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WORKING ABROAD




Unravelling the Maze
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Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade

Ministère des Affaires étrangères
et du Commerce international

Canada 

The Consular Affairs Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is committed to providing effective and efficient services throughout the world to all Canadians.

To obtain more information or additional free copies of this booklet, visit your nearest Passport Office, check the Consular Web site (<http://www.voyage.gc.ca>), or write to:

Enquiries Service
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2
Tel.: 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada) or (613) 944-4000

We would like to hear your comments on this booklet. Write to us at the address above or e-mail us at voyage@dfait-maeci.gc.ca.

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This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

Note: The information contained in this booklet is subject to change. Please check with our Web site or the appropriate government departments and organizations mentioned inside to ensure you have the most current information.

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Working Abroad: Unravelling the Maze

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Contents

Introduction.....	4
Before You Go.....	4
Finding Overseas Employment.....	4
DFAIT Youth Initiatives.....	5
Evaluating Job Offers.....	5
Learn About Your Destination.....	6
What Documents Do You Need?.....	7
Passport.....	7
Visa.....	8
Work Permit.....	8
Alien Registration Card.....	8
International Driver's Licence.....	8
Dual Citizenship.....	9
Health-Related Issues.....	9
Vaccinations.....	9
AIDS.....	10
Medication.....	10
Pregnancy.....	11
Health Insurance.....	11
Other Insurance.....	12
Regulations for Pets.....	12
Practical and Financial Issues.....	13
Money Matters.....	13
Planning Your Finances.....	13
Taxes.....	13
Mail.....	14
Shipping Your Belongings.....	14
Canadian Customs and Border Services.....	14
Personal Issues and Concerns.....	14
People with Special Needs.....	14
Women Working Abroad.....	15
Preparing Your Family for the Move.....	15
Moving Overseas with Children.....	15
Language Training.....	16
Culture Shock.....	16

Preparing for Your Return Before You Leave.....	16
Working Abroad	18
Registering at a Canadian Government Office Abroad	18
Consular Assistance.....	18
Emergency Consular Services.....	19
Voting While Overseas	19
Banking.....	19
Marriage and Divorce While Abroad.....	20
Respecting Local Customs and Laws	20
Drugs.....	21
Returning to Canada	21
Departure Tax	21
Settling Your Obligations Before You Return.....	21
Bringing Home Your Belongings	21
Illegal Souvenirs.....	22
Health Concerns	22
For More Information	23
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.....	23
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.....	24
Canadian Food Inspection Agency.....	24
Canadian Transportation Agency.....	25
Citizenship and Immigration Canada.....	25
Environment Canada.....	25
Health Canada	25
MedicAlert®.....	25
National Film Board.....	25
Passport Office.....	25
Radio Canada International	25
Scams	26
Transport Canada.....	26
Other Recommended Reading	26
Other Resources	27

Introduction

About 1.5 million Canadians live and work abroad. The vast majority do so successfully and, for many, working overseas is an enriching experience. If you are planning to work abroad, there are many details that you will need to consider prior to departure. Preparation and careful planning will go a long way to ensure a safe and successful international work experience.

The goal of *Working Abroad: Unravelling the Maze* is to provide you with practical information to maximize the chances of a successful venture and to offer advice on what to do if things don't work out as planned. Read it before you go, and pack it in your luggage for future reference.

The Consular Affairs Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) is committed to providing effective and efficient services throughout

the world to all Canadians. We understand how accidents, illness, legal problems, and linguistic and cultural differences are difficult to manage alone. If you encounter problems while working abroad, we are there to assist you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through our network of 271 offices worldwide. You will find a list of these offices in the publication *Bon Voyage, But...*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The "For More Information" section includes information on publications, resources and programs available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as from other government departments and agencies mentioned throughout the text. It also includes suggestions for further recommended reading.

