

# ***A Note on Travel to the United States***

This module should provide you with all the information you need for travel preparation to the U.S.A. However, you should also use the lefthand navigation menu to view the other DepartSmart modules on *Site Specific Risks, Safety, Health and Wellness, Cross-cultural Living, Leaving People Behind, While You're Away, and When You Return.*

## **Travel Documents for Travel to the United States**

### **Canadian Citizens**

#### **Passports**

One can enter the U.S. as a Canadian citizen for tourist purposes on proof of citizenship (a birth certificate) and photo I.D (a valid driver's license) . However we and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade strongly recommend travelling to the U.S on a Canadian passport. This is the case for several reasons, please consult *USA Bound: Advice for Canadians Travelling to the United States*, pages 5 to 6, on the internet at [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/Publications/usa\\_bound-en.htm](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/Publications/usa_bound-en.htm)

A passport application can be obtained from the post office, Travel Cuts and most government offices. Information on the closest passport office and how to file your application (as well as the application online) is available at <http://www.ppt.gc.ca/>

Regardless of your destination, your passport should have at least 6 months validity left on it after your intended date of return to Canada. Immigration officials have the right to deny you entry to the country you are trying to enter unless you have this buffer time.

Once you have your passport, sign it immediately, and complete the emergency contact information. After signing your passport, make 2 photocopies of the identification pages, leave a copy at home and bring a copy with you (keeping it separate from your original passport). This will facilitate the replacement of your passport if it is lost or stolen.

#### **Lost or Stolen Passport**

Passport officials recognize that a passport may be lost or stolen. The bearer is required to report the loss or theft as soon as it is noticed to the local police and to the Passport Office (or to the nearest Canadian diplomatic or consular mission if you are outside Canada). This number for reporting lost or stolen passports in the U.S. is +1 819 994 3500.

Contact the closest Canadian consular representatives for guidance on to obtain a replacement passport. A list of Canadian consular representation in the U.S. is available at [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consul/for\\_dest/foreign\\_view\\_client-en.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consul/for_dest/foreign_view_client-en.asp) Before the document can be replaced, Canadian authorities will conduct an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident. A replacement passport (which may be valid for a limited period only) may be authorized provided strict requirements are met.

These include:

- a completed application form
- photos
- fee
- documentary proof of Canadian citizenship (original birth certificate or citizenship card ( and a "Statutory Declaration concerning a Lost, Stolen, Inaccessible or Destroyed Canadian Passport or Travel Document" (Form PPT 203).

## **Visas**

If you are travelling to the US for other than tourist purposes (field trips or attending a conference) you may require a visa. This may include research, presenting at some conferences, working (either remunerative or volunteer), participating in an internship program or being a student at an U.S. educational institution. The U.S. treats immigration violations very seriously, and if you do not have the appropriate entry requirements you may be deported (you may never be allowed to enter the U.S. again) and face severe criminal charges.

For information on whether or not you require, a visa for entry to the U.S. visit the U.S. Embassy in Canada's website at <http://www.usembassycanada.gov/content/content.asp-section=travel&document=visaservices>

Please note that under many circumstances, it may not be feasible for you to obtain the visa yourself and you may need the assistance of an organization that specializes in obtaining the appropriate visas. The list below of some of these organizations is provided as a service and does not constitute any endorsement or recommendation by the University of Guelph.

## **Not a Canadian citizen**

If you are not a Canadian citizen, please contact the nearest U.S. Consulate for advice on whether or not you need a visa to enter the U.S. as a tourist and if so. If you are entering the U.S. as other than a tourist please consult

<http://www.usembassycanada.gov/content/content.asp-section=travel&document=visaservices>

**If you are a U.S citizen be sure to be in possession of the necessary documents for your re-entry into Canada.**



## Supplementary Travel Health Insurance

Students travelling internationally should purchase Supplementary Travel Health Insurance (STHI). Use the [Supplementary Travel Health Worksheet](#) to compare several different insurance plans. **Many plans exclude the United States from their coverage due to the high cost of medical care there. Often you must purchase a base STHI and extend your coverage to the US for a supplemental fee. You**

**should purchase supplemental insurance for the U.S. even if you have a stop-over there or there is any chance you may be sent there for medical treatment (e.g. if you become seriously ill in Mexico you will likely be sent to the U.S. for treatment).**

## Arrival in the U.S.

### Airports

Airports have always been destinations under high security. After the events of September 11, 2001, heightened security measures have been implemented. As an international traveller, it is your responsibility to comply with these regulations. The Government of Canada publishes a brochure called <http://www.bordersandskies.gc.ca/en/brochure.htm> that provides the following tips for airport security.

