

Canadian Newsletter

Travel insurance information for Canadian travellers



Canadians Come From Away

Friendship works both ways and this has been the story of Canada and the United States since Canada became a country on July 1, 1867. Throughout our shared history we have welcomed visitors to each of our respective countries. In 2016, over 80% of Canada's exports (\$297B out of \$364B) were made to the US. During the "Cold War" we worked together to create the "Distant Early Warning" or "DEW" line along the Canadian arctic and today, the "North Warning System" is in place.

On September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, and the crash of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania lead to the closing of the airspace in North America. A total of 270 international flights on route to Canada were told to go back to their point of origin. Another 224 flights already in Canadian airspace were told to land immediately regardless of their ultimate destination. Meanwhile, over 500 flights were on route to the US that day and many turned back but others were beyond the point of returning. These flights were diverted to various Canadian airports on the Atlantic coast.

Canada initiated "Operation Yellow Ribbon" to handle the unexpected flight arrivals and how to care for the passengers and crew while they remained stranded for days. For example, 38 flights landed in Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador that day. There were 6,122 passengers and 473 crew members (total of 6,595 people) requiring food, personal care products, and sleeping facilities for days in a relatively isolated town with a population of 11,688 people. Canadians opened up their homes and their wallets, supplies were brought in and everyone received care during those troubled times. The event has been immortalized in a stage musical called "Come From Away".

Quiz Question: How long is the Canadian-US border? The answer is on page 4.

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Let Travel Insurance Office Inc. contribute to your next event.



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1-800-550-1295
www.travelinsuranceoffice.com

Travel Tips If You Have a Medical Emergency

How you can avoid incurring unnecessary costs

1. If you have a medical emergency contact your travel insurance assistance provider as soon as possible.

Most travel insurance policies have a clause that requires you to contact the assistance provider as soon as reasonably possible if you have a medical emergency. Otherwise, benefits payable under the policy may be reduced by 50%-80%. This percentage varies by policy. The penalty is waived if you are unconscious or physically unable to call and someone on your behalf is unable to contact the assistance provider.

The purpose of the clause is to get the assistance provider and insurance company involved immediately in the management of the claim. The assistance provider will ensure all necessary tests and treatment are provided to you. They will not authorize unnecessary tests and procedures. Managing claims means working with the medical providers and ensuring there is no overbilling. Managing claims has a direct impact on travel insurance rates.

2. Save all original receipts in case you're out of pocket and want to be reimbursed.

Your travel insurance provider works with medical providers to arrange payment of your medical expenses on your behalf. Some medical providers prefer to charge your credit card at the time of the emergency and let you worry about being reimbursed. If this happens to you, you must submit original receipts, not photocopies, along with a claim form.

3. Be aware of hospital "balance billing" scare tactics.

Medical bills are negotiated between the medical provider and the insurance company claims administrator. For example, a \$10,000 U.S. bill can be bargained down to \$7,000. One of the practices of some medical providers is to accept a cheque from the claims administrator for \$7,000 and then bill you for the \$3,000 difference. This is known as "balance billing". Even though the medical provider agreed to settle the bill for \$7,000, they know the use of a collection agency can scare people that want to avoid getting a bad credit rating.

If you had a claim and the insurance company took care of the bill and sometime later you get a call or letter asking for money, don't pay anything! Contact the insurance company claims administrator immediately and they will handle it.

Don't Let the New Cannabis Law Ruin Your Trip

Taking cannabis in or out of Canada for any reason (personal or medicinal use) is illegal



In Canada, you can buy, possess, and use cannabis, better known as marijuana. The new law, that came into effect October 17, 2018, does not allow you to take cannabis or any product containing cannabis over the border for any reason including prescribed medicinal use. It doesn't matter that it is legal in Canada. It doesn't matter that the country (or the state) they are travelling to has legalized or decriminalized cannabis. If you are caught, you will face serious criminal penalties that could result in fines and/or jail time. The Canadian authorities will prosecute you and the authorities in the country that you entered could prosecute you.

If you are out-of-Canada and travelling home, you may not take cannabis or any product containing cannabis into Canada for any reason including prescribed medicinal use. It doesn't matter that you purchased it legally in the country (or state) you were visiting and are returning to Canada where it is legal to possess and use it.

For more information, the Canadian government has a website www.Travel.gc.ca/cannabis with information and a video, as well as a leaflet called "Don't Travel Internationally With Cannabis" that can be viewed and ordered online. The information appears on the Travel Insurance Office Inc. website at www.travelinsuranceoffice.com

You May Have to File a Tax Form with the IRS

It depends on how many days have you spent in the U.S. in the past 3 years

Canadians may spend up to **182 days** in the U.S. in any 12-month period. However, from a tax perspective, Canadians that have spent an average of 122 days or more in the past three calendar years may have to complete an **IRS Form 8840** ("Closer Connection Exception Statement for Aliens") that tells the IRS that you have a "closer connection" to Canada for income tax purposes. If you would like to learn more about this matter, or to download a copy of the **IRS Form 8840**, visit our website at www.travelinsuranceoffice.com and go to "View printed materials" to download a copy. **Please note: if you have questions, we cannot assist you. Please consult an accountant.**

What Your Policy Does Not Cover

All policies have exclusions so be aware of them

Travel medical insurance provides coverage for losses from unexpected, sudden, medical emergencies due to an accident or a sickness. There are some circumstances in which you will have an accident or get sick and NOT be covered by your policy. The exclusions vary by policy so read your policy to be sure. The exclusions can be found in your policy in sections such as, "Exclusions", "What Is Not Covered", "General Limitations", and "General Provisions". Here is a summary of some (but not all) of the things NOT covered by most policies:

1. **Unstable pre-existing condition.** If you have a pre-existing medical condition, regardless of whether or not it appears on the medical questionnaire, it must meet the required stability period as stated in the policy. Stability periods are typically 90, 180, and 365 days but they vary by policy. You should read the definition of "stable" in your policy. Typically, to be considered stable prior to travel, you cannot have any change to your pre-existing medical condition and you cannot have any change in the treatment of that condition. Your stability will be affected if, in the required stability period, you are prescribed new medication, a change in the type of medication, a change in the dosage, or a change in the frequency you take your medication. This applies to a decrease or stoppage of a medication because you're getting better. A change is a change and this affects your stability and whether or not the medical condition will be covered.

