

Canada



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| NAME: | Canada |
| CAPITAL: | Ottawa |
| LANGUAGE: | English & French |
| RELIGION: | Catholic & Protestant |
| CURRENCY: | Canadian Dollar |

Getting Started

When to Visit

[Canada](#)'s weather can vary from so miserably cold you won't leave the building to nearly as miserably hot, but for most of the year the temperature can be easily overcome with the right clothing. Despite the weather, Canada is a great place to visit year-round depending on what you're looking for.

[Canada](#) is a winter sports paradise and the colder months (December-March), although having few sunlight hours, offer great alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, sledding, and the nation's favorite pastime (obsession), hockey. However during this period average temperatures vary from 35° F (3° C) in [Vancouver](#) to -18° F (-28° C) in Yellowknife.

The fall (autumn) in [Canada](#) can be unpredictable, however tourist crowds are significantly reduced. It offers breathtaking fall foliage (especially in [Quebec](#)), and some of the animals from the north, like the polar bears travel further south and can be seen in a number of locations, like Churchill, Manitoba.

For most people, summer is the best time to visit much of the country, especially if you plan on hiking (or even driving) in the national parks in the [Canadian Rockies](#). The summer also offers great animal sightings in the wilderness, whale watching on the coasts, and the most pleasant temperatures to meander around the cities, but tends to be the country's busiest tourist season (although big cities are busy all the time). During this period average temperatures vary from 72° F (22° C) in [Toronto](#) to 46° F (8° C) in Iqaluit. Most locals and foreigners travel around Canada during the summer months from about May to August.

Spring, like the fall a great time to visit from coast to coast and, although the weather can be unpredictable, provides some of the shortest lines and minimal crowds at most of the tourist sites.

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A final point to consider before planning your travel is local holidays. Holidays can make travel either more attractive, such as for large festivals, or less attractive, due to tourist site closings and more expensive transportation options. See [Canada's Official & Unofficial Holidays](#).

Weather

Although weather can be generalized based upon years past, for more up to date weather patterns and predicted future weather patterns, visit weather websites like weather.com; many local news sources also have information for international weather forecasts.

Tours & Cruises

If you're looking for a pre-arranged trip, that involves little effort on your part, then you should consider going on an organized tour or cruise. Organized tours and cruises vary from all expenses included to only daily tours and perhaps hotels included in the price, but all the options below will help you arrange all the details so you don't have to worry about finding the best deal or right hotel.

[Canada Tours](#): Offers both daily city tours and all-inclusive multi-day tours.

[Caravan Tours](#): In business since the 1950s, Caravan offers tours too all ages, but there are few young people on many of their tours.

[Carnival Cruises](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

[Contiki Tours](#): A tour company that only offers tours to 18-35 year olds; known as offering fun and social tours for young singles and couples.

[Disney Cruise Lines](#): Cruises open to everyone, but filled with families and plenty to keep children occupied.

[Gap Adventures](#): Known best among young adults, Gap Adventures provides local transportation, housing, and food, which cuts costs and introduces the local culture, but can also be challenging for those seeking luxury.

[Holland America Cruises](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

[Intrepid Travel](#): Boasts more "off the beaten track" destinations; do your research though since some tours are very adventurous and involves camping and local hotels.

[Nowegian Cruise Line](#): Cruises for all ages and families; less formal than many cruise lines.

[Princess Cruise Lines](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

[Road Scholar](#): For older adults, Road Scholar offers tours with an educational emphasis; formerly known as Elder Hostel.

[Royal Caribbean](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

Guidebooks

If you are just traveling on business and have little free time or are already familiar with [Canada](#), you may not need anything more than the document you're reading! However, if you need more detailed and up to date information, there are a number of great country-wide, region-wide, and city-wide guidebooks available for travel in Canada.

[Eyewitness Guides](#): Incredible pictures and detailed maps of popular tourist sites including museums. Those living abroad can't put these books down.

[Fodor's](#): Good maps and information for the major tourist locations, but has little information for anyone heading off the beaten track. Great for those on organized tours.