Before You Go

Finding Overseas Employment

A wide variety of international work opportunities exists around the world. If you are interested in finding overseas employment, where do you begin? Whether you plan to find paid employment,

pursue volunteer opportunities or explore new business ventures abroad, you first need to decide what you want to do and where you want to do it. You also need to seriously evaluate your job skills and decide whether you want to build on your previous work

experience or do something altogether new. You will find Jean-Marc Hachey's *The Canadian Guide to Working and Living Overseas* an excellent resource as you begin this process. The book will help you assess your personal and professional goals, plan your job-hunting strategy and secure the overseas job you want.

If you are unsure about the length of time you want to work abroad, you might consider looking for short-term projects, such as youth exchanges, internships, professional exchanges, work-and-learn programs or working holidays. A short-term placement may give you the experience and background you need to decide whether you want to work abroad for an extended period.

DFAIT Youth Initiatives

DFAIT co-ordinates two separate initiatives to assist young Canadians in securing employment abroad: the Youth International Internship Program (YIIP) and the International Youth Exchange Program (IYEP). The YIIP provides for paid internships with organizations operating in other countries. You can obtain further information by calling 1-800-559-2888 (in Canada) or (613) 944-2413 or by consulting the Internet (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/interns>). The IYEP provides a

wealth of information concerning opportunities in more than 60 programs in over 20 countries. For more details, call 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada) or (613) 992-6142, or consult DFAIT's Web site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/123go>).

Evaluating Job Offers

If you are offered a job overseas by an organization or company, it is important that you investigate it carefully before you accept. The more preparation and research you do in Canada, the more successful your employment abroad is likely to be.

Find out as much as you can about the organization or company that is offering you a job. Ask for references, visit its Internet site and call your local Better Business Bureau (if the organization or company is Canadian) to get as much information as possible. Contact others who have worked for the organization or company, or ask to speak to someone currently employed there.

Examine the terms of your contract carefully or have it reviewed by a lawyer. Make sure that the financial and other conditions of the job offer are carefully detailed and that you fully understand them. For instance, you should know in what currency your salary will be paid and when you

will be receiving your first pay cheque. Keep in mind that it is never a good idea to accept a job overseas if the details are to be worked out on your arrival.

Understand the arrangements for your work visa. Although your employer may take on the responsibility of obtaining your work visa for you, it is up to you to ensure that all arrangements are legitimate and consistent with the requirements of the country concerned. Refer to the section entitled "What Documents Do You Need?" for details.

Avoid risky ventures. Always remain sceptical of overseas placement firms that operate solely by telephone or mail, and avoid companies that charge advance fees for placement. Women should be particularly wary of employment opportunities that offer quick and easy money for entertainment or hostess jobs. Many are thinly veiled prostitution rings.

Doing your homework before you leave Canada will significantly reduce the chances of things going wrong overseas. It is recommended that you establish an "emergency fund" or make prior arrangements with family or friends to assist you financially in the event that the job proves unacceptable or things simply

don't work out. You should have enough money to return home.

It is also wise to take with you extra copies of your résumé, degrees, diplomas and other certificates, and reference letters so that you have the option of pursuing other job opportunities while you are abroad. Find out, however, what the requirements are if you decide to change jobs or companies, as doing so may render your visa or work permit invalid. For more details, see the section entitled "Visa."

Learn About Your Destination

Take the time to learn about the political, cultural and economic environment of your destination. Some countries experience ongoing wars, insurgencies or sporadic unrest. Find out if your destination is known to be dangerous. Consult the Travel Report for the country you plan on working in before you go. These reports, published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, give up-to-date information on security and political conditions, health issues and entry requirements for over 220 destinations. If you are planning to work in the United States or Mexico, you should also read the DFAIT booklets *Crossing the 49th* and *México: ¿Qué pasa?*

When you are abroad, you will be able to tune in to Radio Canada International (RCI) for the latest news. RCI also broadcasts messages from the Canadian government during emergency situations.

What Documents Do You Need?

