

Step by Step Border Crossing Guide

This no doubt seems like a long list, but in practice, it isn't too bad, particularly once you've done it once. Most of the items are done before flight day.

If you plan on flying IFR, and are not GPS equipped, consider going VFR. The transition to PBN in the Windsor – Quebec City corridor is almost complete, and ATC may not know what to do with you (even though they should).

As soon as the decision to make the trip has been made:

1. Go to https://dtops.cbp.dhs.gov/main/login_internet.jsp#, sign up for an account (free) and purchase a CPB decal for your airplane (\$25). It's good for a year.
2. When the confirming email with your decal number arrives (next day), save it
3. When the decal itself arrives, stick it on the airplane.
4. Get your charts, either paper or electronic
 - a. Foreflight and Garmin Pilot require an additional subscription for Canada
 - b. FltPlan .com is free.
5. Download the required charts to your iPad
 - a. You will need the US NE sectionals (NY if using paper) and the US NE low level (if IFR)
 - b. Also, if IFR, you will need the IAPs for the Canadian provinces you intend to visit (e.g. Ontario, Quebec). Even if you're not using FltPlan.com, you will need the IAPs, and it probably is not worth the cost of the Canadian subscription to ForeFlight or Garmin Pilot, so sign up for FltPlan.com, download the IAPs, and print them. You get them on the website. You may see some NavCanada copyright notices about not printing their charts. Ignore them.
6. Download the Canada Flight Supplement (equivalent of the AFD). If using paper, you can manage without this rather bulky document
7. Decide on your departure and destination outbound and inbound
8. If on an ICS fly-in, you will already know the Canadian end. It needs to have customs (check the CFS, and call 1 888 CANPASS, just to be sure)
9. For the return flight inbound to the US, you also need to land where customs is available
10. Airports where customs are "normally available" can be obtained here:

<https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/20140327%20Airports%20where%20CBP%20Inspection%20Services%20are%20Normally%20Available.doc.pdf>

11. This provides the telephone numbers for customs, but not the hours of availability
 - a. The only way to determine their hours now appears to be to call them.
The best bets for evening/weekend service seems to be larger airports and/or airports close to land border crossing points (e.g. Massena, Buffalo, Cleveland-Hopkins)

About 3 weeks before departure:

12. Now, you need to decide how you are going to submit your eAPIS manifests outbound and inbound. There are two ways to do this
 - a. The CPB eAPIS website:

https://eapis.cbp.dhs.gov/auth/login.html?resource_url=https%3A%2F%2Feapis.cbp.dhs.gov%2Feapisj%2Feapis%2Flogin

You will first need to enroll (free), then log in to fill out your details for each manifest. This site has limited capability to store information for use in more than one manifest (and you will have at least two – one outbound and one inbound).

Even if you choose the FlashPass option, you should enroll in the eAPIS website and note your user name and password, because FlashPass needs this information, and it is possible that the FlashPass server could go down.

- b. The FlashPass app. You can find out the details at <https://www.flashpass.net/>

This app allows you to store data about crew members, passengers, aircraft, and manifests. There is no cost for the app., but it costs \$10 to file each manifest, or \$60/year for unlimited manifests. They have a 30-day free trial offer, hence waiting until 3 weeks before the trip to start. It looks like you can download the app and enter all your data. The 30 day clock does not start until you submit your first manifest, but this needs to be confirmed.

13. You can depart any airport you want, even if it's not on the list. If you are using the eAPIS website to submit your manifest, you will need to supply both the actual airport of departure, and the nearest one with customs facilities.

A few days before the flight:

14. Start looking at the weather and other details. The NWS long range prog charts http://www.nws.noaa.gov/outlook_tab.php, along with civilian forecasts, provide the first indication of the weather you can expect. US weather is available from ADDS, and Canadian from:

https://flightplanning.navcanada.ca/cgi-bin/CreePage.pl?Langue=anglais&NoSession=NS_Inconnu&Page=forecast-observation&TypeDoc=html

The Canadian weather only provides a rather short window of around 12 hours in most cases, so is only useful on the day of flight.

15. Make sure all your aircraft documents are on board and current (C of A, C of R, insurance certificate, pilot license etc.)

You also need to decide how you will file your flight plan. You will need to file an international flight plan in the ICAO format, VRF or IFR. Most of the major EFB software products now support filing to and within Canada to, and from Canada/ Or pick up the phone and call Flight Service.

16. Prepare your manifest for submission, using either the eAPIS website, or Flash Pass. With the eAPIS website, you can prepare a manifest partially, log off, and come back to complete it later, but you can only work on one manifest at a time, so you will have to submit your outbound manifest before you can start working on your inbound one. With FlashPass, you can have as many manifests as you like in progress. You will need the names, addresses, passport numbers and expiry dates, and pilot license numbers and expiry numbers available to do this. You will also need to specify your border crossing point and time.

On the day before your flight:

17. Submit your outbound manifest. There is no need to call US customs outbound. You can also submit your inbound (return) manifest at this time. CBP website users should certainly consider doing so. You should receive confirming emails from CPB. Keep a copy, just in case.
18. For the return flight, call US customs at your Airport of Entry, using the number you found in step10 to arrange your return clearance. Make sure to check the location where you will meet them. Also confirm that you should stay in the airplane. At a few locations, notably in Florida, they don't like to come out onto the hot ramp, and expect you to go inside.

Two hours before your estimated arrival in Canada

19. Call Canada customs at 1-888-CANPASS, and say you'd like to arrange for inbound clearance at your Canadian Airport of Entry. Have the passport numbers of all aboard available in case they ask for details
20. File your flight plan. At terminals which have published arrivals, IFR pilots should plan to route via a point on the arrival most suited to your route. In the case of Hamilton (CYHM), for example, you should route via either AVSOX, COLTS or TIKUM. Smaller terminals, like London (CYXU) do not have published arrivals, so just route direct.
21. Add the following to your pre-takeoff checklist:
 - a. All aircraft documents on board and current
 - b. eAPIS manifest submitted
 - c. CANPASS called
 - d. Flight plan activated

Enroute:

22. Be sure you are assigned a transponder code before you cross the border. You will get this automatically if you are IFR, or if you use flight following.

On arrival in Canada:

23. Request taxi to customs, proceed there, and shut down. Wait a few minutes. Most likely, nobody will be there to meet you. Call 1 888 CANPASS again. Expect to be put on hold for a while. Report your arrival, and copy the report number they give you. That's it – you're in.

Prior to departure from Canada:

24. Call customs at your US port of entry if you have not already done so, or if your ETA has changed significantly
25. File your return flight plan. If using the old fashioned way, you should call 1 866 WXBRIEF
26. Canada Customs don't want to know about your departure

Enroute:

27. As you did on arrival, make sure you get a discrete transponder code before you cross the border.
28. Taxi to the point you agreed to meet customs, and shut down
29. Have your passports ready.
30. Customs *will* meet you. They'll probably go over your airplane with a Geiger counter. Don't crack any jokes about Donald Trump, just in case he voted for him!