

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two flagpoles against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The flag on the left is the Canadian flag, featuring a red field with a white square in the center containing a red maple leaf. The flag on the right is the United States flag, with its characteristic stars and stripes. Both flags are waving in the breeze.

CROSSING THE *Canada-U.S. Border* IN AN RV

Updated March 2025

Hello! I am Janice T.

I AM SO GLAD TO MEET YOU!

I'm a Californian-born American who grew up in Vancouver, BC, Canada. I've been crossing this border for 50+ years. I still cross several times a year in my Class C motorhome - and yes, I have crossed, quite easily, several times already in 2025.



Knowing what I can or cannot have in my rig, and having all the necessary papers in my hand when I arrive at the border, are the two keys to my easy crossings.

My goal with these Five Tips, and multiple Links to Official Government sites, is to help you also cross the border with minimal delays and maximum ease.

#1 TIP FOR SUCCESS: BE PREPARED!



THERE ARE NO WALLS
OR FENCES MARKING
THE BORDER,
INSTEAD,
WATCH FOR
VERSIONS OF THIS
MONOLITH DOTTED
ALONG OUR BORDER.

Yup! Just like everything else in life, it is so much easier if we are prepared when we arrive at the customs-officer's kiosk.

This includes...

- Having the correct identification papers for each person (and pet!)
- Knowing exactly what is legal to bring with us
- How to prepare our rig and how we should act

Oh...and attitude!

May I suggest, DON'T ACT LIKE SOMEONE IN A BAD TV EPISODE! Give these folks total respect. Don't swear, make jokes, or generally forget that they are responsible for protecting our two nations. Our role is to make their job easier.

#2 - WHAT PAPERS DO I NEED?

Bring a Passport for each person! (a Green Card OR Landed Immigration card may work also.) Many borders have a card reader just before the kiosk. These are to read a Nexus card, Enhanced Drivers License, and/or Wallet Size Passport. Being able to use this reader makes for a quicker crossing.

Everyone, including Canadians, NEEDS to have an updated Form I-94 to enter the U.S. (If you have flown into the U.S. sometime since 2013, one may have already been created automatically.) Follow the link below to update or create a new one. Then PRINT IT OUT and carry it with your travel documents.



[CLICK HERE for Form I-94 Official Website](#)



[START HERE for Canadians Visiting the U.S. \(dated 2022\)](#)



[START HERE for Entering OR Returning into Canada](#)

#3 - WHAT ABOUT OUR PET(S)?

NOTE! The CDC has issued new rules about bringing a dog into the United States effective August 1, 2024. These include (but are not limited to)...



- Completing and submitting a CDC Dog Import Form and being prepared to show a printed or digital, valid receipt
- They must appear healthy
- Have a rabies vaccination OR proof they have not been in a high-risk country within the last six months
- They must be at least 6 months old
- They must have a microchip that can be detected with a universal scanner



[START HERE for Bringing a Pet into the USA](#)



[START HERE for Bringing a Pet into Canada](#)

PET FOOD HAS IT'S OWN RULES! BE INFORMED AND PREPARED



- PET FOOD MUST BE IN IT'S ORIGINAL, UNOPENED PACKAGE and Manufactured in Canada or US
- PET FOOD MAY NOT BE RAW
- for USA: 50 lbs maximum. Sheep, Lamb, and Goat products are NOT allowed.
- for CANADA: 20 kgs/44 lbs maximum. Both the pet and its food must be together in the auto/RV with you at the time of crossing.



[START HERE for Bringing Food and Pet Food into the US](#)



[START HERE for Bringing Pet Food and Pet Treats into Canada](#)

#4 - WHAT FOOD OR ALCOHOL IS ALLOWED TO CROSS THE BORDER?

Food rules change frequently so check before each trip!

Generally, a few food rules to remember are:

- NO Fruit with Seeds or Pits (including “spices” that are seeds)
- NO Alliums (aka Onion family including garlic)
- NO Potatoes
- NO Citrus NOR Fruit out-of-season (and the United States requires commercial labels on fruit)
- NO live plants, herb plants, or soil
- NO firewood

I also suggest avoiding any prepared food without labels.



