



Know Before You Go

Regulations for International Travel
by U.S. Residents



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

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Note: Should you have questions
please visit help.cbp.gov or
call 1-877-227-5511 or 703-526-4200.

TRAVELER'S CHECKLIST

Do I have:

- U.S. Passport or other recommended ID for U.S. citizens? (Carry it; do not pack it). www.travel.state.gov.
- Green Card (Form I-551) or document for Lawful Permanent Residents? (Advance Parole if LPR status is pending) www.uscis.gov. Failure to have Form I-551 or document for lawful permanent residents could result in a \$545 waiver fee.
- Notarized travel permission letters for minors traveling without their parents?
- Entry documentation for the country(s) I will be visiting? (Is a Visa required?) www.state.gov. and search for "visa".
- Only the medication that I need for my trip and in its original container?
- Receipts or registration paperwork (CBP Form 4457) for any new electronics, such as a camera or laptop, that I'm taking with me? (Only suggested if traveling with recently purchased goods. Not necessary for goods more than 6 months old.)
- Proof of Rabies vaccinations for my dog if they are traveling with me? (Recommended but not required for cats. Check for requirements regarding other pets.) www.aphis.usda.gov and search for "pet travel".
- Permits and/or certificates if bringing restricted animal and plant commodities regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and plant Health Inspection Service.
- Appraisals or receipts if I'm traveling with a lot of new jewelry?
- Valid driver's license? Do I need an international driver's license in the country I am visiting? www.thenac.com/international_driving_permit.pdf or www.aaa.com.
- An envelope to put all the receipts for my purchases? (This will make filling out the CBP declaration easier.)
- Copy of this **Know Before You Go** brochure?

Information on items that do not have a Web site address after them can be found in this brochure or at www.cbp.gov/travel.

What Is CBP?

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, within the Department of Homeland Security, is responsible for keeping America's borders safe and secure. On March 1, 2003, CBP combined the inspectional work forces and broad border authorities of the U.S. Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture.

At CBP, our job is to keep terrorists, their weapons, and other illegal material or individuals from entering the United States, while also facilitating the flow of legitimate trade and travel. This mission is vitally important and we are dedicated to carrying it out to the best of our abilities.

Your Inspection

To keep our borders secure, we must inspect everyone who arrives at a U.S. port of entry. We pledge to treat you courteously and professionally. We do not assume that you have done anything wrong—because *very few* travelers actually violate the law.

As part of your inspection, you may be asked questions on:

- Your citizenship,
- The nature of your trip, and
- Anything you are bringing back to the United States that you did not have with you when you left.

We may also examine your baggage, including electronic equipment, or your car, which we have the legal authority to do. If we are checking your baggage, you will need to place it on the exam station and open it. (After the exam is completed, you will be asked to repack and close the baggage.) If at any point you are

unhappy with the way you are being treated, ask to speak to a CBP supervisor.

Terms Used In This Booklet

“Duty” and “dutiable” are words you will find frequently throughout this brochure:

- **Duty** is the amount of money you pay on items coming from another country. It is similar to a tax, except that duty is collected only on imported goods.
- **Dutiable** describes items on which duty may have to be paid. Most items have specific duty rates, which are determined by a number of factors, including where you got the item, where it was made and what it is made of.

Also, anything you bring back that you did not have when you left the United States must be “declared.” For example, you would declare alterations made in a foreign country to a suit you already owned, and any gifts you acquired overseas.

Check Our Web Site Before You Travel!

Please note that the information contained within this brochure may change. Visit the travel section of www.cbp.gov for the most up-to-date information.

Preparing To Return To The United States

When you return, you will need to declare everything you brought back that you did not take with you when you left the United States. You may be asked to fill out a CBP declaration form. You will probably find it easier and faster to fill out your declaration form and clear CBP if you do the following:

- Keep your sales slips.
- Try to pack the things you’ll need to declare separately.
- Read the signs in the arrival area.