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[Frommer's](#): Incredible number of lists, which divide travel into various categories based upon your interests. Travelers looking to spend most of their time in a single location or on organized tours enjoy these books.

[Lonely Planet](#): Great maps and updated often with comprehensive housing information, restaurants, & transportation options. Backpackers and adventurers love these guidebooks.

[National Geographic Traveler](#): Almost more of an information book about Canada, than a guidebook; offers great pictures, maps, history, and culture. Popular with armchair travelers and history buffs on organized tours.

Culture

Personality, Culture, & Identity

Although [Canada](#) is often times mistaken as, and treated like, the [United State](#)'s younger, and lesser sibling, Canada can stand on his own two feet while still clinging to his roots. He's well aware of his past in England, France, and locally with the First Nations Peoples, but consistently lets the world know he's different and unique by showcasing his differences.

In many ways [Canada](#) still remains that younger, and more obedient sibling of the US, never having raised a fuss, still loyal to the motherland, and still very much attached to the US. However Canada isn't the jealous or envious little brother, he is the sibling who holds a quiet confidence in who he is, at times still flaunting it with pride, but most of the time letting his brother take the spotlight. At the same time, Canada and the US remain more similar in more ways than they are different and while both nations poke fun at the other, each knows that at the end of the day nothing can break their bond.

Although [Canada](#) knows its past and stands tall with pride for its present, more often than not, Canadians are individuals who find their uniqueness in each person's own way. Canadians identify from their ethnic roots like French or Huron or their provincial roots like [Albertan](#) or Newfie to identities based on their religion, language, or political leanings. However, when these Hurons, Albertans, Catholics, and Conservatives go abroad they proudly wear their maple leaf flag and proclaim themselves Canadian.

History

[Canada](#) is a result of their history beginning with the First Nations Peoples and continuing today with the vast number of immigrants arriving daily. Unlike the aboriginals of modern-day [Mexico](#) or Peru,

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the First Nations People have little remaining architecture still standing, however their cultural impact remains strong throughout the country.

From before the time of the [European](#)'s arrival in the "New World" the local populations in modern-day Canada were varied from the seafaring and totem-pole making people of the Pacific coast to the central nomads who roamed with the food and seasons to the log cabin dwelling natives hunting and fishing on the Great Lakes.

In the 1500s immigrants from [Europe](#) began arriving in substantial numbers, particularly from [England](#) and [France](#). These people changed the dynamic among the First Nations People, each of whom found these new immigrants as enemies, trading partners, or allies. As the English and French fought so too did the aboriginals who planned their allegiances with whoever provided the best economic rewards or ally to fight their historic enemy.

As the powers in [Europe](#) fought so did their colonies in the "New World" as the locals took sides with the French or English while many found themselves fighting another's battle or continuing a war with a neighbor that had been ongoing for generations.

In 1763 [France](#) lost power over "[New France](#)" as the English took full control of the North American colonies. However the French in "New France" maintained their identity, religion, language, and customs.

In 1840 the French and English united to create one government and later, in 1867 they created their own country. After some growing pains and separation issues from the motherland, [Canada](#) finally gained full independence from the [United Kingdom](#) in 1982 with the Canada Act, making the English monarch the head of state, however solely in a nominal fashion.

During the 1800s and 1900s the population was more evenly distributed further to the west. During this same period, the French in [Quebec](#) have gone back and forth of whether to secede or not and the

First Nations Peoples have gained greater rights, particularly in 1960 with full citizenship.

Since about 1990 immigration to [Canada](#) has become more diverse and much of the west coast, particularly [Vancouver](#), has a strong Asian presence. Despite this diversity, the people still unite as one when the world watches and during the 2010 Winter Olympics in [Vancouver](#) the nation displayed their diversity, while demonstrating how each aspect was uniquely Canadian.

Dress & Behavior

There are few dress or behavioral restrictions in [Canada](#). The only issue to be aware of is that, unlike many beaches in [Europe](#), nakedness and women going topless is restricted and offenders will be arrested for public indecency, even if you're only sunbathing face down. Parts of [Quebec](#) are more liberal in this regard, but always follow local examples or ask.