Always check meat products! This list changes very frequently for both countries.

- Canned meat and most seafood are usually ok
- Raw poultry and processed meat products (ie sausages and jerky) are usually banned
- Dairy, Eggs, and Honey may currently be banned



[START HERE for Bringing Food \(Agriculture\) into the USA](#)



[START HERE for Bringing Food, Plant & Animal Products into Canada](#)

Generally, only a small quantity of Alcohol may be brought back and/or into each country for personal consumption. This is based on the quantity and our time out of the country. And yes, even though alcohol is stupidly expensive in Canada, resist the urge to bring enough for your whole two-month journey!



[START HERE for Alcohol Rules Crossing into the USA](#)



[START HERE for Alcohol Rules Crossing into Canada](#)

#5 WEAPONS, MEDS, & DRUGS

Here are links to some of the most common questions including personal medications and firearms. FYI: It is illegal to cross either border with ANY cannabis products.



[US FOOD & DRUG \(aka FDA\) for Personal Importation](#)



[US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION List of Prohibited and Restricted Items](#)



[US IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT \(aka ICE\) Guidance for traveling outside the country with firearms and ammunition](#)



[CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY \(aka CBSA\) for bringing a firearm into Canada](#)



[GOVERNMENT OF CANADA Drugs, Alcohol, and Travel](#)

Travelling with Prescription Medications

It is generally okay to have a “daily pill case” with your meds sorted in it BUT be sure to bring the original containers AND a copy of your prescriptions.

RETURNING HOME?

What am I allowed to bring back with me?



FOR RETURNING AMERICANS

[US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION Types of Exemptions](#)



FOR RETURNING CANADIANS (If you exceed your Personal Exemption, your purchases may be subject to an additional 25% tariff)

[GOVERNMENT OF CANADA Personal Exemption Mini Guide](#)

THE ACTUAL CROSSING

BEFORE YOU REACH THE YELLOW MARKERS OF THE CUSTOMS BOOTHS

PREPARE YOUR RIG and AUTO

Unlock the Rig/Trailer/Auto Doors

Turn off all Propane and Generators

Open any RV Window Coverings on the Custom Officer's Side

Open ALL Auto Windows on the Custom Officer's Side (including rear passenger)

PREPARE YOURSELF and PASSENGERS

- Turn off all music/radios/movies etc
- Take off Sunglasses and Hats
- Be quiet. Be relaxed.
- Declare ALL foods, weapons etc
- Don't bother lying
- Know your travel plans including dates and where you will be staying

IN THE DRIVERS HAND

- Valid Passports for ALL occupants
- ### WITHIN EASY REACH OF THE DRIVER
- Receipts of all products purchased while travelling when returning to home country. (BONUS TIP a written list with totals can make this a quick discussion)
 - A list of fresh food, alcohol, medications, and pet food
 - Insurance and Ownership Papers for all Vehicles including ATV's and Motorcycles



IF YOU HAVE A CARD-STYLE PASSPORT OR PRE-APPROVED CARD LIKE A NEXUS, BE PREPARED WITH THE ID IN THE THE DRIVERS HAND, AS YOU WILL HAVE A SPOT TO HOLD IT (THEM) UP TO A CARD READER BEFORE YOU REACH THE OFFICER'S BOOTH.

More Links

Every person's story, history, vehicle, and reason to cross the border is different so I can't provide enough information to help each of you. I do hope that the links I've already listed have been helpful. Crossing the border shouldn't feel intimidating. Just be prepared.

For more in-depth information, these are links to the primary agencies that administer the entry of individuals into the U.S. and Canada.



FOR AMERICANS TRAVELLING INTO (OR THROUGH) CANADA

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY:

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/>

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/menu-eng.html>

Advice from U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION:

<https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/canada-mexico-travel>



FOR CANADIANS TRAVELLING INTO U.S.

I-94 OFFICIAL WEBSITE:

<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/home>

For Pets and Animal Products

<https://www.cdc.gov/importation/>

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION:

<https://www.cbp.gov/travel>

FARIA BEACH, Ventura County, CA

📷 Janice Tylor

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