

How to Import a Used Electric Car (EV) to Canada

In the fall of 2014, on a trip to Portland Oregon, we found a 2014 Leaf SL on the lot of used electric car (EV) dealer Platt Automotive, put a hold on it and after checking with a Victoria man who had purchased a Leaf from Platt earlier, concluded the deal and imported it to Victoria, BC. We weren't pioneers; there are over 3,000 EV's in Greater Victoria with some 2,500 of them being Nissan Leafs, probably 80% of which are Off-Lease used Leafs which have been imported from Washington, Oregon and California – mostly by Victoria's Nissan dealer and a couple of smaller used car dealersⁱ who specialize in electric cars (EV's).

Individuals can go through the same process that dealers do to import a vehicle from the USA. The guide below outlines the steps involved. They are not onerous but will take some time and exploration and you can save thousands of dollarsⁱⁱ by doing it yourself.

Used electric cars in the NW States are much less expensive than in BC and the rest of Canada. There are a few reasons for this. US rebates in the Pacific States are significant on new electric cars so the dealers can't sell a used car for close to the price of a new car net government rebates. Many car sales in the USA are actually 3 – 5 year leases so the manufacturers auction off the cars when the lease is up - and there are lots of them. Gas prices are ridiculously low in the USA due to lower taxes and subsidies to oil companies, which makes electric cars less attractive to many Americans. Finally, cars tend to be cheaper in the USA than in Canada to start with, even when the exchange rate is not favourable.

So, we get the benefit of a much lower price when buying an EV stateside – something our dealers have realized for some time now and are making very good returns as the used price here can be as much as 30% more than stateside - even after factoring in the lower Canadian dollar, the RIV import fee and inspections required. BC has decent rebates on new EV's and hybrids, but there are not a lot of used Canadian-bought electrics on the market and there is a high demand for them in the Greater Victoria area so dealers can sell them at much higher prices than their US counterparts. There are no rebates on used EV's, so don't count on getting one. Tory Ontario has just killed its EV rebates along with most Green initiatives, so no need to offer lower prices there. I think Quebec is the only other province encouraging electrics as provincial policy via rebates on new electrics and installing more public charging stations.

Based on my experience, I have prepared this guide to help you import an electric vehicle on your own. This is the process, which to the best of my knowledge is applicable as at August 2018. I cannot guarantee that it includes absolutely everything but it is all I needed. As always, it is provided caveat emptor.

Don Scott

GUIDE to IMPORTING an EV into CANADA **August 2018**

Step 1 - Find a good used electric car

Search on-line or seek out some used dealers who specialize in EV's such as Platt Automotiveⁱⁱⁱ in Milwaukie, Oregon, which is just outside Portland. Greg Platt has sold lots of cars to Canadians and was a pleasure to deal with. He is very patient and helpful - to the extent of shipping the car to Port Angeles or Anacortes for US\$250 so you just have to take the ferry over to pick it up. There are lots of other dealers in Washington and Oregon you can check out as well. You need to have the car checked out (Greg puts his cars through CARFAX) to confirm its ownership history, mileage, accident reports if any, damage if any, recall status and proof that the car is clear of any liens and has never been in a flood. If you are considering a Nissan Leaf, have Leaf Spy^{iv} run on the car so you can see that OBDII data with respect to the battery's health and many other aspects monitored by the car's computer.

Go to Transport Canada's Registry of Imported Vehicle's (RIV) site (see Step 6 below) to ensure that the car you want to import to Canada is eligible for import. They list all the eligible models and note that it can not be imported without a confirmation that there are no outstanding recalls and proof that the car has never been in a flood - A service like CARFAX will provide this information.

Step 2 - Run VIN check

Once you have chosen your car, you'll need its VIN number to run a check to ensure that all recalls are up to date, a requirement of Transport Canada before it can be imported to Canada. You can run this check on-line at the USA's NHTSA website^v by entering your VIN number in the on-line form.