If you are planning a trip by air, here are some useful tips about what to expect going through airport security and how to avoid unnecessary delays:

- Make sure there are no sharp objects in your carry-on luggage. Items such as scissors and metal nail files should be packed in your checked bag. If you are not sure, check with your airline.
- Ensure electronic devices such as cell phones, laptop computers and electronic games are charged and ready to be turned on for inspection. You will not be allowed to take them on board unless they are working.
- Pack prescription medication in its original labeled container. Syringes and needles for personal medical use must have the needle guard in place, and be accompanied by the medication in its original container.
- Never wrap or package gifts. Security personnel may need to inspect them.
- Pack your own bags - never let someone else do it.
- Bring appropriate government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's licence for domestic travel, or a passport for international travel. You may be required to show it at the check-in counter and again before boarding your flight. Contact your travel agent for more information.
- Arrive at the airport early. For international travel, make sure to arrive two to three hours before your scheduled departure time. Check with your airline to find out more about check-in time allowances.
- Be sure to check with your airline for more information - there may be additional

requirements not listed here.

### **Other tips include:**

- Refrain from making reference to bombs and other terrorist activities. Even saying the word "bomb" can be treated like a threat and result in you not being allowed to board your flight and even in criminal charges.
- Unattended luggage is treated like a bomb threat. If you leave your bags, even for a minute, they may be taken away and destroyed.
- If you see unattended luggage, get away from it and report it to the airport authorities.
- Do not overpack your bags. If you have a last-minute luggage inspection, and you are unable to stuff everything back in your bag you may be left with the difficult decision of having to leave something behind.

### **Customs and Immigration**

Regardless of whether or not you arriving in the U.S. by plane, train, bus or automobile you will have to go through some form of customs inspection and immigration.

### **Some general tips on passing though customs and immigration:**

- Before you leave Canada, have the valuables that you will be bringing across the border with you (jewelry, electronics, cameras, etc) identified as being purchased in Canada. Before travelling abroad with valuable items, you can take advantage of a free identification procedure at any Canadian Customs office. The contact information for Canadian Customs offices can be found at: <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/contact/rco-e.html>. This service is available for items that have serial numbers or other unique markings. Alternatively, if you request it, Customs can apply a sticker to any item to give it a serial number. When returning to Canada this helps to avoid questions about whether or not duty must be paid on the item.
- Have all your identification ready and accessible. Be prepared to provide supporting documents (i.e. proof of financial resources, proof of residence in Canada, letters of invitation from professors, conference registrations, etc) other than your identification if you are entering the U.S. for other than tourist purposes.
- If you are entering by car, have it neat and easy to inspect.
- Dress nicely while in transit, first impressions count.
- Be honest with authorities, answer their questions concisely and accurately, but don't volunteer unnecessary information.
- Have extra food, water, money and entertainment available to deal with delays. To find out approximate border wait times, visit <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/customs/general/times/menu-e.html>
- If you are bringing any drugs, pets, etc., make sure that they are not subject to import restrictions. This information can be found at <http://www.customs.ustreas.gov/travel/travel.htm>

### **Here are some tips from U.S. Customs in bringing medicines across the border:**

- Have all drugs, medicines, and similar products properly identified.

- Carry only such quantity as would normally be used by an individual having the health problem requiring the drugs or medicines in your possession.
- Have either a prescription or written statement from your personal physician that the medicine is being used under a doctor's direction and that it is necessary for your physical well-being while traveling.
- Declare such drugs or medications to the customs officer.

