

How to Fly to Canada

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Foreflight on the Ipad works well and includes everything you need. Make sure you download all the Foreflight data in the areas you will travel to.

Make sure your GPS database(s) include Canada and if not, figure out a solution for dealing with it.

Buy a US Customs & Border Control decal. About \$35 annually. Stick it on the outside of your airplane somewhere in the general vicinity of the boarding location. Their web site is terrible, if you get stuck, call them; they are nice on the phone. But do the web site first:

<https://dtops.cbp.dhs.gov/>

Sign up for Eapis. eapis.com. Create an account. Take a tutorial on AOPA. Not that hard. Tell Eapis your departure and arrival information. Dates are important; times are not. Guess at times, if they change, forget it. Yes, you need passports. Call your wife crew; it makes it easier later. Eapis will require you to change your password every 6 months and there are password rules; write it down.

IFR with ForeFlight - US to Canada and Canada to US - file & fly normally in ForeFlight. Alternatively (without ForeFlight) Canada to US - call Canadian FSS (866) 992-7433, give them your N number (make sure you say NXXXX) & he will walk you through the international flight plan sequence. He knows N number airplanes might not know it.

By the way, ForeFlight works leaving St. Pierre, France also, you just need a WiFi signal.

You can do it VFR on a VFR flight plan, but you need to be in radar contact squawking if radar services are available and talking if ATC radio is available. File a VFR flight plan and activate it. In remote areas, every situation is different. Do everything you can to convince them that you are not trying to sneak across the border.

If you file a flight plan in Canada, they will assume you took off even if you did not activate it, in some situations. Once you file a Canadian flight plan, you must keep updating the departure times or cancel it. Otherwise, they will be out looking for you.

Customs - Flying to Canada - Call Canpass (888) 226-7277 couple hours before (or more) you will arrive in Canada. The Canadian Flight Supplement tells you what airports international (required) and what hours customs are available (some are closed on Sunday's). Ask where to go on the airport. Sometimes it's at an FBO, sometimes a terminal building, sometimes a special customs building. When you land, call Canpass again & tell them you have arrived. They will either give you a reference number or tell you to wait for the agent. The agents are friendly. Write the reference number in your logbook or somewhere safe in case it comes up later (never happened to me in 100 trips).

Customs - Flying to the US - Call the individual US Customs guy you will meet. Phone numbers are elusive but the FBO at the airport you will land at, has it. He wants a couple hours of notice; give him your new arrival time and check that he has your Eapis info.

Pay attention to time zones. When you call the U.S. CBP (Customs & Border Patrol guy), you are talking to the guy you will meet. You can say things like "What time is it now? I will meet you 2 hours from now."

When you call Canpass, you are calling a clearinghouse central number in, I think, Ottawa. Then they call the local guy. You must tell them the local time of the person you will meet. Don't expect them to do the time zone conversion, they will get it wrong.

Common entry points in the U.S. I have used successfully:

- From New Brunswick & the Canadian Maritimes – Bangor, ME. Ground tells you where to park, they come out, then you taxi away to FBO or departure. Good FBO, food, fuel & mechanic.
- From Montreal, Burlington KBTX. Customs building is next to FBO building. Walk to offsite restaurant or crew car.
- From Toronto, Buffalo. Customs meets you at the FBO. Small landing fee, crew car for food.
- From Western Canada, International Falls is good, park in the yellow circle or something, ground tells you. They come out. Good FBO.
- For Alaska, Northway. No services, but it is near the highway crossing with big customs presence, so they drive over. Flight Service Station might still be there (seasonal).

For any of the above – call the customs guy to check nothing has changed.

Good idea - keep a copy of your passport in your luggage and/or brief case in case you lose it; a copy will get you through, but they will whine. Happened to me.

There are differences in ATC regulations but frankly, things that are recommended here are mandatory there (making CTAF announcements) and a few words the controllers use (radar identified instead of radar contact) are different but you can figure it out. When you depart a controlled airport in Canada, you are expected to change to departure frequency airborne. In the U.S., we wait for the tower to tell us. There are no gotchas.

VFR flights of more than 50 miles in Canada require a flight plan. Makes sense; lots of trees up there. The flight plan can be telling a friend to check on you and call the authorities if you don't show. The friend should know your route and times.

Use your N number up there and don't skip the "N". They will immediately know what you don't know and will help. If you don't understand something ATC says, ask. Especially, for example, out of radar contact or in uncontrolled airspace, both of which are common away from big cities.

Many airways up there are identified by NDB beacons instead of VORs, just enter the beacons into your GPS.

In Canada, if you are at, say, 9000', and you are cleared for an approach, that is your authorization to descend to the MSA altitude on the chart, when within the miles it says on the chart. That is starting to be true in the U.S. but more often true in Canada.

XM and ADSB weather work only in southern portions of Canada. They cut off at different places. Storm scopes still rule!

In 100 trips I have never been asked for a radio license or if I have a 406MHZ ELT. I did get a radio license from the FCC web site. I typed everything in & printed out a license. It was free!

Don't take guns to Canada; they don't like them. They especially don't like handguns. If you want to take a long gun up there, it's complicated and will require fees. Get advice.