

# Center for Student Missions

## What Americans Need to Know When Coming to Canada

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When you come to Toronto, you will be coming to a different country. The following guidelines are offered to prepare you for both crossing the border, and for the differences you will discover between Canada and the U.S.

1. At the border, you will be asked for some form of identification to prove your citizenship. A passport or birth certificate is accepted; a driver's license is not. You may also be asked for some photo ID. Minors should have written permission from their guardians. U.S. citizens may enter Canada without a visa. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you should check with authorities before you come to be sure you would not have problems reentering the U.S. *Please refer to the US Department of State's Website ([http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc\\_2223.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html)) for the most updated info on what travel documents are required.*
2. If you are taking prescription drugs, be sure that they are in a clearly marked container for ease in border crossing.
3. Toronto has been strongly influenced by Canada's open immigration policy. Between 2001 and 2005, Canada attracted an average of 107,000 international immigrants each year. The City of Toronto welcomed two thirds (69,000). For this reason *tolerance* is a characteristic that has been elevated as the highest value. This is an attempt to help make a multicultural society work. Racism always exists but you need to be prepared that it looks very different in Toronto.
4. Toronto is predominantly English speaking. Canada is officially bilingual, but French is spoken mostly in the province of Quebec.
5. Bring winter clothing from November through April and expect to have cold weather. A warm coat and extra sweaters and socks, as well as boots, hat and gloves are advisable. June through September can be hot, so bring shorts, etc. Other months are quite variable, so come prepared for anything!
6. Canada has its own currency, so change your money into Canadian dollars before you arrive. American dollars are not widely accepted, and where they are, the exchange rate is usually very unfavorable.
7. Remember that, during your stay, *you are guests* of another country. Respect the differences you encounter (and don't make fun of them!). You are the one who has the funny accent here!
8. On the surface, some things may seem familiar, but are actually quite different. For example, blacks in the U.S. often look to Africa for their roots and prefer the label "African-American". In Toronto, 85% of the black population is of West Indian descent. Most blacks think of themselves as Jamaican, Barbadian, etc. The term "black" is acceptable.
9. Canada uses the metric system of measurement. Traffic speed limits are posted in kilometers per hour (kph) rather than miles per hour (mph). For example, 100 kph=60 mph. Temperature is measured in degrees Celsius, not Fahrenheit. For example, 0 degrees Celsius=32 degrees Fahrenheit. Gasoline is measured in litres, not gallons. For example, 3.785 litres=1 U.S. gallon.
10. If you are using a borrowed vehicle, be sure to have a letter of permission from the owner, as well as the vehicle's registration and insurance information.
11. Expect to pay up to twice as much for gasoline as you would pay in the U.S
12. There are only a few times you will ever see a patriotic Canadian. The first is when hockey is involved. The second is when a Canadian is talking to an American. You may run into some anti-American sentiments. Don't try to defend your country --just be friendly.
13. Tim Hortons is an essential part of everyday life for most Canadians. The 2<sup>nd</sup> best thing is Second Cup (the Canadian equivalent for Starbucks fans). That's really the most important thing you need to know when coming to CSM Toronto!