

🇨🇦 WELCOME TO CANADA! 🇨🇦

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU CROSS THE BORDER!

When in Calais, Maine you may want to venture over the international border to Canada! Historically residents of Calais, Maine and St. Stephen, New Brunswick have maintained a longtime friendship. The two towns cooperate in many events and projects together. Each year in celebration of this bond a week long International Festival occurs during the second week of August. Also, for much of their history, both towns' fire departments have responded in tandem to any fire call on either side of the border.

The St. Croix River marks a section of the international boundary between the United States and Canada, forming a natural border between Calais, Maine and St. Stephen, New Brunswick. U.S. Route 1 parallels the St. Croix River for a few miles, and is accessed from St. Stephen by three cross-border bridges. The map below illustrates these border crossings.



- A. International Avenue Bridge, often called 'The Third Bridge'**
- B. Ferry Point International Bridge**
- C. Milltown International Bridge**

What to expect when crossing the border

The documentation requirements to enter the two countries are slightly different. Generally speaking, the documents needed to enter Canada are somewhat less strict than the documents needed to enter the United States. However, if you are crossing over the border twice, you should focus on the more restrictive American requirements and you will then be covered for Canada as well.

If you try to cross the border without the appropriate documentation you may be referred for secondary screening at the port. At that time, officers will examine whatever evidence of citizenship and identity you have and will attempt to verify that information against available databases. Obviously, this will take considerably longer than a normal entry and there is no assurance that you will be allowed to proceed into the country. However, you can be admitted to either country without the preferred documentation at the discretion of the border officials.

Be careful about misrepresenting something regarding admissibility. Both countries track every border crossing event and you will most likely be banned from future crossings if you are caught lying.

Basic Requirements to cross the United States / Canadian Border

- The driver must have a valid driver's license.
- You must also have your vehicle registration. Border officials are always on the lookout for stolen vehicles or people trying to avoid duties on vehicles purchased out of country.
- Having your proof of insurance showing coverage is recommended.
- Alarm bells will go off anytime you try to cross the border in a car that is not yours. This is especially true if you fly across the border, and then try to come back in someone else's personal vehicle.
- Rental Cars: Generally speaking, an American citizen can cross the border in a rental car without much problem. It is a bit more complicated for Canadian citizens.
- As a general rule, neither country will prevent one of its own citizens from re-entering the country and return home even if you lack the preferred documentation. Of course, you may be subjected to a secondary screening.

Documents Needed to Enter Canada

- **American Citizens:** A passport is not required but is strongly recommended. Alternatively, you will need other documentation that shows proof of American citizenship such as a birth certificate, a certificate of citizenship or naturalization or a Certificate of Indian Status, plus a photo ID. Remember, you will need to comply with the stricter U.S. entry requirements to return to the U.S.

Documents Needed to Enter the United States

Arriving by land or water you must present one of the following:

- Passport
- United States Passport Card
- Trusted Traveler Cards – NEXUS, SENTRI, or FAST
- State or Provincial Issued Enhanced Driver's License or Enhanced Identification Card – EDL / EIC
- U.S. Military ID with orders. Must be traveling on official orders

- U.S. citizens may present an unexpired Merchant Marine Document in conjunction with maritime business
- Native Americans must have a WHTI compliant document. Some tribes have developed an approved “Enhanced Tribal Card” which is similar to an Enhanced Driver’s License and is a valid border crossing document.
- U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents can use their permanent resident card (Form I-551) or other valid evidence of permanent residence status.

Tips to Make the Border Experience Easier

In addition to having the correct documentation ready to present at the border, here are important tips that will shorten the time you will be talking with customs and border patrol officers.

- Tell the truth. The U.S. and Canada are sharing criminal and other agency databases that contain a whole lot of information about you. If you are caught lying you may be turned back or possibly even charged with a crime. The border agencies now retain a record of each time you cross the border so being turned away could make it much tougher, if not impossible, to get across at a later date.
- If you, or any of your passengers, have a pending warrant, criminal trial, or any type of criminal conviction, you MUST thoroughly check out current border regulations before you leave.
- Be courteous. Political commentary or sarcastic comments about police powers could significantly extend your conversation with port officials. Unless you enjoy spending quality time with law enforcement you should bottle up that attitude until you are safely across the border.
- Only answer questions you are asked, and avoid trying to be witty.
- Always remove sunglasses so agents can read your eyes. The agent is making a judgement as to whether you pose a security threat or are trying to hide something. They can ask one question or 100 if they choose. They usually ask your citizenship, destination, intended activity and length of stay. If they have concerns, they can send you to a secondary inspection for further questioning or to search your vehicle.
- Do not enter using a NEXUS, FAST, or READY LANE unless ALL passengers in the vehicle have that type of card in their possession.
- Don’t be drunk or drugged when you reach the border. Thousands of people are arrested by the border patrol every year for driving under the influence. Consider this a roadside sobriety checkpoint.
- Make sure you have your seat belts buckled. Some States and Provinces are very strict about seatbelt enforcement and occasionally have “blitz enforcement periods” to catch offenders.
- Recreational vehicles can use car or RV lanes but should not use truck lanes. You should also be prepared that the officer may want to come on-board to look around your vehicle.
- Make sure you have the right permits or other documents needed to do whatever you want to do in the country you are entering.
- Be aware of what you can and cannot bring across the border.

- Leave suspicious items at home and only bring things that are consistent with the purpose of your travel. Empty your trunk of anything you do not need for the trip.
- Always turn off all cellphones and radios in the car.
- Roll down your front *and back* windows so that the border officer can see and speak to people seated in the back of the vehicle.
- Passengers should hand their passports and other ID to the driver before reaching the booth to avoid having to frantically search once you've already pulled up. All passengers must have proper documentation.
- *NEVER* bring a stranger across the border. If your passenger is trying to enter the country illegally you could be charged with a crime.
- One very unusual problem can occur if a member of your party has recently undergone any type of medical test involving radiation. When you cross through most ports you will be scanned to detect any kind of radiological source. If you test positive you will likely be sent for a secondary inspection. Patients may want to delay a trip or at least get a note from the doctor explaining the radiation source.

There are lots of rules concerning what you can bring across the U.S. / Canadian border and they change constantly. If you have further questions you should call either:

- The Canadian Border Information Service (CBIS) at 800-461-9999 from within Canada or 204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064 from outside the country.
- For U.S. information, call the CBP INFO Center at (703) 526-4200 or (877) CBP-5511.

For more information please contact this helpful site at:

<http://www.ezbordercrossing.com>