

Overview of Canada

The second largest country in the world, Canada offers visitors a range of experiences as varied as the land itself. It provides something to suit the taste of every traveller: large cosmopolitan cities; frozen northern tundra and snowy mountain peaks; rugged coastlines; rich farmlands; and pioneer outposts.

Canada is bound to the west by the Pacific Ocean and Alaska, to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, to the north by the polar ice cap, and to the south by the United States of America. It's a country renowned for its natural beauty, making it a favourite destinations for lovers of the outdoors.

The cities have been carefully designed to preserve metropolitan green belts and parklands, ensuring that Canadians are never far from their natural heritage. The country has a French and British colonial history, reflected in its cuisine, culture, and customs. Canadian identity is mixed in with the legacy of the country's own aboriginal First Nations history.

In the south, the Rocky Mountains separate Canada's two main tourist provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. The mountains abound with winter sports resorts, with the most popular venues for outdoor pursuits being the country's huge national parks. There are more than 41 national parks in Canada, with the Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta being larger than Switzerland. Canadian national parks are unique in that they have cities and towns within the protected areas, providing comfortable bases for exploring the natural and manmade attractions.

Key Facts

Language:

The official languages are English and French (spoken predominantly in Quebec).

Passport/Visa:

All visitors must hold a valid passport, and it's recommended that passports always be valid for six months after the intended period of travel. Visitors are required to hold onward or return tickets, all documents needed for the next destination and sufficient funds to cover the period of intended stay. Travellers from most visa-exempt countries arriving in Canada by air need to fill in an Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) form online prior to visiting Canada. This requirement is applicable to all but U.S citizens and travellers with a valid Canadian visa. Canadian citizens, including dual citizens, and Canadian permanent residents cannot apply for an eTA. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel documents to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA a valid passport will be required by immigration authorities.

Currency:

The currency used is the Canadian dollar (CAD). Banks and bureaux de change will change cash, as will some hotels. Major credit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are widespread. US dollars are widely accepted.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. American-style flat two-pin plugs and a plug with a third round grounding pin are standard.

Travel to Canada

Overview

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This is certainly a year-round destination, where the warm summer months (June to August) are perfect for sightseeing and overland travel, and the admittedly icy winters (December to February) provide for some incredible skiing and beautiful snow-covered vistas. Visitors to Canada generally choose to focus on one particular region, as there are major distances to travel if the desire is to see everything.

Climate in Canada

Canada is a large country and the climate varies substantially depending on which area travellers visit. The whole country has very distinct seasons, though, and the warmest months are June, July, and August. Winter (December, January, and February) is very cold, with heavy snowfalls in most provinces; autumn is a beautiful season, with crisp air and brilliant fall foliage. In some areas spring brings the emergence of carpets of wild flowers.

Health Notes when travelling to Canada

Travellers should be up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines before traveling to Canada, and should consider taking routine vaccines as a standard precaution. Medical care is excellent but expensive, so medical insurance is advised.

Safety Notes when travelling to Canada

While most visits to Canada are trouble-free, the country does share the common international risk of terrorism. The crime rate is low but travellers are advised to take sensible precautions to safeguard their belongings, as they would anywhere. Parts of Canada are prone to tornadoes between May and September.

Customs in Canada

Rowdiness and loud speech are inappropriate except under special circumstances or in places such as bars, as Canadians tend to be soft spoken, patient and almost apologetic in their public behaviour. They are generally tolerant of the complex network of cultural differences in public behaviour, particularly in cities where such diversity is more common place. Recreational cannabis is legally available throughout Canada, though local laws can vary depending on the province or territory travellers are visiting.

Duty Free in Canada

Travellers to Canada are allowed to enter the country with the following items without incurring custom duties: gifts to the value of C\$60 per recipient (excluding advertising material, tobacco and alcoholic beverages); 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or cigarillos and 200g of tobacco or 200 tobacco sticks; 1.14 litres of liquor or wine or 24 x 355ml bottles or cans of beer or ale. There are strict regulations governing the import of the following: explosives, endangered animal and plant species, items of heritage, fresh foodstuffs and weapons.

Doing Business in Canada

Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, and Montreal are the main business centres, and English is the language of business except in French-speaking Quebec, where all written material and business cards should be in French. Business cards are not traditionally exchanged during an initial meeting, but at some appropriate time thereafter; it is best to wait for the host to offer theirs first.

A firm handshake is used by way of greeting and punctuality should be taken seriously for meetings. Canadians dress conservatively and smartly for business and suits are the norm. Gifts can be given in conclusion to celebrate a deal, but should be understated; taking someone out for a meal is a popular way to conclude business dealings.