## Legal Issues

### Power of Attorney

Will you require money deposited, withdrawn or transferred for you while you are overseas? Will your student loan forms or tax forms become due while you are overseas? If so, it is very important that you arrange for a **power of attorney**. This gives your representative the authority to sign forms on your behalf. There are many reasons to consider a power of attorney. If your signature will be needed for any official or legal document while you are away, you should make arrangements for a power of attorney. This enables a responsible and trusted person (your parents are usually the best option) to act on your behalf. Write out in detail the specific duties, such as signing of documents, bank transfers, payment of credit card bills, filing of income taxes and other legal matters that the chosen person may have to execute in your absence, in detail and have it notarized.

A power of attorney is required for all students with student loans. Check with the provider of your student loans for appropriate forms (bank, OSAP, etc.) Banks also have forms to arrange a power of attorney for their services only.

### In Trouble with the Law: Arrested or Detained

While you are overseas, the laws of your host country apply to you. Do not get in trouble with the law in a foreign country. You don't want to spend time in a foreign jail. **It is your responsibility to know what the local laws are.** "Innocent until proven guilty" may not apply. In case of arrest, Canadian consular staff can help ensure you receive fair treatment under the host country's laws but they cannot get you off the hook. You may be able to get some information at: **Guide to laws around the world-**  
<http://www.loc.gov/law/guide/nations.html>

### Some Notes:

- Under Canadian law, you can be charged in Canada with the sexual exploitation of children while in other countries.
- Do not get involved with the politics of a foreign country. If you find yourself at a political rally, demonstration or riot, you could get into a lot of trouble. You may also jeopardize the safety of your friends or host. Being a Canadian does not grant you immunity.

***A Guide for Canadians Imprisoned Abroad*** is published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and is available at [http://voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/Publications/imprisoned\\_abroad-e.htm](http://voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/Publications/imprisoned_abroad-e.htm)

If you are arrested or detained in a foreign country, you should immediately contact the nearest **mission** of your country of citizenship.



## Money

### Bank Cards

Canadian bank cards may not necessarily work in ATMs/ABMs in the U.S.. Check with your bank before you depart to see if your card is valid. Make sure you have a 4-digit numerical PIN. **Many ATMs/ABMs do not recognize alphabetical characters or not accept PIN's that are longer than 4 digits.** There are often substantial service fees to withdraw funds internationally, find out before you go and plan accordingly. As well, it may be difficult to obtain a replacement card should it be lost, stolen, or damaged. Make sure that you have your bank's toll free or collect number.

It is the same all over the world, you never disclose your PIN number to anyone, even a bank employee. Robberies at bank machines are on the increase world-wide. Always use AT(B)Ms during daylight hours, in indoor public places (preferably banks or retailers) and if possible, not alone.

### Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in the U.S.. Ensure that you record your credit card number and the toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen. You may want to consider putting a line of credit on your card --paying off your credit card before you make purchases or cash advances-- if you are travelling for a prolonged period of time. This prevents you from having to pay interest or worry about making payments while you are away. Make sure that you have the PIN for your credit card if there is any chance that will have to obtain cash advances. **Credit card fraud is problem everywhere.** Monitor your credit card activity online or have someone at home check your statements for fraudulent activities.

### Travellers Cheques

Keep a separate record of the serial numbers of your travellers cheques, as you will need to have these numbers available to obtain a refund. Remember that getting a refund for your travellers cheques is not usually as hassle-free as the commercials might have you believe. Make sure you know the policies and procedures regarding refunds before you leave. Be sure to keep your travellers cheques and registration numbers separate. It is imperative that you record every travellers cheque you have spent as well as have a record of those you have not.

### Cash

Money is accepted just about everywhere, but it is at a high risk of being stolen, lost or counterfeit. That being said, it is recommended that you always carry some U.S. currency in small amounts and keep it well secured. No limit is placed on the amount of money that travellers may legally bring into or take out of the United States. However, if on any occasion you carry **more than US\$10,000 in monetary instruments** (such as U.S. or foreign coin, currency, traveller's cheques, money orders, and negotiable instruments or investment securities in bearer form) into or out of the United States, or if you receive more than that amount while in the United States, **you must file a report (Customs Form 4790)** with U.S. Customs. Failure to comply can result in civil and criminal penalties, including seizure of the currency or monetary instruments. Try to avoid exchanging money at hotels, airports, or retail shops where the exchange rate will usually be highest. Banks and credit unions offer the fairest exchange rate. You can expect to pay a commission every time you exchange currency. Avoid black market money dealers. They may offer exceptional rates of exchange,

but the potential for being ripped off is high, and the police may not look upon your transaction with humour.