Documents You Will Need To Enter The United States

All persons including citizens of the United States **traveling by air** between the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda will have to present a passport, Merchant Mariner Document (presented by U.S. citizen merchant mariners traveling on official business) or NEXUS Card, NEXUS enrollment is limited to citizens of the United States and Canada, and lawful permanent residents of the United States and Canada. Children will be required to present their own passport.

Beginning June 1, 2009, ages 16 and older will be required to present documents from one of the options below when entering the United States **at land or sea ports of entry**. Children under may present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or a Naturalization Certificate.

One of the following documents may be presented to prove both identity and citizenship:

- U.S. Passport;
- U.S. Passport Card;*
- Trusted Traveler Cards (NEXUS, SENTRI, FAST);*
- State issued Enhanced Driver's License (when available this secure driver's license will denote identity and citizenship);*
- Enhanced Tribal Cards (when available);*
- U.S. Military identification with Military Travel Orders;
- U.S. Merchant Marine document;
- Form I-872 American Indian Card.

** Frequent Land Border Crossers: To expedite processing into the United States, U.S. Customs and Border Protection recommends using one of the above asterisked documents.*

Lawful Permanent Residents

U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs), refugees and asylees will continue to be able to use their Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551), issued by DHS, or other evidence of permanent resident status or refugee or asylee status to apply for entry into the United States.

U.S. citizens traveling directly between the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Swains Island and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands will continue to be able to use established forms of identification to board flights and for entry.

Note: Identification requirements for entering or re-entering the U.S. may have change based on implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative please check getyouhome.gov for details.

Advance Parole

Caution

Due to recent changes to U.S. immigration law, travel outside of the United States may have severe consequences for aliens who are in the process of adjusting their status or applying for an immigrant visa (refugees and asylees). Upon return, these aliens may be found inadmissible, their applications may be denied, or both. It is important that the alien obtain the proper documentation **before** leaving the United States.

Aliens who have pending applications for certain immigration benefits need Advance Parole to re-enter the U.S. after traveling abroad.

An I-131 Application for Travel Document is filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) following the instructions found on their Web site, www.uscis.gov.

Note: this does not apply to aliens who have applied to adjust to permanent resident status and who maintain H-1B (Specialty Worker) or L-1 (Intracompany Transferee) status, or their dependents, who have applied to adjust to permanent resident status and who have valid H-1B or L status and valid visas, V nonimmigrants who have a valid V nonimmigrant visa, are in valid V nonimmigrant status and have or obtain a valid V nonimmigrant visa before applying for readmission to the US, and K-3/4 nonimmigrants who have applied to adjust to permanent resident status and who have a valid K-3/4 nonimmigrant visa, are in valid K-3/4 nonimmigrant status and have or obtain a valid K-3/4

nonimmigrant visa before applying for readmission to the United States.

Aliens who have a pending application for adjustment of status **must be approved for Advance Parole prior to leaving the United States in order to avoid termination for their pending application for adjustment.** This includes aliens who have:

- Filed an application for adjustment of status but have not received a decision from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services;
- Hold refugee or asylee status and intend to depart temporarily to apply for a U.S. immigrant visa in Canada; and/or
- An emergent personal or bona fide reason to travel temporarily abroad.

Applicants who are the beneficiary of a Private bill and applicants who are under deportation proceedings must file with the:

Department of Homeland Security
ATTN: Parole and Humanitarian Assistance Branch
425 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20536

Aliens in the United States are not eligible for Advance Parole if they are:

- In the United States illegally; or
- An exchange alien subject to the foreign residence requirement.

Please note that Advance Parole does not guarantee entry into the United States. Aliens with Advance Parole are still subject to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspection process at the port of entry.

For more information, please visit the State Department Web site at www.travel.state.gov or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Web site at www.dhs.gov. To apply for

a passport, U.S. citizens can visit www.travel.state.gov or call the U.S. Passport Office at 1-877-4USA-PPT or TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793. Foreign citizens or nationals should contact their respective governments to obtain passports.