Canadians are reserved and frown on emotional outbursts. Business is based on facts and figures rather than relationships, so it is best to be as prepared as possible for meetings. Hours of business are usually 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Communication in Canada

The international access code for Canada is +1. The outgoing code is 011 followed by the relevant country code.

The outgoing code is not necessary for calls to the US and the Caribbean. Hotels, cafes and restaurants offering free WiFi are widely available. As international roaming costs can be high, purchasing a local prepaid SIM card can be a cheaper option.

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Tippling in Canada

A tip of around 15 percent is standard in restaurants, and hairdressers and taxi drivers are usually tipped at the same rate. Bellhops, doormen, porters, and similar service providers at hotels, airports, and stations are generally paid at the customer's discretion.

Passport/Visa Note

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Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

US travellers should have a valid passport if departing from the USA. Other proof of citizenship is accepted in the form of a birth certificate, a US certificate of citizenship, a US certificate of naturalisation, or a NEXUS card. A visa is not required for a stay of up to six months.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK nationals must have a passport valid for the period of intended stay. A visa is not required for a stay of up to six months, though UK travellers must have Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA).

Entry requirements for Australians:

Australians must hold passports valid for period of intended stay. Nationals of Australia with an Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) are visa exempt for a maximum stay of 6 months.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish nationals must hold a passport valid for the period of intended stay. A visa is not required for stays of up to six months. However, the individual must have an Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA).

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealanders require a passport valid for the period of the intended stay. No visa is required for stays of up to 6 months. However, the traveller requires an Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA).

Entry requirements for South Africans:

South African nationals must be in possession of a passport valid for the period of intended stay. A visa is required. South African temporary passports are not recognised. Passports, identity or travel documents of Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda are not accepted.

Tourist Offices

Canadian Tourism Commission, Vancouver: +1 604 638 8300 or <http://www.travelcanada.ca>

Canada Embassies

In the United States:

Canadian Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 682 1740.

In the United Kingdom:

Canadian High Commission, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7258 6600.

In Australia:

Canadian High Commission, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6270-4000.

In Ireland:

Canadian Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 234 4000.

In New Zealand:

Canadian High Commission, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 473 9577.

In South Africa:

Canadian High Commission, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 422 3000.

Foreign Embassies in Canada

American Embassy

United States Embassy, Ottawa: +1 613 688 5335.

British Embassy

British High Commission, Ottawa: +1 613 237 1530.

Australian Embassy

Australian High Commission, Ottawa: +1 613 236 0841.

Irish Embassy

Irish Embassy, Ottawa: +1 613 233 6281.

New Zealand Embassy

New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa: +1 613 238 5991.

South African Embassy

South African High Commission, Ottawa: +1 613 744 0330.

Currency

The currency used is the Canadian dollar (CAD). Banks and bureaux de change will change cash, as will some hotels. Major credit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are widespread. US dollars are widely accepted.

Exchange rate for 1 CAD - Canadian Dollar

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.68 EUR Euro	0.73 USD U.S. Dollar	0.58 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	111.95 JPY Japanese Yen	0.66 CHF Swiss Franc
1.11 AUD Australian Dollar	28.83 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	324.82 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	68,104.49 LBP Lebanese Pound	3.55 LYD Libyan Dinar	5.02 BOB Bolivian Boliviano
0.00 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.00 OMR Omani Rial	0.00 QAR Qatari Rial	0.99 SGD Singapore Dollar	7.92 SEK Swedish Krona	0.00 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	42.52 DOP Dominican Peso	0.00 HRK Croatian Kuna	12.41 MXN Mexican Peso	446.74 XOF West African CFA Franc	0.00 PGK Papua New Guinean kina
0.00 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.00 FJD Fiji Dollar	0.00 HNL Honduran Lempira	97.95 DZD Algerian Dinar	0.00 MMK Myanma Kyat	0.00 BWP Botswana Pula
2.72 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	686.67 CLP Chilean Peso	283.06 AMD Armenia Dram	17.04 CZK Czech Koruna	12.90 MDL Moldova Lei	102.36 ISK Icelandic Krona
9,206.75 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	2.72 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.52 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.00 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	27.92 UYU Uruguayan Peso	0.00 MUR Mauritian Rupee
0.00 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	7.96 NOK Norwegian Krone	2.95 PLN Polish Zloty	2.74 SAR Saudi Riyal	0.00 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	26.92 THB Thai Baht
2.68 AED U.A.E Dirham	3.73 BRL Brazilian Real	3.39 RON Romanian New Leu	5.72 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	446.74 XAF Central African CFA Franc	18,589.76 VND Vietnamese Dong
642.71 ARS Argentine Peso	0.00 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.00 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	7.36 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.00 BHD Bahrain Dinar	0.73 PAB Panamanian Balboa
1.24 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	2,868.33 COP Colombian Peso	64.70 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	264.88 HUF Hungarian Forint	7.97 TJS Tajikistan Ruble	11,761.39 IDR Indonesian Rupiah
35.09 EGP Egyptian Pound	994.29 KRW South Korean Won	5,456.06 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	3.47 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	371.94 CRC Costa Rican Colón	1.22 NZD New Zealand Dollar
203.32 PKR Pakistani Rupee	66.87 RUB Russian Rouble	13.54 ZAR South African Rand	2.29 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.00 BBD Barbadian Dollar	1.33 BGN Bulgarian Lev
23.66 TRY Turkish Lira	41.92 PHP Philippine Peso	23.64 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	852.33 NGN Nigerian Naira	0.00 XPF CFP Franc	0.00 GHS Ghanaian Cedi
0.00 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.00 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.00 BND Brunei Dollar	79.69 RSD Serbian Dinar	5.30 CNY Chinese Yuan	5.08 DKK Danish Krone
2.55 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	61.04 INR Indian Rupee				