## **Health**

Have a regular physical before you go, to identify any potential health problems before you travel. As well, have a dental check-up. Obtain extra glasses and contacts and the prescriptions for your vision wear before you go. Depending on your state of health and your destination in the U.S., you may need specialized travel health care services. Tell your physician you will be travelling, where and for how long when you go for you physical.

## **Safety**

### **Before you leave**

- Read the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade DFAIT travel report for the U.S. carefully. It can be found at [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/destinations/menu\\_e.htm](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/destinations/menu_e.htm) .
- Do the **Registration of Canadians Abroad** with DFAIT at <http://www.voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/SOS/rocapage-e.htm> if you are going to be in the U.S. for three months or more.
- Provide your family and friends back home with a detailed itinerary of your travel plans and how best to contact you while you are away. Inform them if your plans change.
- Plan your trip so that you arrive during weekday business hours, when taxis, banks, and other services are available. Avoid arriving on national holidays and weekends when businesses may be closed.
- If possible, arrange to have someone meet you at the airport and try to have accommodation arranged beforehand. Preferably, stay at government-regulated hostel or hotel. Your travel agent can book you a room in a hotel and transportation for your first night.
- Being tired, jet-lagged and suddenly thrown into a melee of taxi drivers vying for your business can be a disconcerting experience. Until you are more familiar with the safety and cost of local services use government-regulated transportation rather than a private taxi or bus.
- Check your guidebook to find out about any possible airport scams where you're going. Most airports have them. Some taxi drivers take advantage of disoriented tourists, overcharge them and/or take them to expensive hotels where they rake in a commission. You can also check the Scam watch website at <http://www.citcontario.com/scamwatch.html>

### **When you arrive**

- Conceal or secure all keys, wallets, handbags and baggage. Use a money-belt or neck pouch.
- Consult reliable local people about transportation, safety issues, how to handle beggars, etc.
- Purchase a domestic phone card for the country you are in and carry this with you. You never know when you'll be in a situation where you have to make an emergency phone call without any money. Also, memorize your host home phone number or another emergency contact number. This could come in very handy, especially if you are lost in

the wrong part of town.

### **In your home**

- Doors and windows should be locked at all times. Do not open the door to strangers.
- Make sure that your personal documents are kept in a safe place.
- Keep all emergency numbers close to the phone.
- After dark, close all curtains, blinds and shutters.
- Leave the radio or some lights on when the house is unoccupied, day or night.
- If your accommodation is not secure, arrange to improve this immediately.
- If you have to go out after dark, prepare for your return by leaving outside lights on.

### **In the street**

- Be discreet in your public behaviour. Avoid uncontrolled crowds and do not get involved in local disturbances.
- Look like you know where you are going. Try not to stand on street corners for extended periods of time with your map unfolded and a puzzled look on your face.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry or flashing about large sums of money when walking in the street or driving with the car window open.
- Try not to walk the streets at night. If you have to, choose well lit, busy streets. Be aware of potential hiding places. Do not walk along building walls.
- Avoid short cuts through deserted parks, vacant lots and dark alleys.
- If a beggar or hustler is harassing you, do your best to get out of the situation. Go into a nearby store, ask someone for assistance.
- If an assailant demands your wallet or handbag, give it up.
- Carry money in several locations on your person, not just in your wallet. Consider carrying a "fake wallet" or a leather money belt, which holds a small amount of cash.
- Do not hitchhike!
- If you are even the slightest bit uneasy about getting into a car, don't! Tell the driver you are going in another direction.
- Never cross a border with a hitchhiker or as a hitchhiker. If you must, go through customs and immigration separated from your driver. You can meet up on the other side.