Step 3 - Get your signed Bill of Sale

The dealer/owner will send you the original Bill of Sale/Buyer's Order, which details your sale with the ID of the car, the odometer reading and the full details of the cost of the sale. You must sign and date this form and return it to the dealer/seller.

If you are buying in Oregon, the seller must include a completed "SECURE ODOMETER DISCLOSURE/REASSIGNMENT" form signed by the seller and you will have to sign that as well and return it to the seller.

The Dealer/Seller will then send you a "BUYERS GUIDE" filled out by them noting any warranty still applicable on the car and noting things you should check on a used car for you to sign as proof that you have received this "BUYERS GUIDE" from the dealer.

Step 4 - Pay the dealer/seller

This you will likely have to do via a wire service and the cost of buying the US currency and wiring it down to the dealer/seller will vary dependent up where you go. Using a bank may be most convenient, but it is also significantly more expensive as for some reason their exchange rate and fees are significantly more costly than local currency exchange offices. Shop around for the best deal.

The Dealer will send you the particulars on the account to wire the money to.

If you use a currency exchange agent like *calforex* they will require a certified cheque for the total amount of the car purchase plus their fees. If you contact them first, they can tell you the exact amount of the cheque needed and guarantee that price for a couple of hours at most. Don't dally and be sure to have the dealer's bank account details with you so it can be wired immediately. Wiring is not as fast as you might think in this digital age and it may take a few days to clear the banks. Check with your dealer/seller to confirm when it has been received.

Step 5 – Get AES/ITN number

Before you can export a car from the USA, you must obtain an exporting permit number called an AES/ITN. You get this from a broker, which can be done on-line. I used Simplified Trade Solutions LLC out of Chicago^{vi}. It only cost me US\$35 and they sent me the number within hours. There are many firms supplying this service and the costs vary from firm to firm. (Note that US Customs requires you to provide this AES/ITN number and form to the US border crossing point at least 72 hours before you arrive at the US Customs & Border Protection station with your vehicle.)

Step 6 – Complete RIV Application form

Transport Canada's Registry of Imported Vehicles (RIV) must approve all vehicles imported into Canada. The "Vehicle Import Form – RIV" is available on-line under Transport Canada^{vii}. This is a bit confusing as the instructions on the site refer to a Form 1, but there is no such thing labeled as Form 1 that I ever found. The required form has the title as noted above "Vehicle Import Form – RIV". Follow the instructions on the RIV On-Line Portal. Note that they provide you a checklist so that you have all the necessary documents to import a vehicle.

This must be completed and faxed to the applicable number for your area at least 72 hours before you intend to bring the car across the border. (The fax I used (1-888-642-9899) was for my local Canadian Border Services Agency office at the Coho Ferry dock in Victoria's Inner Harbour– there is also a CBSA in Sidney at the Anacortes Ferry. Print off your fax's Transmission Verification Report as proof of when you faxed the document and keep it with your papers should it be needed in case they cannot locate your fax.

Your fax should include your:

- Your Case Number (you get one when you pay file the RIV form on-line and pay the RIV fee.
- A signed copy of your Bill of Sale/Buyer's Order must be faxed along with
- The RIV form, and
- The CARFAX certificate or other proof of the vehicle history including that the vehicle has never been in a flood.

You can pay the RIV Import Fee on-line as well which I would advise as that will speed things up at the Canadian Border. As of August 2018, the fee is C\$310 +GST. They will send you your receipt by email and be sure to print a copy of that to take with you when you bring the car over the border so you have proof of payment for the CBSA officers, as many may expect you to make the payment because many have not paid in advance in the past.

