



Canada

Canada, the second-largest country in the world, is packed with so much natural and cultural diversity you'd need a lifetime – and then some – to see and do everything it has to offer. This is the crown of the Americas, and it's stuffed with jewels.

The Canadian Rockies provide the backdrop for world-class hiking, while the prairies of Alberta make for unforgettable road trips. Head to Niagara Falls in Ontario to see the brute force of nature and visit Pacific Rim National Park to experience the rugged beauty of British Columbia's coastline. The Bay of Fundy, on the Atlantic side, is great for whale-watching, while on Vancouver Island you can spot wild bears.

The cities, beacons of culture in the vast wilderness, make for a completely different experience. Toronto is one of the festival capitals of the world, Vancouver is a mecca for art buffs and the parks of Montreal make the city worth visiting in their own right.

From Banff to Baffin Island, from Tofino to Toronto, Canada is a remarkable country. Whether you're a hard-core adrenaline junkie looking for a backcountry adventure, an explorer heads out on a big road trip, a city-lover hunting for cutting-edge culture and fine cuisine or a combination of all the above, Canada ticks all the boxes.

Stretching 5,500km (3,400 miles) from the Atlantic to the Yukon-Alaska border, the world's second largest country boasts an astonishing diversity of landscapes: rugged, unspoilt coastline abuts immense forests and emerald lakes containing a startling array of wildlife; vast, seemingly endless prairies become jaw-droopingly beautiful mountain ranges; laid-back, cosmopolitan cities are complemented by remote, quirky outposts.

Canada's people too are enormously varied, from the indigenous Inuit in the Arctic to First Nations communities, 1960s and 70s British expats, fiercely proud Francophone peoples and a burgeoning Asian population. Their genuine friendliness and warmth is immediately apparent to visitors.

Canadian cities are progressive, vibrant and regularly feature on 'best places to live' lists - Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal have all at some point featured on Mercer's Quality of Life Survey, usually scoring in the top 30. Toronto, a veritable patchwork of diverse neighbourhoods, sits in an enviable location on the shore of Lake Ontario whilst Canada's capital city, Ottawa, contains a clutch of great museums and the pretty Rideau Canal for ice skating in winter. Montreal's skyscrapers belie its French heritage, but look closer and you'll stumble upon historic, cobbled streets and centuries-old customs. A stone's throw from the Canadian Rockies, booming Calgary oozes oil wealth and flaunts its cowboy traditions; chilled-out Vancouver, meanwhile, seems to have it all: mountains, beaches, an incredible downtown park and terrific food.

Whilst you're out and about enjoying the cities, don't forget about the experiences Canada delivers. You can ski steep chutes in British Columbia, kayak secluded bays in Nova Scotia or learn to lasso at an Albertan ranch. You can capture grizzlies on camera in the Yukon, watch open-mouthed as mammoth icebergs drift past the Newfoundland coast or listen in awe to the deafening roar of Niagara Falls. You can tour vineyards, dig for clams or slice through a succulent steak.

Canada is a nation of immigrants and thus truly cosmopolitan – around 20% of the population are foreign-born (rising to 45% in Toronto). While other countries have eschewed immigration, Canada has recognised its importance to economic and social development, and continues to welcome vast numbers of young, skilled and highly educated workers from overseas each year. Indeed, in 2010, over 280,000 new permanent residents came to Canada, the largest number in more than 50 years. And contrary to the waves of migration from Europe in the first half of the 20th century, the majority of recent immigrants come from Asia. Thanks to its cautious fiscal policies, Canada's economy has remained reasonably buoyant during the global financial crisis, and it remains one of the world's wealthiest nations and a highly desirable place to work and do business.

With its staggeringly beautiful scenery, multitude of outdoor activities, forward-looking cities and huge swathes of uninhabited wilderness, Canada offers countless opportunities to travellers.

Canada Geography

Canada occupies a major northern portion of North America, sharing land borders with the contiguous United States to the south (the longest border between two countries in the world) and the US state of Alaska to the northwest. Canada stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west; to the north lays the Arctic Ocean. Greenland is to the northeast, while Saint Pierre and Miquelon is south of Newfoundland. By total area (including its waters), Canada is the second-largest country in the world, after Russia. By land area alone, Canada ranks fourth. The country lies between latitudes 41° and 84°N, and longitudes 52° and 141°W.

Since 1925, Canada has claimed the portion of the Arctic between 60° and 141°W longitude, but this claim is not universally recognized. Canada is home to the world's northernmost settlement, Canadian Forces Station Alert, on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island – latitude 82.5°N – which lies 817 kilometres (508 mi) from the North Pole. Much of the Canadian Arctic is covered by ice and permafrost. Canada has the longest coastline in the world, with a total length of 202,080 kilometres (125,570 mi); additionally, its border with the United States is the world's longest land border, stretching 8,891 kilometres (5,525 mi).

