- Salt Lake City International Airport (SLC).
- San Antonio International Airport (SAT).
- San Diego International Airport (SAN).
- San Francisco International Airport (SFO).
- San Juan Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (SJU).
- Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA).
- St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL).
- Washington's Dulles International Airport (IAD).
- Westchester County Airport (HPN).

Additionally, Clear is available at select entrances to the following stadiums during some events:

- Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium — Austin.
- State Farm Arena — Atlanta.
- Coors Field — Denver.
- Ball Arena — Denver.
- Allegiant Stadium — Las Vegas.
- T-Mobile Arena — Las Vegas.
- SoFi Stadium — Los Angeles.
- BMO Stadium — Los Angeles.
- Kaseya Center — Miami.
- Madison Square Garden — New York City.
- Yankee Stadium — New York City.
- Chase Center — San Francisco.
- Oracle Park — San Francisco.
- PayPal Park — San Jose, California.
- SAP Center at San Jose — San Jose, California.
- Lumen Field — Seattle.

- Capital One Arena — Washington, D.C.
- Nationals Park — Washington, D.C.

How does Clear compare to TSA PreCheck?

Clear further reduces airport security wait time by automating the identity verification process and whisking users to the front of the TSA line. However, having Clear does not automatically confer TSA PreCheck status, and it's also currently available at far fewer airports than TSA PreCheck.

Additionally, Clear doesn't preclude you from using the streamlined TSA PreCheck security screening process. It's simply designed to help you reach it faster than you would otherwise.

Unlike TSA PreCheck, whose members are not guaranteed PreCheck access every time they fly since they can be [randomly excluded](#) and sent to the standard line, Clear has no randomized exclusion of passengers. Also, everyone who enters the Clear line is a member of Clear and probably knows how to operate the system.

On the other hand, the TSA sometimes [adds nonmember travelers](#) who have no idea how it works to the TSA PreCheck line. This sometimes holds up the line. Additionally, TSA PreCheck only works when traveling with a [participating airline](#). In contrast, Clear works when traveling with any carrier.

With that said, Clear and PreCheck are restricted to certain hours and may not be available during your flight time.

What's the difference between Clear and Clear Sports?

You can also use Clear at select stadiums thanks to Clear's Sports & Events access. It's free and available to all Clear members to allow expedited entry to games at participating stadiums. However, this membership doesn't provide access to non-stadium Clear locations like airports.

To use Clear Sports & Events, download the Clear app and tap on the black "Sports & Events" tile. Log in to enroll before heading to the Clear lane to show your QR code to a Clear ambassador.

Members can bring one adult guest through the Clear lane per day at stadiums and venues. Children under 18 don't need a membership and can go through the Clear lane when accompanied by an adult.

How to enroll in Clear

You can either start the enrollment process online and finish at a Clear location, or you can [complete the entire process at a Clear location](#). The enrollment process takes about five minutes (assuming no line) and requires no appointment.

Just note that you must complete the final enrollment steps at a Clear location. These steps include answering a few simple questions to verify your identity, showing a valid photo ID, providing a payment method and attaching your biometrics (fingerprints and a picture of your irises) to your newly created account.

To qualify for Clear enrollment, you must be a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident who is at least 18 years old. You must also have one of the following forms of photo identification: a U.S. driver's license, a

U.S. passport, a U.S. passport card, a U.S.-issued permanent resident card, a state-issued ID or a U.S. military ID.



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How to save on Clear

Though the normal rate for Clear membership is \$189 per year, there are many ways to avoid paying that full retail price. To start, Clear members who [refer friends to the program](#) receive two months of free membership apiece.

Also, Clear has partnered with select airlines to offer the following special membership rates for their members:

Delta SkyMiles discounts

- [Delta Diamond Medallion](#) and 360° members: Complimentary membership.
- Delta Platinum, Gold and Silver Medallion members: \$149 per year.
- Those with a Delta cobranded credit card, including the [Delta SkyMiles® Gold American Express Card](#), [Delta SkyMiles® Platinum American Express Card](#), [Delta SkyMiles® Reserve American Express Card](#), [Delta SkyMiles® Gold Business American Express Card](#), [Delta SkyMiles® Platinum Business American Express Card](#) and [Delta SkyMiles® Reserve Business American Express Card](#): \$149 per year.
- General SkyMiles members: \$179 per year.

United MileagePlus discounts

- United Global Services and Premier 1K members: Complimentary membership.
- United Platinum, Gold and Silver members: \$149 per year.
- Those with a United cobranded credit card, such as the [United Explorer Card](#), [United Business Card](#) and the [United Club Infinite Card](#): \$149 per year.
- General United MileagePlus members: \$179 per year.

To take advantage of these rates, enter your SkyMiles or MileagePlus number during enrollment, or link your SkyMiles or MileagePlus account after enrolling. Since it's free to join Delta SkyMiles and United MileagePlus, any U.S.-based passenger can access the discounted membership rates by linking their SkyMiles or MileagePlus account to their Clear account.

Once you are a Clear member, you can log in to your account on Clear's website and add up to three family members for \$60 each per year. Children under 18 can use the lane for free when accompanied by a Clear member.

Which credit cards cover Clear fees as a benefit?

Certain credit cards afford users a free Clear membership. The following cards will reimburse you for up to \$189 per year in Clear Plus membership costs:

- [American Express Green Card](#).
- [The Platinum Card® from American Express](#).
- [The Business Platinum Card® from American Express](#).

Bottom line

If Clear is available at your home airport or one you visit frequently, the program could be a big timesaver for your future travels, regardless of whether you also have TSA PreCheck. There's often just a single TSA staffer checking documents for both the TSA PreCheck line and the regular security line, so enrolling in Clear can save you valuable time.

Additionally, you can stack those expedited line benefits, and Clear members enjoy more predictable access to security. This means those who check in online without checked bags can arrive at the airport closer to their flight departure time than they normally would and sometimes [avoid long security lines](#).

If you value a predictable travel experience and like having many options when it comes time for security, Clear is well worth your consideration.