To learn about dining etiquette in [Canada](#), see the section below.

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Food

Dinning Etiquette

Dining in [Canada](#) varies from highly sophisticated to extremely informal and, fortunately, usually falls closer to the informal side of the spectrum. With a fast food culture growing and eating on the run popular, eating as you walk or in the company of others isn't considered rude, although offering some food to those around you is polite. In these quick service restaurants there are no true dining rules.

In more formal settings, place your napkin on your lap, wait to eat until everyone is served, and use your silverware (cutlery) from the outside in. These rules also apply if you're a guest at anyone's house, although there may be appetizers you can snack on without waiting, plus some people are extremely informal so just follow your host's lead.

If dining as a guest at someone's house in English [Canada](#), always arrive on time, bring a small gift (or a dish if asked), and follow the host's traditions; this could mean a pre-meal prayer or toasts, which are typically limited only to the host, but if others join in, all are welcome to participate. It is also not considered rude to turn down a dish that does not appeal to you, however do so quietly and ask for another dish instead. It is also commonly considered polite to eat all the food you take; leaving food can be implied it was not satisfactory.

In [French Canada](#) rules vary a bit from the rules in English [Canada](#). People show up late for dinner and it is more of a social event than an eating event. Wine also takes a prominent role in dining and most formal dinners begin with at least one bottle of wine. After the wine arrives and the conversation begins, the first course arrives, typically with more wine and conversation. This is of course followed by the main course and wine, finally dessert and perhaps more wine. It is expected that each guest orders a starter, main course, and dessert, but portions tends to be small.

Paying also varies by region. In English [Canada](#) there are no set rules; typically the host will pay, but you should offer to assist and many times the offer will be accepted or the bill will be divided evenly. At a restaurant in [French Canada](#) however, the inviter always pays, so if you invite others expect to pay the entire bill and if you are the guest, it's still considered polite to offer to pay, but after your offer is turned down, asking again can be rude so graciously thank your host instead.

History & Influences

[Canadian](#) food begins with the First Nation's Peoples, who primarily acted as hunters and gatherers. Living off the land meant most foods were what was in the area from fruits and berries to meat, such as deer, buffalo, and turkey.

When the [English](#) arrived they brought with them simple cooking techniques and some basic food staples, however they did little more than introduce cooking styles and utensils to make cooking easier. The [French](#) however consider cooking an art and became more creative with the local ingredients. However, even today most food is based on locally available ingredients, such as fish in the southeast and meat on the great plains, but cooking styles vary drastically.

As technology grew and life became more hectic, mass food production hit [Canada](#) by storm. Cereals became popular, fast food restaurants popped up, and the coffee and doughnut craze hit the country. More recently, as an immigrant destination, Canada's food is growing more and more diverse with dozens of ethnic foods available in every medium-sized to large city.

Staple Foods

Being a country of immigrants, there are no staple foods that exist across [Canada](#). Many of the immigrants, however have staples, from rice for many [Asian](#) immigrants to corn tortillas for Hispanic immigrants.

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Regional Varieties & Specialties

Quebec - poutine, now popular everywhere in Canada, is French fries topped with cheddar cheese curds and gravy

Montreal - smoked meats are famous here; they are cuts of beef that are slowly smoked & seasoned until very tender

Ottawa - beaver tails, which are fried dough topped with any number of toppings

Toronto - street meat, typically Polish sausage, hot dogs, Italian sausage, & others

Vancouver - Indian & Asian foods are popular here due to the immigrant populations

Drinks

The **Canadians** love beer and it goes great with a hockey game. Wine is also popular, particularly in **Quebec**.

Practical Information

Visas

Many foreign nationals need a visa to enter **Canada**, however the requirements for citizens of different nationalities varies. To learn more about who need visas, what type of visa is needed, what requirements are needed to obtain a visa, and visa costs, please visit the [Citizenship & Immigration Canada Department](#).

