



Air Canada's Portable COVID-19 Test Could Make Crossing the U.S. Border Easier, But Here's What You Should Know First

Description

On November 8, the Canadian-U.S. border finally opened for land travelers, though for many Canadians, that “grand opening” was only partial. That’s because Canadians are under obligation to submit a negative PCR COVID-19 test in order to return to Canada — a test that can cost anywhere from \$150 to \$300 and take a few days to process.

Fortunately, it appears Canada will soon drop the PCR test for those taking short trips (under 72 hours). Though we’re unsure when that will happen, the government is expected to make an official announcement on Friday.

For those traveling longer than 72 hours, however, the PCR test may still be a requirement. And if you’re one of the unlucky few who must take this test for re-entry, you might have one slightly easier option: get a portable COVID-19 test from **Air Canada**.

What is a portable COVID-19 test?

Several weeks ago, Air Canada introduced a new self-administered COVID-19 test. A product of its partnership with Canadian-based healthcare company Switch Health, this portable COVID-19 test complies with the Canadian government’s travel requirements for re-entry. In other words, it’s a molecular test, not a rapid one.

That means, instead of searching for a PCR test at an American medical facility, you can take the test from pretty much anywhere. Results are ready in 45 minutes or less, and you can view them online.

The only drawback: you have to be an Aeroplan member to buy the test. In addition, the test (called RT-LAMP) costs \$149, and it takes around seven business days to arrive. A second drawback is that the tests are in short supply. If you don’t act fast, you might not get one before your trip to the States.

One bit of good news is that the RT-LAMP will earn you 500 points per kit. That means, if you’re

getting kits for a family of four, you could earn 2,000 points, or around \$40 in cash back.

Should you get one?

Again, the tests are in short supply. Right now, you have to join a waiting list for the RT-LAMP, with no date as to when Air Canada and Switch Health will produce more tests. That can be a major deterrent, especially if you're looking to travel in the next week or so.

Even if the wait for that test isn't long, we're still unsure if the Canadian travel requirements will last. Just for perspective, the U.S. doesn't require its citizens to submit a PCR test for re-entry. Will the Canadian government do the same for Canadian travelers?

While it's hard to predict, I think it's very probably that the PCR test will be dropped, perhaps sooner than Air Canada's portable COVID-19 test will arrive at your door. For now, if you're an Aeroplan member, I would join the waiting list for the portable COVID-19 test. It doesn't cost you to join the list, and you just have to leave your email address.

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