

Traveling to Canada for US Citizens

I am an American citizen. What do I need to enter Canada?

American citizens, including American-Canadian citizens, must carry proper identification and meet the basic requirements to enter Canada. You do not need a Canadian passport, a Canadian visa or an eTA to enter Canada if you are travelling with a valid U.S. passport.

You Must Have a Passport

All U.S. citizens arriving in Canada must have a valid passport or passport equivalent, such as an enhanced driver's license or NEXUS card. Gone are the days of casual cross-border visits with only a driver's license; those disappeared after 9/11. There's some leniency when it comes to children coming to Canada. Travelers 15 or younger need only present a birth certificate or certified copy to the border patrol.

You Can Bring Fido but Not Fresh Fruit

Be sure to educate yourself on what can and can't be brought over the border to Canada when you visit. For example, you can bring your pet (with proper documentation), but fresh fruit is a no-no. Take advantage of shopping for duty-free liquor and cigarettes at the duty-free stores, but you can only buy limited amounts.

Canada is a popular hunting destination but be sure to read up on the country's laws regarding prohibited, restricted, and non-restricted guns and be sure you have all the proper paperwork.

You can take gifts into Canada, but anything valued at over \$60 is subject to duty and taxes.

Your U.S. Driver's License Is Valid

At first glance, driving in Canada looks the same as it does in the U.S., but dig a little deeper and you'll notice some differences.

The good news is, your U.S. driver's license is perfectly transferable to driving in Canada. However, you'll need to learn some of the other laws and conditions.

Speed limits are different in Canada and posted in metric, so kilometers, not miles, are used to indicate maximum speeds in any given area. Distracted driving laws are in effect in all Canadian provinces and territories, which means cell phones must be used hands-free when driving. Canada also makes it a no-no to smoke in a car if you have a minor.

U.S. Currency Is Not Accepted Everywhere

Though many border towns and large metropolitan areas will accept U.S. currency, it is not widely accepted in other parts of Canada, like smaller or more remote towns, where they only deal in Canadian currency. Tourist attractions and major malls will probably give you a reasonable exchange rate, while other businesses may just accept U.S. currency at par.

You Could Get Dinged With Cellphone Roaming Charges

Your U.S. cellphone will work in Canada, but the charges will be astronomical if you don't let your carrier know you are heading out of the country and have them work out a texting and calling package for you while you're away. If you don't set up a special plan, turn off your cellular data in settings and only download email when you're hooked up to WiFi.

You Could Be Denied Entry

Canadians love their neighbors to the south and are a friendly lot, but they don't let just anyone across the border. Canadian Border Services Agency guards can get sticky when it comes to criminal records or suspicious behavior. You should be aware of what can get you denied entry; that includes DUIs and improper identification or papers if you're traveling with minors who are not your own.

You'll Still Need Health Insurance

Canada does have an excellent universal health care system, but only for Canadians. If you are visiting Canada, you might want to get travel health insurance coverage during your stay unless your health insurance provider covers you outside the U.S.

Legal Drinking Age Is 18 or 19

It may be 21 in the U.S.A. but make your way north and the legal drinking age goes down to 18 or 19 in Canada, depending on the province. The drinking age also applies to the ability to buy liquor and beer, which in most parts of Canada is at specially designated liquor and beer stores, not in grocery or convenience stores. **The drinking age in Vancouver BC is 19.**

The Taxes Might Surprise You

Your restaurant or hotel bill might surprise you if you don't know that Canada adds a federal sales tax on all goods and services. The travel services tax is 5 percent in British Columbia. The tax refund program for visitors to Canada was dropped in 2007, so the taxes you pay while you're in Canada stay in Canada.