Passport

All Canadian citizens must have a valid passport before taking up residence abroad. Once living overseas, you should continue to maintain a valid passport. Application forms are available on-line through the Passport Office Web site, and at passport offices, post offices and Canadian government offices abroad. Passport applications accompanied by the required information and supporting documentation are usually processed within five working days if presented in person or up to three weeks if mailed to the Central Passport Office. When planning your departure time, however, allow yourself more time if you need a visa, since a valid passport is required before you can apply for a visa.

Your passport is valid for five years. If your passport is due to expire within the next six months, check with your host country's

embassy or consulate in Canada for its rules and restrictions regarding passport validity and expiration. Some countries will not let you enter if your passport is within six months of expiry.

Before you leave Canada, be sure to complete the "In case of accident or death notify" section in your passport. This will help us quickly notify your family or friends if an emergency arises. You should also prepare a "passport emergency kit" in case your passport is lost or stolen. This should include a photocopy of the identification page in your passport, an original of your birth or citizenship certificate, the address and telephone number of the Canadian government office abroad in the country in which you plan to work, and two recent passport-size photographs. Keeping this information in a safe place separate from your passport will save you time and money should you lose the originals. For added security, you may also want to leave a kit with a friend or relative at home.

If your passport is lost or stolen while you are overseas, report the loss or theft to the local police, obtain a copy of the police report and contact the nearest Canadian government office abroad immediately for a replacement. Before a new passport can be issued, you

must complete an application form, produce written evidence of your Canadian citizenship (e.g., a birth or citizenship certificate), provide a copy of the police report and present two recent photographs.

Visa

All governments require foreigners to obtain their permission to reside in their country. In some instances, that permission is reflected by an endorsement or stamp placed in your passport, allowing you to enter the country for a specific time and purpose. All countries require you to obtain special permission for entry when you plan to work. This permission is called a visa or work permit.

Only the country concerned can provide you with definitive and official information on entry requirements. If a visa is required, you should obtain it before leaving Canada. It is important that you consult the embassy or consulate of the country in which you plan to work for details and processing fees. You should apply months in advance of your departure date, as obtaining a visa can be a time-consuming process. For information about visa requirements, check the Country Travel Reports published by DFAIT.

Note that your work visa may have special provisions concerning departure and re-entry. If you plan

to travel while working overseas, enquire about the process of obtaining a multiple-entry visa to avoid future difficulties.

An increasing number of countries are including AIDS testing as an entry requirement, particularly for long-term residents and students. Again, contact the embassy or consulate of the country concerned for the latest information.

Work Permit

A work permit is usually required if you plan to work in a foreign country. You should obtain it before you leave Canada. You can usually do this at the same time as you get your visa. Note that a work permit could be included in your visa or it could be a separate document from your visa. Again, contact the embassy or consulate of the country you are going to for details.

Alien Registration Card

When you arrive in your host country, you may also need to obtain an Alien Registration Card. You will be required to carry it at all times for identification purposes and as proof of your status.

International Driver's Licence

Contact your local Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) office to find out the procedures

for obtaining an international driver's licence. Keep in mind, however, that some countries require foreigners to acquire a local licence after a certain period. Obtain that information before leaving Canada or make enquiries at the time of your arrival. In addition, it is important that you educate yourself on the traffic rules and procedures of your host country before you get behind the wheel. Always carry your car insurance policy with you when driving in case of an accident.

Dual Citizenship

Having dual citizenship does not necessarily mean you can work in the other country of which you are a citizen. Ask for a definitive ruling from the authorities of the second country. Be aware that obtaining Canadian citizenship could have led to the loss of your other citizenship without your knowledge. Call the country's embassy or consulate in Canada to obtain more information about your status. If your citizenship status is clear and you decide to work in your country of second nationality, you could be under certain obligations. For instance, you may be required to perform obligatory military service or you could lose your right to protection and assistance from Canadian consular officials.

