Training aid only, not flight instruction. Review it with your CFI and get their approval before you use it in training or in the airplane. Check every number against the POH and current FAA sources. Last reviewed Nov 7, 2026 against CBP and CBSA rules and the CBSA airport of entry directory.

THE BORDER AND LAKE ERIE

Cherokee 140 · KONZ · Canada next door, Lake Erie to the south

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THE BORDER NEXT DOOR

KONZ sits on an island in the Detroit River. Canada is just across the water to the east, and Windsor (CYQG) is about 14 nm northeast. The border runs down the middle of the river and out into Lake Erie, and nothing in the sky marks it.

- **An accidental crossing is a real problem.** Crossing without a flight plan, customs notice and permission to land breaks rules on both sides. Expect a phone call, paperwork, and possibly enforcement action and fines.
- **Sightseeing on the river is where it happens.** The Detroit River, the Ambassador Bridge and downtown Detroit draw you east. A few minutes of drift in a turn puts you over Canada.
- **Use the chart and the GPS together.** The border is printed on the sectional and the Detroit Terminal Area Chart. Show it on your GPS or EFB map, and give it a wide margin.
- **Keep the airspace picture too.** Near KONZ you are also under the Detroit Class B. See the KONZ Airport Guide and the Navigation guide.

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IF YOU CROSS THE BORDER BY MISTAKE

Turn back toward the U.S. side right away, then tell someone.

1. **Turn west, away from Canada,** and fly back over U.S. territory. Don't land in Canada unless it's an emergency.
2. **Talk to ATC.** If you're on flight following, tell the controller what happened. If not, call Detroit Approach. Being on a frequency and squawking an assigned code makes the record clear.
3. **Write down the times and what happened** as soon as you're on the ground.
4. **Talk to your CFI** before you call anyone else, and expect that CBP or the FAA may contact you.
5. **If you had to land in Canada** (weather or an emergency), call the CBSA reporting line, 1-888-226-7277, or the nearest CBSA or RCMP office before anyone leaves the airplane, and follow their instructions.

The easiest fix is prevention: stay well west of the river centerline unless you've planned an international flight.

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FLYING TO CANADA AND BACK

A planned trip is very doable, but every step is required. Start the paperwork days ahead, not on the ramp. This page is a study aid, not legal advice: check the current CBP, CBSA and FAA rules before every trip.

Before the first trip (one-time items)

Item	What it is	Who issues it
Passport	Every person aboard needs a valid passport or other accepted travel document	U.S. State Department
Pilot certificate	With the "English proficient" endorsement	FAA
Medical	Your current medical certificate. If you fly under BasicMed, check that Canada accepts it for your flight before you go	FAA
Restricted Radiotelephone Operator Permit	A lifetime FCC permit for the pilot, needed for international flights	FCC
Aircraft radio station license	An FCC license for the airplane's radios, needed for international flights	FCC
CBP user fee decal	An annual decal bought online through CBP's DTOPS site, for private aircraft arriving in the U.S.	U.S. CBP
eAPIS account	CBP's online system for passenger manifests	U.S. CBP
Insurance	Confirm the policy covers flight in Canada and carry proof	Your insurer

Also carry the usual aircraft documents: airworthiness certificate, registration, operating limitations and the weight and balance.

Leaving the U.S. for Canada

1. **Pick a Canadian airport of entry (AOE)** and check its CBSA hours. General aviation aircraft must land at an AOE during CBSA business hours unless other arrangements are made. Use the CBSA's current list.
2. **File eAPIS for the departure** at least **60 minutes before you leave the U.S.**, and wait for CBP's approval message.

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3. **Call CBSA** at 1-888-CANPASS (1-888-226-7277) **at least 2 hours, but no more than 48 hours,** before you arrive in Canada. Give your ETA, the aircraft's registration, your destination, and the name, date of birth and citizenship of everyone aboard.
4. **File a flight plan.** A flight plan is required for any flight between the U.S. and Canada (14 CFR 91.707). Use the ICAO format for international flights, and open it after takeoff.
5. **Squawk and talk.** Fly with your altitude-reporting transponder on and stay in radio contact. Ask for flight following and a discrete code.
6. **On arrival in Canada,** call the reporting line again right after landing. Nobody leaves the airplane until CBSA authorizes it.

Coming home to the U.S.

1. **Pick a U.S. airport of entry** that serves general aviation and check its hours. Landing rights and user fee airports often need more notice than an international airport. Use CBP's current list.
2. **File eAPIS for the arrival** at least **60 minutes before you depart Canada**. Wait for the CBP message granting **landing rights** at that airport, and follow its instructions.
3. **Give CBP notice of arrival** at the airport of entry as their instructions say, normally by phone, at least an hour ahead.
4. **File and open a flight plan,** squawk, and stay on frequency.
5. **Land at the airport of entry you named,** close to your ETA. Taxi to the customs area and wait in the airplane until a CBP officer arrives or tells you what to do. Keep bags aboard and unopened.
6. **If your plans change** (time, airport, people aboard), update CBP or CBSA before you go.

Notes on airports of entry

- **Windsor (CYQG)** is the closest Canadian airport to KONZ and a CBSA airport of entry (AOE/325). Travellers are cleared 08:00 to midnight local, seven days a week, and general aviation can use telephone reporting (CBSA directory, updated August 2026). Hours change: check the CBSA directory before you go.