Canada Facts

USA Facts				
Full country name:	Canada			
Area:	9,984,670sq. km			
Population:	35,427,524			
People:	76.7% European 1.2% Latin American	14.2% Asian 0.5% Multiracial	4.3% Aboriginal 0.3% Other	2.9% Black

Language:	English and French
Religion:	Catholic, Islam
Government:	Federal parliamentary. Constitutional monarchy
Monarch:	Elizabeth II
Prime Minister:	Stephen Harper
Major industries:	Motor vehicles and parts, machinery and equipment, crude petroleum, natural gas and high-technology products.
Major trading partners:	USA, Japan, UK
Health risks:	None
Time:	(UTC-3.5 to -8) and (UTC-2.5 to -7) summer DST
Electricity:	110-120 volts AC, 60Hz. American-style flat two-pin and three-pin (grounded) plugs are standard.
Country code:	+1
Mobile Phone network:	GSM 900, GSM 1800, 3G
Weights & measures:	Metric with local variations

Since the end of the last glacial period, Canada has consisted of eight distinct forest regions, including extensive boreal forest on the Canadian Shield. Canada has around 31,700 large lakes, more than any other country, containing much of the world's fresh water. There are also fresh-water glaciers in the Canadian Rockies and the Coast Mountains. Canada is geologically active, having many earthquakes and potentially active volcanoes, notably Mount Meager, Mount Garibaldi, Mount Cayley, and the complex. The volcanic eruption of the Tseax Cone in 1775 was among Canada's worst natural disasters, killing 2,000 Nisga'a people and destroying their village in the Nass River valley of northern British Columbia. The eruption produced a 22.5-kilometre (14.0 mi) lava flow, and, according to Nisga'a legend, blocked the flow of the Nass River. Canada's population density, at 3.3 inhabitants per square kilometre (8.5 /sq. mi), is among the lowest in the world. The most densely populated part of the country is the Quebec City – Windsor Corridor, situated in Southern Quebec and Southern Ontario along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

Average winter and summer high temperatures across Canada vary from region to region. Winters can be harsh in many parts of the country, particularly in the interior and Prairie provinces, which experience a continental climate, where daily average temperatures are near -15 °C (5 °F), but can drop below -40 °C (-40 °F) with severe wind chills. In noncoastal regions, snow can cover the ground for almost six months of the year, while in parts of the north snow can persist year-round. Coastal British Columbia has a temperate climate, with a mild and rainy winter. On the east and west coasts, average high temperatures are generally in the low 20s °C (70s °F), while between the coasts, the average summer high temperature ranges from 25 to 30 °C (77 to 86 °F), with temperatures in some interior locations occasionally exceeding 40 °C (104 °F).

Canada Culture

Canada's culture draws influences from its broad range of constituent nationalities, and policies that promote multiculturalism are constitutionally protected. In Quebec, cultural identity is strong, and many French-speaking commentators speak of a culture of Quebec that is distinct from English Canadian culture. However, as a whole, Canada is in theory a cultural mosaic – a collection of several regional, aboriginal, and ethnic subcultures. Government policies such as publicly funded health care, higher taxation to redistribute wealth, the outlawing of capital punishment, strong efforts to eliminate poverty, strict gun control, and the legalization of same-sex marriage are further social indicators of Canada's political and cultural values.

Historically, Canada has been influenced by British, French, and aboriginal cultures and traditions. Through their language, art and music, aboriginal peoples continue to influence the Canadian identity. Many Canadians value multiculturalism and see Canada as being inherently multicultural. American media and entertainment are popular, if not dominant, in English Canada; conversely, many Canadian cultural products and entertainers are successful in the United States and worldwide. The preservation of a distinctly Canadian culture is supported by federal government programs, laws, and institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

Handshaking predominates as the normal mode of greeting. Close friends often exchange kisses on the cheeks, particularly in French-speaking areas. Codes of practice for visiting homes are the same as in other Western countries: flowers, chocolates or a bottle of wine are common gifts for hosts, and dress is generally informal and practical according to climate. It is common for black tie and other required dress to be indicated on invitations. Exclusive clubs and restaurants often require more formal dress. Smoking has been banned in most public areas.

Religion in Canada

Around 70% of the population belong to the Christian faith; over half are Roman Catholic, followed by the United Church of Canada and Anglican denominations. There are numerous other active denominations and religions.

Language in Canada

Canada is officially bilingual (English and French). The use of the two languages reflects the country's mixed colonial history - Canada has been under both British and French rule. However, while the federal government must operate in both languages as much as is practical, use of each language outside government varies widely across the country.

