

Canada

Land Mass

At 9 970 610 km², Canada is the world's second-largest country.

Capital

Ottawa, in the province of Ontario.

Provinces and Territories

Canada has 10 provinces and 2 territories, each with its own capital city (in brackets): Alberta (Edmonton); British Columbia (Victoria); Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown); Manitoba (Winnipeg); New Brunswick (Fredericton); Nova Scotia (Halifax); Ontario (Toronto); Quebec (Quebec City); Saskatchewan (Regina); Newfoundland (St. John's); Northwest Territories (Yellowknife) and Yukon Territory (Whitehorse).

Geography

Diversity is the keynote of Canada's geography, which includes fertile plains suitable for agriculture, vast mountain ranges, lakes and rivers. Wilderness forests give way to arctic tundra in the Far North.

Climate

There are of course many climatic variations in this huge country, ranging from the permanently frozen icecaps north of the 70th parallel to the luxuriant vegetation of British Columbia's west coast. On the whole, though, Canada has four very distinct seasons, especially in the regions lying along the U.S. border.

Daytime summer temperatures can rise to 35 °C and higher, while lows of -25 are not uncommon in winter. More moderate temperatures are the norm in spring and fall.

National Parks and Historic Sites

The Canadian government has set aside more than 100 national parks and historic sites in honour of the people, places and events that have marked the country's history.

Similarly, the provincial governments may form provincial parks.

Canada's 37 national parks are spread throughout the country. Banff, located on the eastern slopes of Alberta's Rocky Mountains, is the oldest, having opened in 1885, while Vuntut in the northern Yukon was established as recently as 1993.

Mountain Ranges

As one might expect, Canada's terrain incorporates a number of mountain ranges: the Torngats, Appalachians and Laurentians in the east; the Rocky, Coastal and Mackenzie ranges in the west; and Mount St. Elias and the Pelly Mountains in the north. At 6050 m, Mount Logan in the Yukon is Canada's tallest peak.

Lakes

The main lakes, in order of the surface area located in Canada, (many large lakes are traversed by the Canada-U.S. border) are Huron, Great Bear, Superior, Great Slave, Winnipeg, Erie and Ontario. Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories is the largest lake situated entirely in Canada; its area is 31 326 km².

Rivers

The St. Lawrence River, which is 3058 km long, provides a seaway for ships from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. The Mackenzie is the longest river, flowing 4241 km through the Northwest Territories. The Yukon and the Columbia, parts of which flow through U.S. territory, the Nelson, the Saskatchewan, the Peace and the Churchill are also major watercourses.

Time Zones

Canada has six time zones. The easternmost, in Newfoundland, is three hours and 30 minutes behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). The

other time zones are the Atlantic, the Eastern, the Central, the Rocky Mountain and, farthest west, the Pacific, which is eight hours behind GMT.

Political System

Canada is a constitutional monarchy and a federal state with a democratic parliament. The Parliament of Canada, in Ottawa, consists of the House of Commons, whose members are elected, and the Senate, whose members are appointed. On average, members of Parliament are elected every four years.

National Emblem

The maple leaf has been associated with Canada since the 1700s. It has become the country's most important symbol since the national flag was introduced in 1965.

National Anthem

O Canada was proclaimed the national anthem on July 1, 1980, a century after being sung for the first time.

Currency

The Canadian dollar is divided into 100 cents.

Population

At the time of the June 1991 census, Canada's population was 27.3 million.

Main Cities

According to the 1991 census, the leading Canadian cities are Toronto (3.89 million), Montreal (3.12 million), Vancouver (1.60 million), Ottawa-Hull, the National Capital Region (0.92 million) and Edmonton (0.84 million).

Urban and Rural Population

The majority of Canadians, 76.6 percent, live in cities and towns, while 23.4 percent live in rural