
Life in Canada

Geographic location and climate

Canada, which occupies the top half of the North American continent, is territorially the second-largest country in the world. Its area covers over 9,800,000 km². It stretches over 5,120 km from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, and almost 4,800 km from the northern tip of Ellesmere Island to the United States border. It has a population of some 26 million.

The climate varies greatly from region to region. The Pacific coast of Canada is cool and fairly dry in summer but mild, cloudy and wet in winter. Interior Canada, from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes, has a continental-type climate with long cold winters, short but warm summers and scanty precipitation. Southern portions of Ontario and Quebec have a humid climate with cold winters, hot summers and generally ample precipitation. The four Atlantic provinces have a moist continental-type climate, although in immediate coastal areas, there is a marked maritime effect.

When making arrangements to study at a Canadian university, students from abroad should ask about the climate of the particular area or city in which they will be studying and living. In winter, buildings are heated, and in summer they are often air-conditioned.

People

Canada has two official languages, English and French. Bank-notes, stamps, federal government documents and packages containing common household goods are printed in both languages. Besides Canadians of British and French ancestry, many other nationalities, mainly European, are represented among the Canadian people.

There is a great diversity of religions in Canada, but the majority of the population is Christian. Many non-Christian faiths are represented, however, with places of worship in most Canadian cities.

Banking and commerce

It is not wise to carry more than about \$20 in currency, or to leave large sums of money in one's room. It is easy to open a bank-account in Canada, which is the safest way to keep money. Cheques are generally used for major payments and money required for day-to-day expenditures can easily be withdrawn from a bank-account. Bank assistants will be ready to provide advice and help in opening an account. When travelling, use travellers' cheques, which can be cashed in banks, hotels, trust company offices and most shops. Some Canadians buy goods on credit (deferred payment). Do not sign any agreement or pay any deposit until you have had advice from a university official on these matters.