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- Several airports around Detroit have U.S. customs service, but their hours and rules change. Check CBP's current list and call ahead. Don't plan around an airport from memory.

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LAKE ERIE: FLYING OVER WATER

Lake Erie starts just south of KONZ. It's shallow, it gets rough fast, and it is cold for most of the year. Our Cherokee has one engine, so every overwater leg is a decision about gliding distance.

Gliding distance

- **Planning estimate:** at best glide (80 mph) our Cherokee covers roughly **1.5 nm for every 1,000 ft above the surface.** This is an estimate, not a POH figure. Wind, weight and technique change it.
- **From 3,500 ft over the lake** (about 2,900 ft above the water), that's roughly 4 nm of glide.
- **Plan legs that stay within gliding distance of shore,** or climb high enough that they do. If you can't, ask whether the leg is worth it.
- Remember that the Detroit Class B sits above much of the area near KONZ, which limits how high you can climb.

Picking a route

- **Follow the shoreline** where you can. It adds a few minutes and keeps a landing option in reach.
- **Over open water you lose the horizon** on hazy days and at night. Be ready to fly on instruments. See Aeromedical Factors and Decision-Making.
- **Lake weather moves fast.** Lake-effect clouds and snow, fog over cold water in spring, and strong winds are all common. See Winter Flying in Michigan.

Life vests and cold water

- **Part 91 doesn't require life vests for our flying.** 14 CFR 91.205(b)(12) requires them only for flight for hire over water beyond power-off gliding distance from shore. We still recommend a wearable or easily reached life vest for every person on any overwater leg.
- **Cold water is the real threat.** The "1-10-1" rule: about **1 minute** to get your breathing under control after the cold shock, about **10 minutes** of useful movement before your hands and arms stop working, and about **1 hour** before hypothermia makes you unconscious.

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- **If you must ditch:** brief passengers, unlatch the door before touchdown, belts tight, touch down as slowly as possible, and get out with the vests. Put them on outside the cabin so they don't trap you.
- **In winter the lake may be partly frozen.** Ice is not a safe landing surface. Don't count on it.

Talking to someone

- **Use flight following** over the lake. Radar and radio coverage are good near Detroit and Toledo at most altitudes.
- **File a VFR flight plan** for longer overwater legs so search and rescue knows your route.
- **No lake reporting service.** The FAA discontinued Lake Reporting Service, along with the other hazardous-area reporting services, on October 1, 2015. Use a VFR flight plan and flight following instead, and stay in radio contact while you're over the water.

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SELF-CHECK

Tap a question to see the answer.

Is a flight plan required to fly from the U.S. into Canada?
Yes. 14 CFR 91.707 requires an IFR or VFR flight plan for any flight between the U.S. and Canada. File it in ICAO format and open it.

How far ahead must you call CBSA before arriving in Canada?
At least 2 hours and no more than 48 hours before arrival, at 1-888-CANPASS (1-888-226-7277).

When must eAPIS be filed for a flight leaving the U.S.?
At least 60 minutes before departure, and you must have CBP's approval before you go.

What must you receive from CBP before leaving Canada for the U.S.?
A message granting landing rights at a specific U.S. airport, after filing eAPIS at least 60 minutes before departure.

Which radio licenses do you need to fly to Canada?
An FCC Restricted Radiotelephone Operator Permit for the pilot and an FCC aircraft radio station license for the airplane.

You drift over Canada while sightseeing on the river. What do you do?
Turn west back to U.S. territory right away, tell ATC, note the times, and talk to your CFI. Don't land in Canada unless it's an emergency.

Does Part 91 require life vests for a private flight over Lake Erie?
No. 91.205(b)(12) applies to flight for hire beyond power-off gliding distance. Carry them anyway on overwater legs.

What is the 1-10-1 rule?
About 1 minute to control breathing after cold shock, 10 minutes of useful movement, and 1 hour before hypothermia causes unconsciousness.

Roughly how far can our Cherokee glide from 2,000 ft above the water?
About 3 nm, using the planning estimate of 1.5 nm per 1,000 ft at 80 mph. Wind and weight change it.

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SOURCES

- U.S. CBP general aviation and eAPIS rules (19 CFR 122.22 and 122.12, via the Federal Register), and the CBP DTOPS user fee site. Checked November 7, 2026.
- CBSA, "CANPASS – Telephone Reporting – General Aviation Aircraft" and Memorandum D2-5-12. Checked November 7, 2026.
- FAA, "Entering, Exiting and Flying in United States Airspace". Checked November 7, 2026.
- AOPA, "Cross Border Flying" guide. Checked November 7, 2026.
- CBSA Directory of Offices and Services, Windsor Airport (CYQG) entry, modified August 19, 2026. Checked November 7, 2026.
- Flight Service notice "Discontinuation of Hazardous Area Reporting Service", effective October 1, 2015 (includes Lake Reporting Service).
- 14 CFR 91.707 and 91.205(b)(12); AIM chapter 5.
- These rules change. Check CBP, CBSA, the FAA and the current Canada Flight Supplement before every international flight.

Training aid only, not flight instruction. The POH in the airplane and its placards win: check every number against them, and fly with your CFI.

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