Port of Call - Cape Breton

In the heart of Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island, Sydney offers a modern and scenic cruise port well situated for exploring the rugged coastline and forested interior of the island and the city of Sydney. Popular activities on Breton Island include walking in Sydney's tranquil Wentworth Park, exploring the historic buildings in the city, and taking a drive along the scenic Cabot Trail. Cruise ships dock at the east side of Sydney Harbour inside a long, protected inlet at a newly renovated cruise port that also berths cargo and other trade vessels. The Joan Harriss Cruise Pavilion welcomes passengers to trade shows, concerts and galleries and is well situated to begin excursions about Breton Island. More than 40 cruise ships make use of the harbour facilities every year.

Shopping in Cape Breton

The Cape Breton Centre for Crafts and Design is a good place for souvenirs. The Mayflower Mall and the Sydney Shopping Centre are both larger shopping complexes for more practical purchases. There are not many boutique shops in Sydney, although smaller shops are spread about touristy sights around Breton Island, especially Baddeck village.

Best Buy: CD of traditional music

Dining in Cape Breton

Joe's Warehouse - Traditional Canadian home cooked meals
Tim Hortons - Canadian fast food done right
A & K Lick-A-Chick - Great fried Chicken

Best Dish: Fried Chicken

Port of Call - Halifax

Boasting one of the largest harbours in the world, Halifax is the gateway to Atlantic Canada and sees hundreds of cruise ships each year. This bustling young town is the home of many college students and has a vibrant and colourful entertainment and nightlife scene as well as a rich and diverse history that can be felt while exploring the city. Halifax has strong ties to the sinking of the Titanic as three of the city's ships formed part of the recovery team after the tragedy in 1912; headstones in three of the city's cemeteries bear testament to this. History buffs will love the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic as well as the Immigration Museum of Pier 21. Passengers are greeted by Scottish bag-pipers since Nova Scotia is translated to 'New Scotland'. Cruise ships dock at one of the two piers at the harbour, but if there is more than one cruise ship at port, one may have to dock at the less convenient container terminal as there is only one cruise terminal. Ships docking at the container terminal require a shuttle transfer to the city.

Shopping in Halifax

Cruise passengers will love the choice along the boardwalk, which runs alongside the harbour. The Historic Properties at Privateers Wharf, which dates back to the 1800s and is located on the boardwalk, comprises a four-acre (1,6 ha) collection of wooden and stone buildings that feature shops, restaurants, boutiques, and pubs. A great place for a spending spree!

Best Buy: Mouth-blown, hand-cut crystal

Dining in Halifax

Great Wall Restaurant - Szechuan and Cantonese cuisine in a cosy setting
Café Chianti - gourmet Italian and European cuisine with a fantastic wine cellar

Best Dish: Crab cakes and rum cake

Port of Call - Saint John

The largest port city in New Brunswick, tucked safely into the Gulf of Fundy, Saint John is one of the oldest cities in Canada and today blends the historic charm of old architecture with its modern role as a major commercial port. The town's old architecture is pleasant to stroll through and there are several quirky yet popular attractions including a river that's water changes directions, and a farmers market building that looks like a big ship. Cruise liners dock at the Pugsley A/B dock, which is the fourth most visited Canadian cruise port. The A/B dock is beside a new cruise terminal. The cruise terminal opens to downtown Saint John, within easy walking distance of almost all the city's attractions except the river.