Frequent Traveler Programs

Applicants must voluntarily undergo a thorough biographical background check against criminal, law enforcement, customs, immigration, and terrorist indices; a 10-fingerprint law enforcement check; and a personal interview with a CBP officer.

FAST

Free and Secure Trade, or FAST, is a joint initiative between CBP and its Canadian and Mexico counterparts that enhances border and trade security while simplifying the inspection of cross-border commercial shipments simpler, subjecting them to fewer delays.

When a FAST-approved driver arrives at the border, he or she presents to the CBP officer. Data declarations and verifications are done at a later time, away from the border.

Global Entry

The Global Entry program allows pre-approved, low-risk travelers expedited clearance upon arrival into the United States. U.S. citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents aged 14-years and older may apply to this program.

Participants will enter the United States by using automated self-service kiosks. To report their arrival, participants will use their machine-readable U.S. passport or permanent residency card, submit their fingerprints for biometric verification, and make a CBP declaration at the kiosk's touch-screen. After successfully completing the Global Entry process at the kiosk, the traveler will be issued a transaction receipt and directed to baggage claim and the exit, unless chosen for a selective or random secondary referral.

Global Entry participants are exempt from routine CBP questioning. However, on a random basis or if selected by CBP officers, they may be subject to additional screening at any time in the entry process.

For the latest information about the Global Entry pilot program, including current locations, or to apply please visit www.cbp.gov or www.globalentry.gov

NEXUS

The NEXUS program allows pre-approved, low-risk travelers to be processed with little or no delay by United States and Canadian officials at air, land and marine ports of entry in the United States and Canada. Travelers are able to use the NEXUS kiosks at the Canadian Preclearance airports, and approved applicants are issued a photo-identification/proximity card. Participants will present their NEXUS card and make a declaration. They are then released, unless chosen for a selective or random secondary referral.

SENTRI

Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection, or SENTRI, is a land border-crossing program that provides expedited CBP processing for pre-approved, low-risk travelers between Mexico and the U.S.

Once an applicant is approved they are issued a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Card that will identify their record and status in the CBP database upon arrival at the U.S. port of entry. An RFID decal is also issued to the applicant's vehicle or motorcycle. SENTRI users have access to specific, dedicated primary lanes into the United States.

SENTRI dedicated commuter lanes are located in San Ysidro and Calexico, Calif.; Nogales, Ariz.; and El Paso, Hidalgo, Brownsville and Laredo, Texas.

Global Online Enrollment System (GOES)

The Global Online Enrollment System, or GOES, allows registered users to enter their own applications for U.S. Customs and Border Protection trusted traveler programs, and approved members to edit their information as needed. Note that mistakes on the original

application cannot be corrected once the application is certified. Mistakes will need to be brought to the attention of CBP during your interview.

Once a completed application is certified by the applicant and the non-refundable payment is successfully processed, CBP will review it and determine whether or not to conditionally approve the application. If it is conditionally approved, your GOES account will be updated to instruct you to schedule an appointment for an interview. Every individual who would like to apply for membership—children included—must create a separate account within GOES, submit a separate application, and schedule an interview appointment upon conditional approval.

What You Must Declare

- Items you purchased and are carrying with you upon return to the United States.
- Items you received as gifts, such as wedding or birthday presents.
- Items you inherited.
- Items you bought in duty-free shops, on the ship, or on the plane.
- Repairs or alterations to any items you took abroad and then brought back, even if the repairs/alterations were performed free of charge.
- Items you brought home for someone else.
- Items you intend to sell or use in your business, including business merchandise that you took out of the United States on your trip.

Also, if you acquired items in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, or in a Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act country (see section on \$800 exemption for a list of these countries) and asked the merchant to send them to you, you must still declare

them when you go through customs. This *differs from the usual procedure for mailed items*, which is discussed in the section on **Sending Items Back to the United States**.

