

## Your passport to trouble-free travel

June 30, 2017 | Filed under: Line Story, Travel | Russell Hannon

Tags: The Frugal Traveller, Travel tips

*As you count down the days and dream of faraway lands, here are five ways your passport could derail your vacation and what to do about it*



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Travelling abroad this summer? As you count down the days and dream of faraway lands, you may be overlooking easily-preventable problems that, unfortunately, many people aren't aware of.

I was part of travel planning panel discussions at this year's New York Times Travel Show and Philadelphia Travel and Adventure Show. I spoke with Karen Christensen, deputy assistant secretary of state for Overseas Citizens Services, and Dean Orlando, director of the Philadelphia Passport Agency about common passport issues facing Americans.

Back home, I contacted Consular Affairs and Service Canada (which manages the passport program) to see if the passport issues Canadians face are the same as those encountered by Americans.

Here are five ways your passport could derail your vacation and what to do about it:

### Your passport can be rejected if it has less than six months left until expiry.

Many countries require visitor passports to be valid for as much as six months beyond their expected date of departure from that country.

If your passport doesn't meet this criteria for your upcoming trip, the Passport Program, operated by Service Canada, offers expedited processing of passport renewals. They strive to renew your passport within 24 hours for \$110 (in addition to your renewal fee). If you have 10 or more days until you leave, you can pay a lower \$50 fee to have your renewal expedited in two to nine days.

The Passport Program cautions that these expedited processing times can't be guaranteed as they can be subject to verification and security checks can take longer in certain circumstances.

### Your passport can be denied if it has insufficient stamping space.

A common complaint with the 10-year Canadian passport is that it has the same number of pages (36) as the five-year passport. And since pages can't be added to a passport, you must apply for a new passport once the stamping and visa pages are filled.

The Passport Program says "Passport holders are responsible for applying for a new passport when the pages do not contain sufficient blank pages for an upcoming trip." But the Passport Program doesn't clarify what's universally accepted as sufficient.

So it's best to be prudent and apply for a new passport if there's any chance you might not have enough space for stamps on an upcoming trip (I suggest at least two full blank pages).

### A country can deny you entry if it sees you visited another country they don't get along with.

Consular Affairs Canada says "Every country can exercise its own discretion to decide who can enter the country." Some countries are sensitive to the issue that travellers may face when visiting multiple countries, and may, on request, stamp a separate piece of paper instead of your passport. Consular Affairs Canada suggests you check with the embassy or consulate of the country you'll be visiting prior to your trip to see if this is an option.

You might be surprised to learn that there are cases where Canadians can be granted a duplicate passport. The Passport Program says, "Duplicate passports are not normally issued for countries other than Israel and Arab countries. However, in unusual circumstances, when authorized, this restriction may be waived and duplicate passports issued."

### Your passport might not be accepted if any pages are damaged.

This includes pages that are torn or deformed due to moisture.

So keep your passport in a waterproof cover or resealable plastic bag.

### If you lose your passport, you need to go to the nearest Canadian embassy to replace it.

If this happens, you'll be better off if you have a copy of your main passport page (and any visas) in your luggage or accessible online. This way, you have all the information you need when you contact the nearest embassy.

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To keep the lost passport scenario from happening, [travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca) recommends you keep your passport on you at all times while abroad. That said, I suggest there are times you should use your discretion. For example, if you're going to the beach for a swim, you might be better off securing your passport in a hotel safe.

Beware of anyone who asks that you hand them your passport. Passports are property of the government of Canada and it's illegal for foreign authorities to take your passport unless they're using it to administer a visa or for immigration purposes.

You might know of European train operators collecting passenger passports or companies in Middle East countries holding on to the passports of expats who work for them.

You should do all you can to keep your passport in your hands and insist to anyone who suggests otherwise that they take their issue to the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate.

#### Have questions?

For information specific to your travel scenario, visit [www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca) and click Travel.

*Russell Hamon uses lean principles to travel at a fraction of the going rate. He's the author of [Stop Dreaming Start Traveling: The Ultimate Guide to Traveling More & Spending Less](#). [breakthetravelbarrier.com](http://breakthetravelbarrier.com)*

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