In almost all of the province of Québec, as well as parts of New Brunswick and Ontario, French is the dominant language; in most of the rest of the country, English predominates. Montréal, Ottawa and Moncton have large concentrations of fluently bilingual people. Immigration has also changed the language picture considerably; while not official languages, Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Arabic and other languages are often heard on the streets of Canada's largest cities.

Events and Public Holidays

Public Holidays			
Date	Holiday name	Holiday type	Where it is observed
Jan 1	New Year's Day	National holiday	
Jan 2	Day After New Year's Day	Local holiday	Quebec
Jan 6	Epiphany	Observance, Christian	
Jan 7	Orthodox Christmas Day	Orthodox	
Jan 14	Prophet's Birthday	Muslim	
Jan 14	Orthodox New Year	Orthodox	
Jan 16	Tu B'Shevat (Arbor Day)	Jewish holiday	
Jan 31	Chinese New Year	Observance	
Feb 2	Groundhog Day	Observance	
Feb 10	Family Day	Common Local holidays	British Columbia
Feb 14	Valentine's Day	Observance	
Feb 15	National Flag of Canada Day	Observance	
Feb 17	Islander Day	Common Local holidays	Pr.Edward I
Feb 17	Family Day	Common Local holidays	AB, ON, SK
Feb 17	Louis Riel Day	Common Local holidays	Manitoba
Feb 21	Heritage Day in the Yukon	Local holiday	Yukon Territory
Mar 1	St David's Day	Observance	
Mar 4	Carnival/Shrove Tuesday	Christian	
Mar 5	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Mar 9	Daylight Saving Time starts	Clock change/Daylight Saving Time	
Mar 10	Commonwealth Day	Observance	
Mar 16	Purim	Jewish holiday	
Mar 17	St. Patrick's Day	Observance	
Mar 17	St. Patrick's Day	Local holiday	Newfoundland and Labrador
Mar 20	March equinox	Season	
Apr 6	National Tartan Day	Observance	
Apr 9	Vimy Ridge Day	Observance	
Apr 13	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Apr 15	First day of Passover	Jewish holiday	
Apr 17	Maundy Thursday	Christian	
Apr 18	Orthodox Good Friday	Orthodox	
Apr 18	Good Friday	National holiday, Christian	
Apr 19	Holy Saturday	Christian	
Apr 19	Orthodox Holy Saturday	Orthodox	
Apr 20	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox	
Apr 20	Easter Sunday	Observance, Christian	

Apr 21	Orthodox Easter Monday	Orthodox	
Apr 21	Easter Monday	National holiday, Christian	
Apr 21	St. George's Day	Local holiday	Newfoundland and Labrador
Apr 22	Last day of Passover	Jewish holiday	
Apr 28	Yom HaShoah	Jewish holiday	
May 6	Yom HaAtzmaut	Jewish holiday	
May 9	National Day of Honour	Observance	
May 11	Mother's Day	Observance	
May 18	Lag B'Omer	Jewish holiday	
May 19	Victoria Day	National holiday	All except QC
May 19	National Patriots' Day	Local holiday	Quebec
May 27	Isra and Mi'raj	Muslim	
May 29	Ascension Day	Christian	
Jun 4	Shavuot	Jewish holiday	
Jun 8	Pentecost	Christian	
Jun 9	Whit Monday	Christian	
Jun 15	Trinity Sunday	Christian	
Jun 15	Father's Day	Observance	
Jun 19	Corpus Christi	Christian	
Jun 21	June Solstice	Season	
Jun 21	National Aboriginal Day	Local holiday	Northwest Territories
Jun 21	National Aboriginal Day	Observance	
Jun 23	Discovery Day	Local holiday	Newfoundland and Labrador
Jun 24	St. Jean Baptiste Day	Local holiday	Quebec
Jun 29	Ramadan begins	Muslim	
Jul 1	Canada Day	National holiday	
Jul 1	Memorial Day	Local observance	Newfoundland and Labrador
Jul 9	Nunavut Day	Local holiday	Nunavut Territory
Jul 14	Orangemen's Day	Local observance	Newfoundland and Labrador
Jul 24	Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Destiny)	Muslim	
Jul 29	Eid-al-Fitr	Muslim	
Aug 4	Heritage Day in Alberta	Common Local holidays	
Aug 4	Civic/Provincial Day	Common Local holidays	MB, NT, ON, SK
Aug 4	New Brunswick Day	Common Local holidays	New Brunswick
Aug 4	British Columbia Day	Common Local holidays	British Columbia
Aug 4	Natal Day	Common Local holidays	Nova Scotia, Pr.Edward I
Aug 5	Tisha B'Av	Jewish holiday	
Aug 15	Assumption of Mary	Christian	
Aug 15	Gold Cup Parade	Local holiday	Pr.Edward I
Aug 18	Discovery Day	Local holiday	Yukon Territory