You must state on the CBP declaration, in U.S. currency, what you actually paid for each item. The price must include all taxes. If you don't know for sure, estimate. If you did not buy the item yourself—for example, if it is a gift—estimate its fair retail value in the country where you received it.

Remember: Even if you used the item you bought on your trip, it's still dutiable. You must declare the item at the price you paid or, if it was a gift, at its fair market value.

Tip: Register Items Before You Leave The United States

If your laptop computer was made in Japan—for instance—you might have to pay duty on it each time you bring it back into the United States, unless you could prove that you owned it before you left on your trip. Documents that fully describe the item—such as sales receipts, insurance policies, or jeweler's appraisals—are acceptable forms of proof.

To make things easier, you can register certain items with CBP before you depart—including watches, cameras, laptop computers, firearms, and CD players—as long as they have serial numbers or other unique, permanent markings. Take the items to the nearest CBP office and request a Certificate of Registration for Personal Effects Taken Abroad (CBP Form 4457). It shows that you had the items with you before leaving the United States and all items listed on it will be allowed duty-free entry. CBP officers must see the item you are registering in order to certify the certificate of registration. You can also register items with CBP at the international airport from which you're departing. Keep the certificate for future trips.

Duty-Free Exemption

The duty-free exemption, also called the *personal exemption*, is the total value of merchandise you may bring back to the United States without having to pay duty. You may bring back more than your exemption, but you will have to pay duty on it. In most cases, the personal exemption is \$800, but there are some exceptions to this rule, which are explained below.

Exemptions

Depending on the countries you have visited, your personal exemption will be \$200, \$800, or \$1,600. There are limits on the amount of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products you may include in your duty-free personal exemption. The differences are explained in the following section.

The duty-free exemptions (\$200, \$800, or \$1,600) apply if:

- The items are for your personal or household use or intended to be given as gifts.
- They are in your possession, that is, they accompany you when you return to the United States. Items to be sent later may not be included in your \$800 duty-free exemption. (Exceptions apply for goods sent from Guam or the U.S. Virgin Islands.)
- They are declared to CBP. If you do not declare something that should have been declared, you risk forfeiting it. If in doubt, declare it.
- You are returning from an overseas stay of at least 48 hours. For example, if you leave the United States at 1:30 p.m. on June 1, you would complete the 48-hour period at 1:30 p.m. on June 3. This time limit does not apply if you are returning from Mexico or from the U.S. Virgin Islands. (See also the section on the \$200 exemption.)
- You have not used all of your exemption allowance, or used any part of it, in the past 30 days.

For example, if you go to England and bring back \$150 worth of items, you must wait another 30 days before you are allowed another \$800 exemption. (See the section on the \$200 exemption.)

- The items are not prohibited or restricted as discussed in the section on Prohibited and Restricted Items. Note the embargo prohibitions on products of Cuba.

Joint Declaration

Family members who live in the same home and return together to the United States may combine their personal exemptions. This is called a **joint declaration**. For example, if Mr. and Mrs. Smith travel overseas and Mrs. Smith brings home a \$1,000 piece of glassware, and Mr. Smith buys \$600 worth of clothing, they can combine their individual \$800 exemptions on a joint declaration and not have to pay duty.

Children and infants are allowed the same exemption as adults, except for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

\$200 Exemption

If you cannot claim other exemptions because:

- You have been out of the country more than once in a 30-day period or because
- You have not been out of the country for at least 48 hours.

You may still bring back \$200 worth of items free of duty and tax. As discussed earlier, these items must be for your personal or household use.

If you bring back more than \$200 worth of dutiable items, or if any item is subject to duty or tax, the entire amount will be dutiable. For instance, you were out of the country for 36 hours and came back with a \$300 piece of pottery. You could not deduct \$200 from its value and pay duty on \$100. The pottery would be dutiable for the full value of \$300.

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