

# Canada Easing COVID-19 Border Restrictions: How to Prepare & Adapt to Changing Travel Rules

Article By:

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Canada announced it is expecting to [ease COVID-19 quarantine restrictions](#) for Canadians entering the country in early July. Under the new rules, fully vaccinated Canadians arriving by air won't have to quarantine in a government-designated hotel and will be allowed to quarantine at home for the required 14 days.

"The first step ... is to allow fully vaccinated individuals currently permitted to enter Canada to do so without the requirement to stay in government-authorized accommodation," said Canadian Health Minister Patty Hajdu in a press conference. "We do want to be cautious and careful on these next steps to be sure that we are not putting that recovery in jeopardy."

The [U.S.-Canada border closed to travelers](#) on March 20, 2020. Currently, the Canadian border is only open to essential travel, and the Canadian government hasn't released a plan yet for restarting non-essential travel for international travelers.

The Biden Administration announced on June 8 it is forming expert working groups with Canada as well as the United Kingdom (UK), Mexico and the European Union (EU) to determine how to lift border restrictions. However, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a press conference June 8 that she didn't have a prediction for [when the U.S.-Canada border would open](#) for non-essential travel.

Even though restrictions are beginning to lift, travel is going to look different than it did before the coronavirus pandemic within North America and beyond.

## What to Expect for Travel to Canada & Beyond

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said all [visitors traveling to Canada](#) will have to be fully vaccinated, and is working on a phased approach to reopening the borders to non-essential travel. Additionally, Ms. Hajdu said the government supports the idea of requiring travelers to have [COVID-19 vaccine passports](#) to enter Canada.

Mr. Trudeau said that the Canadian border restrictions will remain until at least 75 percent of Canadians are vaccinated. Under increasing pressure to allow [travel between the US and Canada](#),

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Mr. Trudeau said in a press conference on May 31 that he wouldn't be pressured to open the borders without taking the necessary precautions in order to avoid another wave of infections that could slow the economic recovery already taking place.

"We're on the right path, but we'll make our decisions based on the interests of Canadians and not based on what other countries want," he said.

The slow and cautious approach to reopening the U.S.-Canada border drew criticism from both politicians and organizations. Last month, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer called on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to implement a four part plan to [reopen the Canadian border](#), which includes expanding the definition of "essential travelers" to include vaccinated individuals who have family or property across the border.

Dan Richards, travel crisis expert, CEO of Global Rescue and member of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board said in an interview with the *National Law Review* that while the argument of protecting Canada and the U.S. from spikes in infections is one made in good faith, it needs to be weighed with the economic impact of keeping borders closed, especially if vaccination rates are high and infection rates are low.

"When you look at the Canadian challenge, its population is a tiny fraction of the population in the United States and they're one of our biggest trading partners. Closing that border is a big deal," Mr. Richards said. "If the public health systems in the two countries that have a border between them are capable of dealing with the level of infection that is occurring, then the borders should be open...Any friction in the travel process for people crossing borders should be removed."

Mr. Richards said that while there is a possibility smaller pockets of COVID-19 infections could occur, the likelihood of another large scale wave of infections is slim.

"Trudeau is not entirely off the mark when he says there could be another wave, but the reality is that there's almost no likelihood that could occur," he said. "By and large, the average is dropping like a stone in the United States, and we're starting to see that happening as well in Canada."

The US and Canada's cautious approach to reopening to international visitors contrast with countries like Spain, which opened their borders to fully [vaccinated international travelers](#) on June 7. More broadly, the European Union (EU) agreed to take steps to open up to fully vaccinated tourists, but did not give a timeframe for when that would happen.

Some countries like the United Kingdom (UK) are open to travelers who can produce a negative COVID-19 test upon arrival. But, [international travelers to the UK](#) are required to be quarantined for 10 days after their arrival and must take two COVID-19 tests.

"Europeans got off to a slow start, but now they're now vaccinating close to 4 million people a day," Mr. Richards said. "They're only a month or so away from looking at dropping all their restrictions as well."

## **How Might Travelers and Businesses Adapt to Easing Travel Restrictions?**

With the news that some countries like Canada may ease border restrictions soon, travelers and businesses are beginning to adapt to the change.

“We’re going to see people combine business and leisure travel in ways that haven’t been done before,” Mr. Richards said. Specifically, people may choose to travel and work remotely for longer periods and then come back to the physical office for shorter periods.

“There is value to being in the same room with your colleagues and certainly with your clients,” Mr. Richards said. “But I think the days traveling long distances for one meeting with one person are going to be greatly diminished in the future.”

For businesses with employees traveling during the pandemic, there are steps to take to ensure the travel is done safely. Mr. Richards said it is the employer’s responsibility to monitor and alert employees if they are traveling to areas where there may be COVID-19 outbreaks.

“Businesses are more concerned right now about the duty of care that they have to their employees that are traveling than ever before,” he said. “If you send someone somewhere and they get sick or have an adverse event happen to them, it is your responsibility to provide a reasonable level of support as an employer under the law.”

## How Will Travel Change Post-COVID-19?

While the travel and tourism industry took a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is room for a robust rebound as the pandemic shows signs of slowing. However, when non-essential travel is possible again, it may look different than it did before the pandemic.

“It’s going to be tough to get a seat on an airline,” Mr. Richards said. “I unfortunately think that getting on an airplane to go where you want to go is going to be challenging in the near term and more expensive than anybody expected.”

While rising fuel prices and airlines having fewer planes in use contribute to higher prices, Mr. Richards said the leisure travel segment is going to see [an increased level of activity](#) as people are eager to leave their homes and take trips. Additionally, technologies such as [COVID-19 PCR tests](#) that can detect virus particles in travelers’ breath can help prevent the next pandemic and its impact on travel.

“If COVID showed us anything, it’s that work can be done from almost anywhere in many industries and people are going to take advantage of that,” Mr. Richards said. “The days where you had to be tethered to an office weekly are going to go away for some industries.”

*Rachel Popa contributed to this article.*

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