Sep 1	Labour Day	National holiday	All
Sep 23	September equinox	Season	
Sep 25	Rosh Hashana	Jewish holiday	
Oct 4	Feast of St Francis of Assisi	Christian	
Oct 4	Yom Kippur	Jewish holiday	
Oct 5	Eid-al-Adha	Muslim	
Oct 9	First day of Sukkot	Jewish holiday	
Oct 13	Thanksgiving Day	National holiday	All
Oct 15	Last day of Sukkot	Jewish holiday	
Oct 16	Shmini Atzeret	Jewish holiday	
Oct 17	Simchat Torah	Jewish holiday	
Oct 23	Diwali/Deepavali	Observance	
Oct 25	Muharram/Islamic New Year	Muslim	
Oct 31	Halloween	Observance	
Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Observance	
Nov 2	Daylight Saving Time ends	Clock change/Daylight Saving Time	
Nov 2	All Souls' Day	Christian	
Nov 11	Remembrance Day	Common Local holidays	All except ON, QC
Nov 30	First Sunday of Advent	Observance	
Dec 8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception	Christian	
Dec 11	Anniversary of the Statute of Westminster	Observance	
Dec 17	First Day of Hanukkah	Jewish holiday	
Dec 21	December Solstice	Season	
Dec 24	Last day of Hanukkah	Jewish holiday	
Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Observance	
Dec 25	Christmas	National holiday, Christian	
Dec 26	Boxing Day	National holiday	MB, NB, NL, NS, NT, ON, PE, YT
Dec 31	New Year's Eve	Observance	

General Information

Telephone

Most public telephones charge 50 cents a call, which can be paid with any combination of five-, 10- and 25-cent coins. Public telephones are becoming harder to find, due to the growing popularity of mobile phones. Many telephone companies offer a reduced long-distance rate Mon-Fri 1800-0800 and Sat 1200 to Mon 0800. For long-distance calls, telephone cards are available. You can find credit card telephones in larger centres. If you're near an internet café, you can use Skype too.

Mobile Phone

Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good in major urban areas, but spotty in remote locations. Roaming rates can be high, so you should check with your provider before leaving home.

Internet

Available throughout Canada, as are internet cafes (although the latter are not as common as they are in many other countries). You can often find pay-per-use Wi-Fi hotspots in coffee shops, fast-food outlets and airports; in some cases it's free as long as you buy a drink or something to eat. Free public Wi-Fi is easiest to find in public libraries. Some hotels provide free Wi-Fi too, but others continue to charge exorbitant daily fees.

Post

All mail from Canada to outside North America is by air. Stamps are available at post offices and in many hotels, pharmacies and convenience stores, among other locations. Letters sent by regular mail take four to six working days to reach the USA and four to seven working days to reach other countries.

Post Office Hours

Generally Mon-Fri 0930-1700, Sat 0900-1200, but times vary according to province and location; city offices will have longer hours. Canada Post (www.canadapost.ca) has a full list of locations and hours.

Media

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is Canada's national broadcaster. It was set up in the 1930s and broadcasts in both French and English via TV, radio, internet and satellite. The main national daily newspapers are The Globe and Mail and The National Post. French-language dailies are published in Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec City. Regional English-language daily newspapers are also published in individual provinces.

Tipping

How much tipping is customary in Vancouver? Whether you are visiting Vancouver or other centres such as Kelowna, Whistler, or Victoria, tipping in BC is the same as in the rest of Canada, and very similar to USA.

Paying a gratuity for services is the norm but note that it is seldom included in the bill with the exception perhaps with large groups at a restaurant. Expect to tip your taxi driver, waiter, bartender, aesthetician and hotel attendants. The standard tip for good services is 15% of the total amount before taxes.

How much should you tip? Following is a guide to tipping in BC (amounts shown are in Canadian Dollars).

Restaurant Server (waiter / waitress): 15% to 20% of the total bill before taxes. Restaurants may include a gratuity of 15% or more in their bill for large groups.

Bartender / Cocktail Waitress: 10% to 20% of the total bill before taxes.

Taxis / Cab Driver: 10% to 15% of the fare.

Tour Guide: 10% to 15% of the total.

Hotel Bellman / Porter: \$1 to \$2 per bag.

Housekeeping / Chambermaid: \$1 to \$2 per day (or more at luxury hotels). Usually this is a daily tip as the same maid may not service your room each day.

Hotel Doorman: \$1 to \$2 with assistance hailing a taxi.

Hair Salon / Spa: 10% to 15% of the total bill.