

FACT SHEET
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman

2010 Winter Olympics

The XXIst Olympic Winter Games and the Xth Paralympic Winter Games will take place in and around Vancouver and Whistler, Canada, from February 12-28, 2010, and March 12-21, 2010, respectively. For additional information on the XXIst Olympic Winter Games, including information on hotel accommodations, tickets, transportation, and advice for spectators, please see the website of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games at <http://www.vancouver2010.com>. For information on the Xth Paralympic Winter Games, please see its website at <http://www.vancouver2010.com/paralympic-games/>. American citizens planning to travel to Canada to see or participate in the Games should visit U.S. Consulate General Vancouver's website at <http://vancouver.usconsulate.gov/content/index.asp>.

Before You Go:

Travel Documents and Entry Requirements:

American travelers to Canada should not depart the United States without a valid passport or other Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) compliant document (for land and sea border crossings), as these are needed for re-entry into the United States. For information on entering the United States and WHTI compliant documents, including "Special Audiences," please see <http://www.dhs.gov/files/crossingborders/> or www.getyouhome.gov. For information on how to obtain or replace a U.S. passport, please see the Department of State's webpage on [Passport Services and Information](#).

Canadian law requires that all persons entering Canada carry both proof of citizenship **and** proof of identity. Children under sixteen need only present proof of U.S. citizenship. U.S. citizens entering Canada from a third country must have a valid U.S. passport. A visa is not required for U.S. citizens to visit Canada for up to 180 days. Anyone seeking to enter Canada for any purpose other than a visit (e.g. to work, study or immigrate) must qualify for the appropriate entry status, and should contact the Canadian Embassy or nearest consulate and visit the [Canadian immigration web site](#).

Minors traveling with only one parent or without their parents may find it useful to carry a written consent letter from the non-traveling parent(s) authorizing their international travel. The letter should contain the minor's name and date of birth, the relationship to the minor, the statement of consent, the parent(s) names and signatures, and a copy of the non-traveling parent's photo ID.

Anyone with a criminal record [including certain misdemeanors or Driving While Impaired (DWI) charges] may be barred from entering Canada and must obtain a special waiver well in advance of any planned travel. Refer to the Canadian citizenship and immigration web site to determine [whether you may be inadmissible and how to overcome this finding](#).

For [further information on entry requirements](#), travelers may contact the Canadian Embassy at 501 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20001, tel. (202) 682-1740; or the Canadian consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, San Juan, or Seattle.

Traveling by Road:

Officials estimate Interstate-5 Peace Arch border crossing volumes during the games will be at 124% of peak summer traffic, with similar increases expected at all British Columbia-Washington State land borders within the Vancouver vicinity. Visitors arriving by car should allow sufficient time for border crossings in both directions. Northbound border crossing information can be found at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/border/>. Southbound border crossing information can be found at <http://images.drivebc.ca/bchighwaycam/pub/html/www/index-Border.html>.

Register with the Consulate:

The Department of State urges you to [register](#) with the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver, preferably before you travel, via our [Internet-Based Registration System](#). This will help us locate you in the event there is a general emergency or if someone in the United States needs to reach you about an urgent matter. Travel registration is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. Registration allows you to record information about your country of residence or upcoming trip abroad. You should leave a copy of your itinerary, a copy of your passport data pages, and your contact information with family or friends.

Medical Care:

No Canadian health care provider accepts U.S. domestic health insurance. Visitors who seek any medical attention in Canada should be prepared to pay cash in full at the time the service is rendered. Traveler's medical insurance is highly recommended even for brief visits, including insurance for medical evacuations. Medicare recipients should know that Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad. For more information, see the State Department's flyer [Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad](#).

For the latest information regarding H1N1 flu, please visit <http://flu.gov> or www.fightflu.ca.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: IMPORTATION OF FIREARMS: Firearms are much more strictly controlled in Canada than in the United States. Violation of firearms restrictions may result in arrest, prosecution, imprisonment, and deportation. As of January 1, 2001, visitors bringing any firearms into Canada, or planning to borrow and use firearms while in Canada, must declare the firearms in writing using a Non-Resident Firearm Declaration form. Visitors planning to borrow a firearm in Canada must obtain in advance a Temporary Firearms Borrowing License. These forms must be signed before a Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) officer at the border and no photocopies are available at the border. [Full details and downloadable forms are available from the Canada Firearms Program](#). Canadian law requires that officials confiscate firearms and weapons from persons crossing the border who deny having the items in their possession. Confiscated firearms and weapons are never returned. Possession of an undeclared firearm may result in arrest, prosecution, imprisonment, and deportation.

Canada has three classes of firearms: non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited. Non-restricted firearms include most ordinary hunting rifles and shotguns. These may be brought temporarily into Canada for sporting or hunting use during hunting season, use in competitions, in-transit movement through Canada, or personal protection against wildlife in remote areas of Canada. Anyone wishing to bring hunting rifles into Canada must be at least 18 years old, must properly store the firearm for transport, and must follow the declaration requirements described above. Restricted firearms are primarily handguns;

however, pepper spray, mace, and some knives also are included in this category. A restricted firearm may be brought into Canada, but an Authorization to Transport permit must be obtained in advance from a Provincial or Territorial Chief Firearms Officer. Prohibited firearms include fully automatic, converted automatics, and assault-type weapons. Prohibited firearms are not allowed into Canada.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: PORNOGRAPHY AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES:

Canada has strict laws concerning child pornography, and in recent years there has been an increase in random checks of electronic media of travelers entering Canada. Computers are subject to search without a warrant at the border, and illegal content can result in the seizure of the computer as well as detention, arrest and prosecution of the bearer.

Please contact the Embassy of Canada in Washington, DC, or one of [Canada's consulates in the United States](#) for more information regarding customs requirements, including information on carrying prescription drugs into Canada.