### **In the car**

- Learn the rules of the road and be prepared for local driving conditions.
- Keep the doors locked and try to keep the windows closed, especially in slow traffic.
- Consider getting a cellular phone if you will be driving your own car.
- Check the DFAIT advisories regarding driving conditions in your host country.

**Returning Home** (Information taken from DFAIT's Bon Voyage, But... Information for the Canadian Traveller 2001/2002 [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/Publications/bon\\_voyage\\_but-e.htm](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/Consular-e/Publications/bon_voyage_but-e.htm))

### **Departure Tax**



There may be a departure tax or service fee at the point of departure. Before leaving, make sure you set aside enough money, in local funds, to pay this tax.

### **Canadian Food Inspection Agency: Be Aware and Declare**

Every year, thousands of travellers fail to declare things like cheese, meat, animal hides, live birds, plants, fruits and their products. These items may carry pests or diseases that pose a risk to human, plant or animal health. Foreign pests or diseases could destroy Canada's crops and forests and endanger our livestock, threatening our ability to produce safe food.

Canadian law says you must declare all the plants and animals you bring back, as well as their products. It restricts and prohibits the entry of products that could harm Canada's agriculture and forestry or that pose a danger to human health and safety.

Before you leave Canada, contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency or visit their Web site at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/ops/secur/borfroe.shtml>

### **Canadian Customs and Import Controls**

- You must declare everything acquired abroad, whether purchases for yourself or gifts, as well as goods bought at a Canadian or foreign duty-free store. Keep your original receipts for possible inspection.
- If you have been away from Canada for 24 hours or more, you may bring back goods worth up to C\$50 without paying duties or taxes. This does not include alcohol and tobacco.
- If you have been away from Canada for 48 hours or more, you may bring back goods worth up to C\$200 without paying duties or taxes. These goods can include tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, as described below.
- If you have been away from Canada for seven days or more, you may bring back goods worth up to C\$750 without paying duties or taxes.
- These goods can include tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, as described below. When calculating the number of days you are absent, do not include the date you leave Canada, but do include the date you return.
- If you have been away from Canada for 48 hours or more, you may bring back up to 1.14 litres of liquor or 1.5 litres of wine, or a case of 24 bottles or cans of beer or ale, each containing 355 ml. You may also bring back up to 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or cigarillos, 200 tobacco sticks and 200 grams of manufactured tobacco. Provincial age restrictions apply to liquor and tobacco products.
- Certain goods are restricted from entering Canada. If you are considering importing meat or dairy products, plants, weapons, vehicles, exotic animals or products made from their skins or feathers, contact the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency or the Canadian Firearms Centre beforehand for guidance.
- Obscene materials, hate propaganda, most weapons, and goods harmful to the environment are prohibited from entering Canada.
- If you have any questions about what you can bring home, contact the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency or call your local Customs border service office.

The above information may change without notice, the booklet I Declare available at <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/E/pub/cp/rc4044eq/rc4044-e.html> describes what you can and cannot bring back to Canada if you have been away for less than a year.

### **Import of Firearms**

Rigid rules apply to the import of firearms. For more information, visit the Canadian Firearms Centre at <http://www.cfc-ccaf.gc.ca/en/default.asp>

### **Illegal Souvenirs**

Before you purchase an animal or plant, or a product made from animals or plants, be sure you know what rules and regulations apply. Many attractive items sold in foreign countries are made from endangered plants or animals. Live cactus and orchid plants, ivory bracelets and carvings, marine turtle shells and turtle-shell products, whalebone carvings, and cat skins, teeth and claws are some of the more common items illegally brought back to Canada. These items are included in the more than 30,000 species of wild animals and plants regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). A violation of CITES could lead to seizure of your purchase, as well as a fine and/or prison term.

Since many other countries also have strict laws protecting wildlife, it is often wise to leave any items you already own at home.

When in doubt, don't buy it!

### **After Residing Abroad**

After a stay abroad of more than a year, there are special import provisions for household items and personal belongings when you move back to Canada. Information is contained in the brochure Moving Back to Canada, published by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency: <http://www.ccr-aadrc.gc.ca/customs/individuals/former-e.html>

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**Minding  
Your  
Finances**