



# CANADA



**Canada** which occupies the top half of the North American continent, is the second largest country in the world. Canada is so large that it spans over 6 of the world's 24 time zones! Canada's three largest cities are Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, however Canada is much more than just that! Canada has two official languages, being English and French, but French is more highly spoken on the Eastern side.

## Short Facts

**Area:** With an area of 9,970,610 km<sup>2</sup>, it stretches over 5,500 km from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and over 4,600 km from the northern tip of Ellesmere Island to the United States border. The various regions of Canada differ markedly from one another, and each of Canada's ten provinces and three territories have their own character. Canada's territory is diverse, embracing fertile plains that provide excellent farmlands. Canada's terrain also includes great expanses of mountains, rock, lakes and rivers. In the far north, wilderness forest gives way to Arctic tundra.

**Climate:** Most of Canada, particularly the area stretching east-west along the American border, experiences four distinct seasons. In summer, daytime highs can go up to 35 C while winter lows of 25 C are not uncommon. Spring and autumn temperatures are moderate. Permanently frozen ice caps north of 70th parallel contrast sharply with rainforests of the West Coast of British Columbia.

**Government:** Canada is a federal state with democratic parliamentary representation. It also recognises the Queen of Great Britain, reflecting its strong historical ties to that country.

**Population:** 31 million, with 80% living within 300 km of the USA border. Most Canadians are descended from European ancestry—primarily the British Isles and France. Other European countries, East and Southern Asia are also represented. Native peoples make up only 2% of today's population.

**Religion:** Christianity is the major religion. Roman Catholics form the largest group, followed closely by Protestants. Other religions include Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.

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**Economy:** The Canadian economy ranks among the first 10 in the world in gross national product and international trade. It has developed from a strong resource base (fishing, forestry, mining and agriculture, pulp and paper) into an important producer of advanced technology.

**Education:** Each Canadian province is responsible for its own educational system. Each provincial system, while similar to the others, reflects its specific regional concerns and its historical and cultural heritage. In some provinces the system consists of eight years of primary school, four or five years of secondary school





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and three to four years of higher education whereas in Quebec there are 6 years of primary, 5 years of Secondary, 2 years of Pre-University (CEGEP) and then University.

**History:** Present-day Canada was originally inhabited by natives (Indians) and Inuit (Eskimos) who are thought to have arrived from Asia 30,000 years ago by way of a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska.

Europeans first arrived to Canada when the Vikings arrived around 1000 AD. This colonization effort failed, and Canada was not re colonized until 1497 by the English. Later, Jacques Cartier explored the East coast for France.

With Canada under British rule, the French sought to retain their French traditions, culture and language. This right was given to them and Quebec has become the main province in which they reside.

After the United States won its independence in 1776, large numbers of English-speaking colonists moved North to Canada Settling mainly in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and along the Great Lakes.

Soon after the confederation, Rupert's land (a vast area extending south and west for hundreds of kilometers from Hudson Bay) was purchased by Canada from the Hudson's Bay Company. This land was divided into three provinces: Manitoba in 1870 and Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905. The remaining land became the Northwest Territories. In 1898, the Yukon Territory was established to ensure Canadian control of the area's gold rush. British Columbia joined the confederation in 1871. Prince Edward Island followed in 1873. Newfoundland remained a colony until it became Canada's 10th province in 1949.



**Family Life:** The Family unit is the centre of society. It is common for both parents to work. The average number of children per family is 1.3.

**Recreation:** Canadians view sport as an integral part of their lives vital to well-rounded, healthy living. Swimming, ice skating, tennis, golf, ice hockey, skiing and curling are some of the most common participatory sports. The most common spectator sports are ice hockey, Canadian football and baseball.

**Culture and Gastronomy:** Canada's music, literature, dance, cinema and other art forms reflect its vibrant and varied culture. Music, whether classical or rock, jazz or opera, plays a leading role in Canadian culture. Every year Montreal holds a Jazz Festival which has become one of the most prestigious events.

Canada is renowned for its various festivals – From the Just for laughs festival in Montreal, to the International Jazz festivals. From the comedy festivals to Stampede week in Calgary, Alberta! There is never a dull moment in Canada, no matter what season you are in!

When coming to Canada it is helpful to be open-minded about food. Beavertails are a must try in Ontario, Poutine and maple products are staples of Quebec and Nainamo Bars are popular in British Columbia. Seafood is abundant on the coastal provinces and game meats such as moose, are available, but are generally not eaten by a large portion of the population.

**YFU Activities:** YFU Canada provides arrival and departure orientations for students. In some areas, the volunteers may organize events with other volunteers, host families and international YFU students.

**Exchanges with:** Argentina, Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, USA and New Zealand amongst others. Placements can be specified to English speaking or French speaking Canada.