



Canada-U.S Border Opens for the 1st Time Since March 2020: Here's What You Should Know

Description

Finally, after 19 months of border lockdowns, not to mention three months after Canada reopened its border to Americans, the U.S. is finally open to Canadians traveling by land. That means no more twisted air routes or two-hour drives to the nearest airport when the border is only 20 minutes away. Finally, Canadians can pop over the border and return with little hassle.

Well, sort of.

Though the border has (hallelujah) opened, you may still have to go through some hoops to go there and back. If you want to go to the U.S. in the near future, here's what you need to know.

The requirements

To enter the United States, you need to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and have appropriate documentation.

That seems simple enough. But, much to everyone's surprise (and anguish), the real friction happens when you return to Canada.

In order to go back across the border, you need to test negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of crossing. With a rapid test, that isn't a problem. But here *is* the problem: as of right now, Canada isn't accepting rapid tests for border re-entry.

The only test results the Canadian government accepts are negative PCR tests ("polymerase chain reaction" tests). These tests are expensive, ranging from \$150 to \$300, and they can require more than a day to come back with results. Not only that, but PCR tests are harder to find than rapid ones.

Oddly enough, the Canadian government does give you the option of getting a negative PCR test in Canada, traveling to the U.S., and returning with the negative PCR test results as your ticket. As long as you do all of those within 72 hours of getting your negative test results, you'll be permitted entry.

For trips that are longer, however, you'll have to get a PCR test in the U.S. before you can come back to Canada.

Will Canada drop the PCR test requirements?

By far the biggest disappointment is Canada's PCR test requirement. PCR tests cost \$150 to \$300 per test. For a family of four, you're looking at spending around \$600 to \$1,200. And that's just on COVID testing.

This has angered Canadians. And not just travelers. The mayors of border cities, such as Niagara Falls and Windsor, are calling on the government to lift the PCR test requirement. It seems unnecessary, especially since Canadians can test negative in Canada, contract the virus in the U.S., and come back to Canada, entering with an inaccurate PCR test. A rapid test, however, would most likely come back positive.

As of writing this, the Canadian government has stated that they will look carefully at the requirement. My guess is that the government is being extra careful for these first couple of weeks. They may be slow to lift the requirement, but hang in there Canada — we'll have frictionless travel here soon enough.

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