Step 7 – Fax same information to US Customs and Border Services at your preferred US border point **at least 72 hours** before arriving at the border crossing

As noted earlier US Customs and Border Protection needs proof that the vehicle is cleared for export. The fax numbers for various border crossings are listed on-line on the USA Customs and Border Services web site, but it is difficult to find the ferry based stations. The fax for the Port Angeles Customs station^{viii} was 1-360-457-7514 in November, 2017. Print off your fax's Transmission Verification Report as proof of when and to whom you faxed the documents and keep it with your papers should it be needed in case they cannot locate your fax. A word of advice, it is usually better to cross at a small border crossing than the bigger high volume ones like Blaine, WA., as the big ones may require much more elaborate documentation.

Your fax should include:

- ITN Number (perhaps with email from your border broker with the ITN number)
- Certificate of Title provided by State of last registration (your dealer should have provide this)
- The fully signed copy of your Bill of Sale/Buyer's Order. I included the Secure Odometer Disclosure / Reassignment for good measure.

Step 8 – Get temporary State Vehicle Permit

Ensure you have a temporary State permit that allows you to drive through the various states to the reach the border. (E.g. Oregon's permit is valid in Washington State as well). If you bought the car from a dealer, they should provide this and have the necessary stickers on the car when it is picked up or when it is shipped to the border destination.

Step 9 – Buy Insurance

You will need Canadian insurance to cover driving the vehicle in the USA and once in Canada to drive home, to the inspection station and during the week(s) awaiting your provincial registration.

You will need the VIN number and your Certificate of Title from previous jurisdiction and proof of purchase (Bill of Sale) to provide to your insurer.

In BC, it is called a “Binder Insurance” policy and is provided by ICBC. The cost is about \$70 for up to a month’s coverage and is non-refundable when you formally register the car.

Step 9 – Arrange location in USA and time to pick up car

If you buy directly from the dealer and drive it up yourself, this step is not needed. If your dealer ships the car to the border, you will have to be in touch with the dealer (and possibly the transporter driver) for the delivery date and approximate time. You can arrange to meet the transport driver at the border but it is easier to have arranged to have the car dropped off at a particular spot with the papers. For example, Platt Automotive has arrangements with a motel in Anacortes and a B&B in Port Angeles near the ferry terminal who will hold the car for a day or so and have the delivery driver’s confirmation papers for you to sign. Expect a modest charge for this service.

Step 10 – Drive to the same US Customs and Border Services station to which you faxed your documents

Park near the US Customs and Border Station and walk over with your signed papers including your ITN certificate and any correspondence you have received from the US Customs on faxing your papers. Do not drive into the US Border Station in Port Angeles as that is their exit lane (there is no entrance lane except from the ferry in Port Angeles.) Make sure you bring the originals of all your documents you faxed to in Step 7 plus any others you may have including your insurance. Don’t expect friendly service, the agents tend to be pretty officious.

When we arrived they instructed me to give them our documents and to go get in line for the ferry which is adjacent to the Customs office saying that they would bring the papers to us in the line-up. They delivered the papers back to us with clearance stamps within 10 minutes. Be sure you get to the terminal well before the ferry arrives or you may have to wait for them to process all the traffic coming off the ferry first and you could miss the next ferry.

Step 11 – Stop at Canadian Border Services Office at ferry terminal/border crossing
On arrival in Canada, declare to the border services agent that approaches your car that you are bringing in a car and they will send you to their office at the ferry terminal.

Take in all your original signed papers and a copy of the receipt you received if you paid your RIV fee on-line. The Canadian Border Services Agent will go thorough your papers checking that the fees are paid and that the car is cleared for Canada. This takes about 15 minutes.

At this point you will have to pay the GST on the full purchase price of the car (credit or debit cards are accepted). If you are importing a fully electric car, make sure they don't charge you the \$100 Air Conditioner tax as the AC is not operated by fossil fuels so is exempt – we had a sharp agent who reminded the agent processing our papers that the tax was not applicable to our Leaf. (The Canadian agents were much friendlier than their American counterparts.)