Shopping in Saint John

Saint John City Market is the country's oldest continuing farmers market, selling great food and also local crafts. Market Square sells similar goods, as well as more upmarket items. Also in Uptown Saint John is the Brunswick Square Shopping Centre, which offers a collection of about 60 well known retail stores and locally owned shops.

Best Buy: Moosehead beer

Dining in Saint John

Billy's Seafood Company - Well regarded seafood in the City Market Steamer's Lobster Co. - Lobster cookouts near the waterfront Grannan's Seafood - Family dining in Market Square

Best Dish: Steamed lobster

Port of Call - Vancouver (Burrard Inlet)

Vancouver's port on the Burrard Inlet sees more than a million cruise passengers pass through annually en route to Alaska. The port is wonderfully protected with calm waters which makes for a fantastic port for large ocean-going ships and cruise liners. Throw in a multitude of attractions, ethnic diversity and hospitable locals, and it's no wonder this city keeps visitors coming back time after time. Visitors will enjoy the countless world-renowned sights such as Stanley Park, Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Harbour Centre Tower, the tallest structure in British Columbia, which offers breathtaking panoramic views over the city of Vancouver. Vancouver has two separate cruise terminals with the Canada Place Terminal being the main one and closest to shops, restaurants, hotels and attractions. The Ballantyne Pier is located approximately 10 minutes from the city centre and shuttle and taxis can be hailed to get into town.

Shopping in Vancouver (Burrard Inlet)

Head to the trendy and fashionable Yaletown for all the best boutiques in Vancouver and some exciting shopping opportunities, while Chinatown's weekend night market is worth a visit for all avid shoppers and bargain-hunters. Those looking to shop for their children should head to the Kids Market on Granville Island, where more than 25 shops featuring toys and costumes can be found.

Best Buy: VQA Ice wine

Dining in Vancouver (Burrard Inlet)

Eighties Restaurant - popular eatery serving hearty home-cooked fare Joe Fortes Seafood and Chophouse - fresh seafood eatery and oyster bar popular with locals The Water Street Café - fantastic variety of food with outside patio dining option

Best Dish: Salt-cured fish or venison

Port of Call - Victoria

Located on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island, Victoria is sometimes called the most British city in Canada. Victoria is a popular port on Alaskan cruises, welcoming more than 400,000 passengers and nearly 200 cruise ships each year. Tourists are drawn to Victoria's manicured gardens and Mediterranean climate, but this large city has many attractions for the whole family, ranging from cinemas and zoos to wineries and hiking trails. Cruise ships dock at the Ogden Point Cruise Terminal in the Outer Harbour area of the city, located about a mile from the Inner Harbour and downtown. The Inner Harbour area is a delight for cruise passengers and tourists with time constraints, as it offers a vibrant atmosphere with shops and markets, museums and attractions within easy distance of the docks.

Shopping in Victoria

There are some decent souvenir shops in the Inner Harbour area, and a craft market in the summertime. For a pleasant shopping experience, visitors can wander up Government Street toward Chinatown, which has a number of shops geared to tourists and cruise passengers, and even features live music in places like Market Square.

Best Buy: Nanaimo Bars - a chocolate dessert bar that is British Columbia's best known confection

Dining in Victoria

Pizzeria Prima Strada - fresh wood-fired pizzas made to order Blue Fox Cafe - small and stylish restaurant with eclectic breakfast and lunch menus Red Fish Blue Fish - fresh seafood in a picnic-style wharf-side setting

Best Dish: Fanny Bay oysters

Overview of the Attractions in Canada

Canada has an abundance of things to see and do within its vast borders, as few countries are blessed with such a rich endowment of natural beauty and astounding physical attractions. Complementing these are world-class cities such as the west coast gem of Vancouver, the vibrant metropolis of Toronto, and elegant Montreal.

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Public Holidays in Canada

	2023	2024
New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
Good Friday	Sun. April 7	Fri. March 29
Victoria Day	Wed. May 22	Mon. May 20
Canada Day	Mon. July 1	Mon. July 1
Labour Day	Wed. September 4	Mon. September 2
Thanksgiving Day	Wed. October 9	Mon. October 14
Remembrance Day	Mon. November 11	Mon. November 11
Christmas Day	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25
Boxing Day (Ontario only)	Thu. December 26	Thu. December 26