

Taking Your Photography Equipment out of the United States —

Things to Consider !

Prepared by Jim Roberts, Green Valley Recreation Camera Club, 3/29/18

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My wife, Bonnie, and I have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to travel a great deal over the past 30+ years. We were both teachers for much of our careers, and that afforded us full summers and holiday periods to pursue and enjoy our interests — photography, art, and motorcycling. International trips required considerable planning and preparation. We'd like to share with you a few things that we have learned about taking our equipment on-the-road to foreign lands. **Please let us know about your experiences and sage advice so that we can add to this article.**

In recent years, the Federal Government, primarily TSA (Transportation Security Administration), has become more strict about checking equipment that is coming into the U.S. with passengers on air flights. They are first concerned about items that may have been stolen. TSA is also looking for contraband (drugs, explosives, weapons, etc.) being brought into our country. They even check equipment traveling only within the States. Agents are known to open up both carry-on and primary luggage to do a detailed inspection, and even look to see if cameras and lenses are hollow and containing illegal substances. You may be pulled out of line and required to lay out all of your photography equipment on a table for inspection. We have had this happen in several foreign countries and while traveling in the United States.

It is highly recommended that you bring your photography equipment with you into the airplane in your carry-on bag. And, lock your primary luggage with approved TSA locks. TSA website: <https://www.tsa.gov>

It's best to "**be prepared**" (Boy Scout Motto) —

1. Write a list describing all of your equipment. Most importantly, record the **Serial Numbers** and Model Numbers of your cameras, lenses, laptop, portable drives, etc. that you plan to take with you on your journeys.
2. Bring the equipment with your list to the TSA Office located at your airport. TSA staff will inspect the equipment and record the information at their Office.

3. Complete the following form:

Certificate of Registration for Personal Effects Taken Abroad (19 CFR 148.1)

OMB Control Number: 1651-0010
Expiration Date: 08/31/2019

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY U.S. Customs and Border Protection		Number
CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION FOR PERSONAL EFFECTS TAKEN ABROAD 19 CFR 148.1		
Name of Owner		Address of Owner
Description of Articles		
<i>I certify that the information shown hereon is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.</i>		Signature of Owner
Port	Date	Signature of CBP Official
▶ Certifying officer shall draw lines through all unused spaces with ink. ◀		

CBP Form 4457 (08/16)

4. After inspection, TSA will stamp your form using red ink. Be sure to take your original stamped form along with you as you travel through CUSTOMS at airports and other crossings. The form is your proof of ownership. We like to make some photocopies of our Equipment List and the stamped “19 CFR 148.1” Form to keep with us and in our primary luggage as we travel.

We have also given a copy of our Equipment List to our Insurance Agent. This helps recover the replacement cost of items in the event they are stolen or badly damaged. To back up any claims, keep all of your original purchase receipts for your equipment together in a fireproof container.

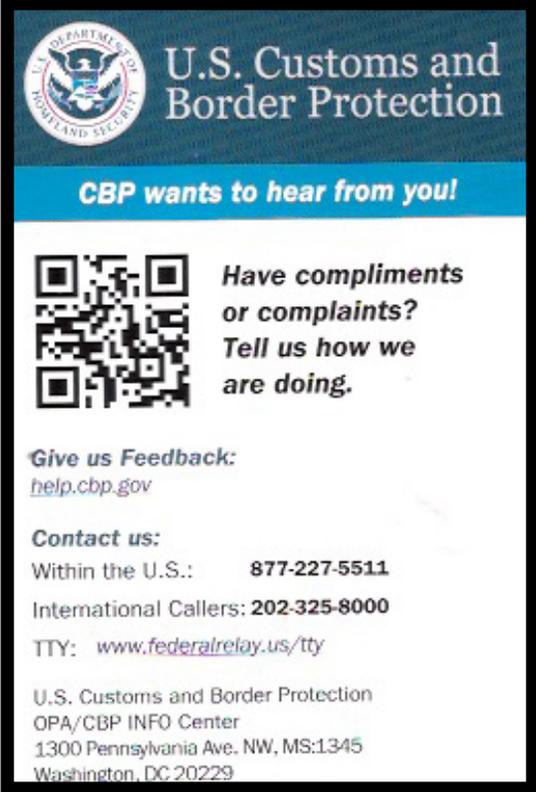
Attach an I.D. tag to your equipment and/or apply an address label to each piece. And, it doesn't hurt to take photographs of your equipment. You could bring a hard copy photograph of your equipment along with you on your trip, or store the photograph in your smartphone. You can also store a PDF copy of your Equipment List in your smartphone and laptop.

On a trip that took us through Barcelona, Spain, we had our small black attache case stolen as we were sitting on a bench in a train station at 11:00 PM. The case had most of our trip papers, schedules, and my Passport. We felt helpless and lost without our documents. Fortunately, we remembered that we had photocopies in our primary luggage. We imagined that the thieves thought that the case contained a laptop or other valuables. We had to go to the local police station to report the theft that night. Then we went to our hotel. As we walked in, the hotel clerk asked “Are you the Roberts’s?” To our amazement the Hotel had just received a phone call from the police. Someone had found our attache case on the street and had turned it in. WHAT A RELIEF. That incident could have spoiled the rest of our trip!

The U.S. Government has a couple of other registrations that may be important to you if you are a frequent international traveler. Look into “**TSA Pre-check**” and “**Global Entry**”. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection office at the airport has a brochure on these services. You can also use their website to get info: **WWW.GLOBALENTY.GOV**

Benefits:

- * Automated CBP entry process
- * No more paper customs declaration form
- * Mutual benefits with certain other countries
- * Conveniently located at most major airports
- * Eligible for TSA Pre-check



The image shows a feedback card from U.S. Customs and Border Protection. At the top left is the official seal of the Department of Homeland Security. To its right, the text reads "U.S. Customs and Border Protection". Below this, a blue banner contains the text "CBP wants to hear from you!". The main body of the card features a QR code on the left and the text "Have compliments or complaints? Tell us how we are doing." on the right. Below the QR code, it says "Give us Feedback:" followed by the URL "help.cbp.gov". Underneath, it lists "Contact us:" with phone numbers for within the U.S. (877-227-5511) and international callers (202-325-8000), and a TTY number (www.federalrelay.us/tty). At the bottom, it provides the physical address: "U.S. Customs and Border Protection, OPA/CBP INFO Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, MS:1345, Washington, DC 20229".