



## Canada Border Services Agency Rules for Christmas Travel

By Cyndee Todgham Cherniak on December 15th, 2015

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If you are traveling for Christmas (whether it is to Canada to visit family/friends or returning to Canada after a trip abroad), your time with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will be less stressful if you follow a few simple rules:

1. Don't bring wrapped gifts. While wrapped gifts are not against the law in Canada, the CBSA wants to know what is the gift. The CBSA may ask you to unwrap the gift (possibly in front of the recipient of the gift). It is better to use gift bags. If the gift is for someone traveling with you, you may ask the CBSA officer to look at the contents away from a traveling companion's eyes;
2. Have copies of all receipts for the gifts in your possession when crossing the border. There is no rule that the copy must be the original copy. You can have a photocopy or a photograph on your smart phone;
3. If you receive gifts outside Canada, you must know the value of the gift. While normally it is considered to be rude to ask the giver of a gift about the price, it is a must when you must be able to verify a value to a CBSA officer. If you do not declare the correct amount for the gift, the CBSA may seize the gift and charge you a penalty to get it back. Kindly explain to Grandma/Mom/Dad/Giftgiver that you love the gift and you would appreciate a copy of the invoice so that the CBSA does not take it away from you;
4. If you travel outside Canada for Christmas and bring gifts purchased in Canada with you, also bring copies of the receipts. For example, a husband and wife go to Bahamas for Christmas and the husband was very generous and brought a gift of a Rolex watch purchased in Yorkville, Toronto. The CBSA will assume that the gift was purchased wherever you were on your vacation (e.g., Bahamas). If you have a photocopy of the receipt from the Toronto store and any unique identifiers (eg., the serial number on the watch), you will be able to alleviate the CBSA's concerns;
5. If you are bringing gifts to Canada that will stay behind, you must tell the CBSA officer about the gifts and provide the value of the gifts. The CBSA has to determine whether the gift is subject to border duties and taxes;
6. Gifts purchased for yourself at the duty free store outside Canada must be reported to the CBSA and included in your declaration;
7. Be careful what gifts you give. Do not bring into Canada gift of drugs (this is a given), pornography (certain

pornography is considered to be obscene materials in Canada), prohibited foods, etc.;

8. Declare any gifts of alcohol or tobacco products. Canada restricts the number of items that may enter duty-free; and

9. If you live in Canada and are picking up parcels at a mailbox/dropbox in the United States, know the value of the good. Often the person driving the vehicle is not the person who purchased the good in the parcel. Make sure you provide this information to the family member/friend/employee who is picking up the parcel for you. The person may never do another favour for you again if they get their NEXUS card cancelled because their good deed was punished because they did not have all relevant information.

If you follow these simple rules, you may even have a pleasant visit with the CBSA. It will be a shorter visit with the CBSA.

Tags: Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, Christmas, Customs, duties, gifts, taxes

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