Step 12 – Take your car to a Transport Canada approved inspection station

Before you can register your car, it must pass Transport Canada's RIV inspection. Check to see who is authorized in your community (In Victoria, it is done by various Canadian Tire stores for \$99.) You will have to fix any items that fail the inspection. Most American cars do not have permanent daytime running lights so a kit that enables these must be installed. If you know mechanic, they should be able to do it in a few minutes. The Nissan dealer can also do this. Otherwise Canadian Tire will do it for about \$225. If the dealer you are dealing with in the USA is used to shipping cars to Canada, you may be able to arrange for them to do it if it costs less there.

Cars other than the Leaf may have other modifications that are needed to pass the RIV inspection.

Step 13 – Register and Insure your car

Once your car has passed the RIV inspection, you can take your inspection report plus all your original purchasing and importing papers to your insurance agent to register your car. Be aware that in BC, the Provincial Sales Tax applies to all used car purchases so as you register and insure your car, you will also pay the PST.

There is a lot more to this than registering a BC car. It is wise to seek out an agent who is familiar with the process to prevent any errors in the processing. I was referred to the HUB – Barton Insurance Brokers at 1736A Island Hwy in Colwood and the young woman doing the paperwork was terrific and really knew the process inside-out. It took 15 minutes but would have likely taken an hour or more with an agent who did not do these regularly and was not familiar with the process.

Step 14 – Apply RIV sticker to the B pillar of your car

RIV will mail you a peel off sticker that must be applied to the “B” pillar of your car. That is the chassis pillar between your front and back doors where other Transport Canada stickers and your tire pressure requirements are located.

Now you are done!!! Congratulations on saving thousands of dollars by spending a few hours of your time filling out forms on-line and a pleasant ferry trip.

Enjoy driving your EV and eliminating 98% of your CO2 emissions while driving your EV. It will put a smile on your face.

ⁱ See Motorize EV's in Sidney. <https://motorize.ca>

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Cost Comparison
Buy from Local Victoria Dealer vs. Self-Import
2014 Nissan Leaf SL

<i>Odometer in km.</i>	<i>40-50,000 km</i>	<i>31,890 km</i>
EXCHANGE RATE		1.295
	Victoria Dealers	Self-import
	\$ CDN	\$ CDN
Dealer Price	\$24,700.00	\$17,676.75
Dealer's Documentation Fee	\$495.00	\$-
Total Cost @ Dealer	\$25,195.00	\$17,676.75
GST	\$-	\$883.84
PST	\$3,023.40	\$1,237.37
Currency Exchange Transfer Fee	\$-	\$15.00
Shipping Fee	\$-	\$323.75
AES/ITN Fee	\$-	\$45.33
RIV Fee	\$-	\$309.00
Running Lights kit & Install	\$-	\$212.78
Inspection Fee	\$-	\$112.00
Binder for Interium Insurance	\$-	\$70.00
SUBTOTAL CAR	\$28,218.40	\$20,885.82
Ferry to Port Angeles & back	\$-	\$121.00
TOTAL COST	\$28,218.40	\$21,006.82
SAVINGS		\$7,211.59
Date Registered	20-Nov-17	

iii <http://plattauto.com>

iv Leaf Spy is an App for iPhone or Android that communicates with a dongle plugged into the Leaf's OBDII diagnostics port and gives you a huge amount of data on your car, including battery health and the number of times its been charged on a L1/L2 charger and a L3 Quick Charger. Check out Leaf Spy on-line for more information. App costs about \$30 and you can pick up a OBED II dongle for \$15 - \$55 that is compatible with your mobile phone.

v <https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls>

vi <http://simplifiedtradesolutions.com>

vii <https://www.riv.ca>

viii US Customs & Border Protection Port Angeles Station is at 110 South Penn St. Zip Code 98362 and FAX 1-360-457-7514 <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/along-us-borders/border-patrol-sectors/blaine-sector-washington/port-angeles-station>