Health & Insurance

Every part of the world has different health concerns and diseases, including **Canada**. Before traveling, consult with a physician to learn more about your destination and what steps you can take to prevent illness. At the time of writing, Canada didn't have any health immunizations that are required prior to arrival, although a number of immunizations are strongly recommended.

Many health insurance providers don't cover health care that is provided outside your home country. Before going abroad check with your health insurance to see if they cover international care. If not, consider purchasing an international medical insurance option, preferably from a company that specializes in international medical insurance.

Transportation

Unless you're on an organized tour or working with a travel agent, you will have to arrange some transportation. The below links can greatly help you start your planning, first by finding a flight to **Canada**, then with domestic airlines and car rental agencies. If you don't know where to begin, try the "Flight & Rental Car Search Sites" to learn competitor's prices during your trip.

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Largest International Airlines: [Air France](#), [American Airlines](#); [British Airways](#); [Cathay Pacific](#); [China Southern Airlines](#); [Delta](#); [Emirates](#); [KLM](#); [LAN](#); [Lufthansa](#); [Qantas](#); [Singapore Airlines](#); [United Airlines](#).

Largest Canadian Airlines: [Air Canada](#) & [West Jet](#).

Largest Rental Car Agencies in Canada: [Avis](#); [Budget](#); [Dollar](#); [Hertz](#); [Pay Less](#); [Thrifty](#).

Flight & Rental Car Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Farecast.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Housing

Housing options are numerous in most tourist destinations, but every individual seeks out something different when it comes to housing. The below links should help you get started, with low- to high-end hotels, hostels, and camping options.

Popular International Hotel Conglomerates: [Accor Group](#) (various price ranges); [Choice Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range); [Hilton](#) (various price ranges); [Hyatt](#) (high-end to resorts); [InterContinental Group](#) (mid- to high-price range); [Marriott Family](#) (various price ranges); [Starwood Hotels](#) (high-end); [Wyndham Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range).

Hotel Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Hostels: Although there are many hostel websites, some of the most popular and reputable include [hostels.com](#), [hostelworld.com](#), & [hostelbookers.com](#).

Camping: The best starting point for [Camping Options in Canada](#) can be found on the Canadian National Park Website. Although there

are dozens of camping locations throughout the country, some of the best are in Canada's National Parks.

Opening Hours, Expenses, & Tipping

[Canada](#) is on the same time schedule as much of northern [Europe](#) and the [United States](#). Shops and tourist attractions tend to open at about 9:00 am and close at about 5:00 pm. While shops only tend to remain open Monday-Friday, tourist sites often times are open on the weekends (Saturday & Sunday) and typically with extended hours on Saturdays.

Restaurant hours vary depending on what they serve and the time of day. Most Canadians eat breakfast prior to work, have lunch between about 11:30 am and 2:00 pm, and dinner anywhere from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Bars, pubs, and dance clubs tend to open for dinner (or later) and remain open until about 2:00 am.

[Canada](#) can be fairly expensive and making it a budget destination is a challenge. Due to its size, most trans-national transportation must be through flights and this often begins at about \$150 for a one-way flight between major cities. A meal can cost anywhere from CAN \$2-3 at a grocery store or market to CAN \$50+ in a nice restaurant. Hotels tend to start at about CAN \$80 for low end and there are relatively few hostel options outside the major cities, which can be as inexpensive at CAN \$20 a night. In some locations camping is permitted and if you have your own tent, can provide cheap housing among some of the nation's best scenery.

When eating out at a sit-down restaurant a tip of between 12-20% is expected (depending on the quality of the service). Unlike in [Europe](#), waiters and waitresses get low pay and are reliant on tips as a supplement to their income. In bars a tip of CAN \$1 per drink is standard, and for bell hops in hotels CAN \$1 a bag is appreciated. Other services, like taxis expect a tip, however typically around 10% or rounding up to the nearest CAN \$5 increment if that's close to 10% of the fare.

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Crime & Safety

[Canada](#) is a very safe place to visit, however every major city has it's neighborhoods to avoid and wondering around the wilderness can be dangerous due to the wildlife, uneven terrain, and isolation. Check with locals before getting too far off the beaten track; most Canadians are more than willing to help.

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