While You're There:

The closest U.S. Consulate or Embassy to the city of Vancouver is the U.S. Consulate General in Vancouver (see contact information at the end of this document). U.S. consuls stand ready to [assist Americans](#) in a variety of emergency situations abroad, including lost and stolen passports, illness, temporary destitution, crime, or arrest. If an American citizen becomes seriously ill or injured abroad, a U.S. consular officer can assist in locating appropriate medical services and informing family or friends. If necessary, a consular officer can also assist in the transfer of funds from the United States. However, payment of hospital and other expenses is the responsibility of the traveler. Your medical insurance company can advise you on whether your policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. For information on Canadian doctors and dentists, please see the [List of Doctors and Dentists in British Columbia and the Yukon](#) for doctors and dentists who have expressed interest in serving American citizen clients.

If your U.S. passport is lost or stolen, you will need to apply for a replacement at the U.S. Consulate General in Vancouver or one of our other offices in Canada before continuing your travel abroad or returning to the United States. For more information, please see the State Department's [Frequently Asked Questions](#). Note that the Consulate General in Vancouver will offer expanded hours during the Olympics and Paralympics in February and March 2010.

American citizens who need financial assistance should explore commercial options such as [Western Union](#) or other money wire services, credit card advances, or automatic teller machines (ATMs). In emergencies, the U.S. Consulate can help you contact family and friends to have them send money. For more information, please see the Department of State's webpage on [Providing Financial Assistance to Americans Abroad](#) and its link to the Department's [Overseas Citizens Services Trusts](#).

Please note that consular officers in our Consulate General in Vancouver and other offices in Canada cannot act as travel agents, ticket brokers, banks, lawyers, investigators, post offices, or law enforcement officers. They cannot find you employment, provide you with residence or driving permits, search for missing luggage, or settle disputes with hotel managers. They can, however, tell you how to get help on these and other matters.

Americans traveling or living in Canada are subject to the Canadian legal system and can be arrested for violating local law. The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, and the Consulate in Vancouver **cannot** prevent an arrest, have charges dropped, or request an American be released from jail or prison. However, U.S. consular officers can provide other types of assistance. For more information, please see the Department's flyer on [Assistance to Americans Arrested Abroad](#). If you seek an attorney in British Columbia, please see the [Consulate General's list of lawyers](#) for attorneys who have expressed interest in representing American clients.

Despite the best preparation, crises like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or mass-transportation accidents can occur. For information on what you can do in a crisis and how the U.S. Government can assist you, please see the Department of State's webpage on [Crisis Awareness](#).

Security Assessment:

The U.S. Government remains concerned about the sustained international terrorists threats directed against U.S. citizens and interests abroad. While there have been no specific, credible terrorist threats to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games, in the post-September 11th world, the threat from international terrorist groups at major public events is always a principal concern. As security increases in and around Olympic venues, terrorists could shift their focus to more unprotected Olympic venues, open public spaces, hotels, railway and other transportation systems, churches, restaurants, and other sites not associated with the Olympics. U.S. citizens planning to attend Olympic events or to participate in any large-scale public gatherings during the Olympic Games are advised to use caution and to be alert to their surroundings at all times. This includes the periods immediately before and after these events.

Al-Qaida's demonstrated capability to carry out sophisticated attacks against sizable structures – such as ships, large office buildings, embassies, and hotels – makes it one of the greatest potential threats to the Olympics. Threats could also emanate from extremists who may not be directly controlled by al-Qaida, as occurred in the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004, and the subway and bus bombings in London on July 7 and 21, 2005.

Domestic protest groups, supporting various political causes, may attempt to disrupt the Olympics through demonstrations or other activities. While the Canadian security services are highly skilled at protecting large events and controlling demonstrations, even peaceful events can turn violent, and Americans are therefore advised to avoid any areas of public protest.

One way to make your foreign travel safer and more enjoyable is to inform yourself of what you will find when you arrive overseas. The Department of State publishes a Consular Information Sheet for Canada that includes information on usual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, usual currency and entry regulations, as well as crime and security – including risk of terrorism and drug penalties. Consular Information Sheets include information designed to help you make your own decisions about travel.

For additional information on safety/security in Canada, please see the following:

- [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement](#)
- Department of State's [Country Specific Information for Canada](#)
- Department of State's ["A Safe Trip Abroad"](#)
- Department of State's ["Top 10 Tips for Travelers"](#)

Useful Contact Information:

- U.S. Embassy in Ottawa
 - tel.: (613) 688-5335
 - address: 490 promenade Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario
- U.S. Consulate General in Vancouver
 - tel.: (604) 685-4311
 - address: 1075 West Pender Street, Vancouver, British Columbia
- Department of State's Office of American Citizens Services and Crisis Management
 - within U.S. and Canada: 1-888-407-4747
 - from overseas: 001-202-501-4444
- Department of State's National Passport Information Center
 - within the U.S.: 1-877-487-2778
 - TDD/TTY from within the U.S.: 1-888-874-7793
 - American citizens overseas should contact the [closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) for information about passports.
- Local Authorities
 - Police: 911
 - Ambulance (fees may be applicable): 911
 - Fire Department: 911
- Useful Links
 - U.S. Embassy Ottawa's website is <http://canada.usembassy.gov/>
 - U.S. Consulate General Vancouver's website is <http://vancouver.usconsulate.gov/>
 - U.S. Department of State's website about travel and living abroad is <http://travel.state.gov/>
 - U.S. Department of State's website for passport information is <http://travel.state.gov/passport/index.html>
 - Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games Organizing Committee's (VANOC) website is <http://www.vancouver2010.com/>
 - Vancouver Paralympic Winter Games website is <http://www.vancouver2010.com/paralympic-games/>