Travelodge and Holiday Inn) operate discount voucher schemes, which allow you to buy vouchers in advance and then book your accommodation as you go. Vouchers cost between £20 and £40 for one night's stay, depending on the organisation.

Package holidays offer good introduction

If this is to be your first trip to Canada, you may feel you will get to know the country and its people better by taking a guided tour. Tourism Canada's *1988 Holiday Information Guide* provides details of all the approved operators and their tours.

For example, the Heritage Highlights Tour offered by Canada Air Holidays takes in Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa and Niagara Falls, and lasts for 13 days. The cost, which included the air fare from the UK, is around £1000 per person.

Or you might prefer to concentrate on the eastern

seaboard with the same organisation. The CAH's Atlantic Canada tour hits all the high points of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and costs about £1200 per person for 17 days.

Alternatively, National Holidays offers a Panoramic Tour of Western Canada for around £1150, starting in Calgary and taking in Victoria, Vancouver and Whistler, as well as a breathtaking trip through the Canadian Rockies.

If you want to include a rail journey, you may find National's 14-day Canadian Tour is just what you are looking for. You travel by train from Toronto to Calgary, take a coach tour through the Rockies, fly on to Vancouver, whence you catch the flight home. The cost per person is around £1650.

For people whose time is precious, there are a number of short-stay city-package holidays on offer. All Canada Travel and Holidays, for example, offers short-stay holidays in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, in addition to its longer tours.

Also, of course, you can always spend a few days exploring the cities on your own. Canadian cities are modern, vibrant and cosmopolitan; and each has its own distinctive style. Below, we briefly describe some of the attractions of Canada's main 'gateway' cities.

HALIFAX

As the capital city and chief seaport of Nova Scotia, Halifax is steeped in history. It was founded in 1749 as a garrison town by Lord Cornwallis to counter the strength of the French fortress at nearby Louisbourg. A year later, the church of St Paul's was erected, the oldest Protestant church in Canada.

The first elective assembly in the British Empire was held here in 1758 – an event commemorated by the Sir Sandford Fleming Memorial Tower – and there are many fine buildings of a bygone era, such as the warehouses where pirates would hide their booty; the city's landmark, the old Town Clock (1803); and Province House (1818) described by Charles Dickens as 'a gem of Georgian architecture'.

Halifax is also a thriving educational, business and cultural centre, with every convenience for the modern traveller. With its maritime tradition combined with echoes of the past, this is one of Canada's most appealing 'gateways'.

MONTREAL

The second largest French-speaking city in the world, Montreal began as the French colony of Ville Marie in 1642 and quickly became an important fur-trading centre. The arrival of rich Scottish and English merchants in the 19th century turned the city into a major industrial and commercial metropolis.

Standing at the crossroads of French, English and North American cultures, the city is the country's most cosmopolitan city. Its film and jazz festivals attract devotees from near and far; its symphony orchestra enjoys an international reputation; and Montreal's theatrical, operatic and dance scene is among the liveliest in North America.