



CISV International
Building global friendship

What to do if stopped at Border Control

Contents

1. Before You Travel: Prepare Thoroughly	2
2. At the Border: What to Expect	2
You may be asked:	2
Suggested response:	2
3. What to do if you are taken for a Secondary Inspection	3
4. Know Your Rights	3
5 Emergency Contacts.	3
6. If Your Phone or Laptop Is Taken	4
7. Bringing Gifts into other countries.	4

This guide is designed to support CISV delegations and participants traveling to other countries. It outlines what to do if you're stopped by Border Control. Remember that you can be turned away if you do not have the correct paperwork

Please remember: Always stay calm, prepared, and respectful.

1. Before You Travel: Prepare Thoroughly

Each person should carry printed copies of:

- Passport (make sure it is valid with at least 6 months left)
- Visa, Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA/ESTA/eTA/ESTIA...) or other Required Paperwork printout
- CISV programme invitation letter (from host Chapter)
- The legal form confirming that each child can travel with the leader (or alone). Ensure that the names are correct and match the passport and that it is signed
- Return flight confirmation
- Travel insurance details: [See on CISV Central](#)
- Contact info for Host Association – the address and contact number, the numbers to contact the Association and the emergency phone number of CISV International.

2. At the Border: What to Expect

You may be asked:

“Why are you here?”

“What is CISV?”

“How long are you staying?”

“Who is responsible for the children?”

Suggested response:

“We are part of CISV, a cultural exchange programme focused on peace education. We are invited to a camp hosted by CISV XXX – we have their details if you need to confirm this.”

3. What to do if you are taken for a Secondary Inspection

This is not unusual. Stay calm.

DO:

- Let the adult leader speak for the group, if you have a delegation
- Present documentation clearly
- Ask to contact the host Chapter if needed.

DON'T:

- Argue or make jokes
- Sign anything you do not understand
- Use mobile devices unless permitted.

Leaders should discuss with children and young people before travelling as a delegation, the importance of being respectful in this situation and that making jokes about carrying illegal substances or carrying out an illegal act, could result in the delegation being turned away. Adults should consider how to have these discussions before they travel in a way that conveys the seriousness of the situation, without raising anxiety levels.

4. Know Your Rights

- For non-citizens (adults or children), Border Control can deny entry or inspect devices such as your phone, tablet or laptop
- Children and young people traveling in a delegation, they should be kept with their Leader – they cannot be left alone.

5. Emergency Contacts

Every adult and participant should carry:

- The Emergency Contact number of where you or the delegation is travelling to – make sure that you have this written down as well as stored on your phone
- The CISV International Emergency Phone number – make sure that you have this written down as well as stored on your phone: **+44 20 4591 8887**
- Host Chapter contact info – so that the leader or Border Control can contact them
- Insurance details, including the contact number.

6. If Your Phone or Laptop Is Taken

Border Control may detain electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops) for further inspection, even if you are not suspected of wrongdoing.

If this happens:

- Stay calm. Do not resist
- Ask for a receipt or written confirmation that your device was taken
- Ask when and how it will be returned
- Notify your CISV host and your sending Chapter immediately.

Important: Do NOT store sensitive personal or CISV data on devices. Travel with minimal data or use a clean device if possible.

You are not legally required to provide passwords, but refusal may delay entry or result in seizure (especially for non-citizens).

7. Bringing Gifts into other countries

Gifts are a valued part of CISV exchanges, but they must be handled carefully at the border to avoid problems with customs.

Why gifts can be a problem:

- All gifts should be declared on the customs form
- Food, seeds, plants, or natural materials may be prohibited
- Multiple similar items may be seen as commercial goods.

If you do bring gifts:

- Keep gifts small, symbolic, and clearly cultural
- Avoid food, agricultural products, or handmade items using plants/seeds
- Carry a written list of gift items and estimated values
- Declare everything honestly.

Make sure that you are not bringing anything into the country which is illegal – it is your responsibility to check this.

If you are traveling as a delegation, have a leader carry and declare group gifts to simplify the process.