New symptoms, diagnostic tests, and undiagnosed medical conditions all affect your stability. For example, undiagnosed chest pains will be considered a heart condition until a heart condition is ruled out. If your medical file indicates you delayed medical treatment because you were about to travel or you require diagnostic tests or surgery in the future, your condition will not be covered.

2. **Abuse of prescribed medication.** This includes failure to take your prescribed medication or taking the wrong dosage.

3. **Abuse alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicants.** For example, if you're over the legal limit for alcohol use, even if you are in your own home, and you have an accident, sickness, or injury, you will not be covered by most policies.

4. **Suicide, attempted suicide, or self-inflicted injuries.**

5. **Emotional, psychological, or mental disorders or symptoms.** This usually includes anxiety and depression.

6. **Criminal acts.** For example, you commit a felony and have a medical emergency. None of us intend to commit a felony but consider this scenario: You're driving somewhere in a hurry, you go through a yellow light turning red, and you hit a pedestrian. In your attempt to miss the pedestrian, you crash your car and are injured. If you're charged with careless or dangerous driving, you may not have coverage.

7. **High-risk activities.** Most policies list activities that you cannot participate in if you want to have coverage for an accident or sickness. These activities include body contact sports, parachuting, parasailing, hang gliding, mountaineering, bungee jumping, and scuba diving.

8. **Travel to some countries, regions, or cities in the world.** If, prior to your departure, a travel warning is issued by the Government of Canada (Global Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada) to avoid travel to a country, region or city, you should change your travel plans. If you elect to travel there and you have an accident, sickness, or injury, that is related to the reason for which the warning was issued, you will not be covered.

9. **Your refusal to be medically evacuated to Canada.** If you have a medical emergency and the assistance company elects to return you to Canada for treatment, you must agree to return to Canada. If not, all further medical expenses will be your responsibility.

10. **Recurrence or complication of a medical condition.** If you have a claim while travelling, once your condition is successfully treated, or are out of the hospital, and you no longer need medical care, a recurrence or complication of the condition will probably not be covered. The assistance company involved with your initial claim will inform you that coverage for that condition will terminate and you will be advised to return to Canada. If you elect to stay out of Canada, and there is a recurrence or complication, there will be no coverage.

To conclude, read your policy prior to travel to ensure you understand what is covered and what is not covered.

Travel Insurance Facts

- 78% of Canadians over age 18 were covered by some form of travel insurance on their last trip.
- 46.5% of non-insured travelers didn't think travel insurance was necessary.
- The various Provincial Government Health Insurance Plans cover less than 10% of most claims.
- Approximately 9% of Canadian travellers will have a claim and less than 1% will be denied.
- Most denied claims are due to a mistake on the application or an unstable pre-existing condition.



5 reasons to Get A Quote from Travel Insurance Office Inc.

We are one of Canada's largest travel insurance brokers

You want quality travel insurance, the satisfaction you did not overpay, and a trustworthy broker. Switching brokers may be scary at first but think of this: thousands of other Canadians, including people you know, are satisfied with their broker and may be paying less for equally good coverage. **Travel Insurance Office Inc.**, one of Canada's largest travel insurance brokers, has been insuring travelling Canadians and snowbirds since 1991 and is going into its 28th year. Here are 5 reasons to get a quote from **Travel Insurance Office Inc.:**



1. We offer four unique products and some of them are not available from any other broker in Canada.



2. Our products are competitively priced and, in some cases, have the lowest rates you will find anywhere.
3. Our products cover stable pre-existing medical conditions even if your health changes as little as a week before you depart.
4. Our safe and secure website is user friendly. If you buy online, your policy and wallet cards will arrive by email in a few minutes.
5. There are no administration charges and no service fees. If you cancel with us before you travel, you get 100% of your money back. If you return to Canada earlier than planned, and have not had a claim, you will get a full refund on the unused days.

BONUS: Your call is answered by a licensed agent, there are no phone menus or buttons to push, and we guarantee same-day service.

1-800-550-1295

www.travelinsuranceoffice.com



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Free "Canadian Event Kits"

Let Travel Insurance Office Inc. contribute to your next event

If your U.S. community is planning a pot-luck, Canada-USA day, tournament, or any other event, **Travel Insurance Office Inc.**, a Canadian insurance broker, will supply a free "Canadian Event Kit". The kit includes placemats (that can be personalized to include the name of your community event), napkins, plastic cups, gift cards for lucky draws, pens, ballot pads, and a ballot box.

Please let your community Activity Manager or a Canadian organizer know about the free "Canadian Event Kit". It has been a big hit at hundreds of events in the past few years. To get your free a kit (including free shipping), contact **Travel Insurance Office Inc.** today.

Call **1-800-550-1295**

or visit **www.travelinsuranceoffice.com**

Quiz Question answer: 8,891 km or 5,525 miles

