

United States Border Crossing Information

All groups are responsible for their own passage back through United States customs. DOXA can be a great resource to help navigate the process and answer questions. As with most things, an excellent mission trip starts with sound preparation. The information below is meant to help with that preparation.

The process of entering the United States is generally more rigorous and involved than entering Mexico. Below are some tips on what to expect, based on DOXA's experience.

- There is always a wait to enter the United States by vehicle. This wait is generally between 30 minutes and 5 hours.
 - There are several different sources you can consult to get more accurate border wait information, one of those is an app called CBP Wait Times. While any source of border wait information can help give you a general idea of what to expect, please keep in mind that conditions change rapidly on the ground and these sources can quickly become inaccurate.
 - As a general guide, here are some historical border wait trends:
 - Longest wait times are 9am-3pm Saturday and 10am-9pm Sunday.
 - Long wait times are 5am-9am Monday to Friday.
 - Medium wait times are in the afternoons Monday to Friday.
 - Shorter wait times are in the evenings Monday to Saturday.
 - Another large factor in wait times is the holiday calendar. If entering the United States on the last day of a holiday, then expect significantly longer wait time as everyone else is also coming back home.
- You will need to show your US passport (or other acceptable form of ID) to re-enter the United States.
 - Every single person will have their passport checked, so please plan accordingly by preparing these documents prior to arriving at the customs booth.
 - Acceptable forms of ID can include: US passport, foreign passport with valid US visa, US passport card, Global Entry pass, SENTRI pass, NEXUS pass, and birth certificate. For more detailed information, please consult the United States Customs and Border Protection website.
- Please refrain from taking pictures or being on your phone while in the border checkpoint area. This behavior is prohibited.
- Please reinforce with all of your passengers that they should only speak to a customs official when spoken to first.
- The vast majority of border crossings into the United States are met by a firm (but nice) customs official and some pointed questions. We recommend having a quick talk with all of your drivers, so they can be prepared for these simple questions. Nothing you are doing is illegal or needs hiding. The best thing you can do is just be honest with the customs official and provide simple, true, and concise answers.
 - What were you doing in Mexico?
 - *Sample answer: volunteering, building homes*

- How long were you in Mexico?
 - *Sample answer: 5 days*
- Where did you go in Mexico?
 - *Sample answer: Tijuana*
- What are you bringing back with you?
 - *Sample answer: our luggage that we brought in and some souvenirs*
- Where are you going in the United States?
 - *Sample answer: back home to Colorado, our flight leaves this afternoon*
- In very rare cases, your vehicle may be selected for secondary inspection. Just remain calm and follow their directions. Nothing you are doing is illegal or needs hiding. The best thing you can do is treat the customs official with respect and be patient while they do their job. The secondary inspection process may take from 10 minutes to 2 hours, and may also require an x-ray of the vehicle.
- Food
 - You may not cross into the United States with any fruit, vegetables, or meat.
 - Snacks, such as chips and other processed foods, are typically OK.
 - For more detailed information, please consult the United States Customs and Border Protection website.
 - Since groups typically do not bring back food with them, this is a non-issue.
- The United States has 3 different types of lanes for entering customs. What lane you are permitted to access depends upon your personal and vehicle clearances. For the vast majority of groups, the regular lanes are the best option. Written directions to the regular line entrance are available in this packet and a Google Map showing each of the lane entrances is located here: bit.ly/doxamap
 - Regular Lanes
 - Anyone with any type of US passport or acceptable form of ID. This lane has the least amount of restrictions and everyone is always eligible to travel in this lane.
 - The directions in this packet direct you to the start of these regular lanes.
 - Ready Lanes
 - Anyone with any type of US passport or acceptable form of ID that has an RFID chip in it.
 - When using these border lanes, you will hold out your RFID documents and get scanned prior to approaching the checkpoint booth.
 - SENTRI and Global Entry Lanes
 - Only people with Global Entry, SENTRI, and NEXUS cards may use this lane. Everyone in the vehicle needs to have one of these cards on their person in order to utilize these expedited screening lanes.
 - In addition, the vehicle that you are driving must also be registered in the SENTRI trusted traveler program.
 - These lanes are the most restricted and come with hefty fines (\$5000) if used incorrectly.