If you do run into problems because of your dual nationality, contact the nearest Canadian government office abroad immediately.

Health-Related Issues

Health Canada strongly recommends an individual risk assessment by your own family doctor or a travel medicine provider prior to travelling. Based on your health risks, the need for vaccinations or any special precautions can be determined.

It is recommended that you visit a travel clinic well before your departure. The travel clinic will ensure that you receive the most current advice, as well as any vaccinations and medications that are necessary to avoid health problems while abroad.

Contact Health Canada's Travel Medicine Program to obtain more information and a list of travel clinics in your area. A list of travel clinics may also be obtained from the Canadian Society for International Health at (613) 241-5785.

Vaccinations

Before travelling to any destination, find out well in advance of your departure if you need any special vaccinations or preventive medications for such illnesses as

yellow fever, typhoid, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis or malaria. For instance, a meningococcal vaccination is required for pilgrims travelling to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for the annual hajj; and an International Certificate of Vaccination for yellow fever is a legal requirement to enter certain countries.

You may need to start receiving your vaccination shots or taking medication **six to eight weeks before you leave**. Also ensure that your routine immunizations — diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella — are up-to-date. Other immunization requirements will vary according to your age, existing medical conditions and the nature and duration of your time abroad.

If you are travelling with infants or small children, you may need to arrange an alternative or accelerated childhood immunization schedule for them. Talk to your pediatrician, family doctor or travel medicine clinic.

AIDS

AIDS/HIV is a global disease. Some countries require proof of AIDS testing. Have the test conducted and obtain the results **before you leave**. Call Health Canada to find out if the country

where you plan to work requires this documentation. When you are overseas, take the same precautions you do at home. Do not assume that condoms will be readily available. Even if they are, they may not meet the safety standards set by the World Health Organization.

Remember: Using intravenous drugs is not only illegal but is also extremely risky — especially if you share needles.

Medication

If you take medication, be sure to pack an extra supply or make arrangements for resupply in case you are away for longer than expected. Having a duplicate of your original prescription is highly recommended. Also, have an extra prescription that lists both the generic and the trade names of any drug you are taking, in case your medication is lost or stolen. This is also a good idea if you wear glasses or contact lenses — having the prescription makes it easier to replace them.

Do not try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container. Keep all medications in the original, labelled container to avoid problems.

Find out whether your medication is sold in the country in which you will be working. Also check to see

that it is legal. Some over-the-counter medications in Canada are illegal in other countries or require a prescription. Obtaining a note from your doctor that states the medical reasons for your prescription and the recommended dosage is also encouraged.

If you need syringes for a medical condition such as diabetes, it is very important that you take an appropriate supply. As well, you should have a medical certificate that shows they are needed for medical use.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition that could present a problem while you are abroad, it is wise to wear a MedicAlert® bracelet. Through the MedicAlert® Foundation, your vital medical facts become part of a database that can be accessed 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

Pregnancy

If you are pregnant and plan to work abroad, talk to your doctor. Some vaccinations may not be recommended. Also, check your health insurance plan carefully to ensure it covers health complications arising from pregnancy.

Health Insurance

Obtain health insurance before you go abroad. Make sure that you

understand the terms of your policy and that it covers all your needs and those of all members of your family. There is nothing worse than being ill and on your own in a foreign country, and having to worry about large financial obligations. Health insurance is one of the best investments you can make.

Out-of-country health insurance is available through travel agents or directly from insurers listed in the Yellow Pages.™ Check the following points when purchasing such health insurance:

- Are foreign hospital and related medical costs paid directly or are you required to pay up-front and seek reimbursement later?
- Does the insurance cover medical evacuation to Canada, along with any required medical escorts?
- Are pre-existing medical conditions covered?
- Are premature births and related neonatal care covered?
- Will the insurer provide a cash deposit in advance if a hospital requires it?
- Does the insurance cover costs associated with a death abroad, including the return of remains to Canada?

- Does the insurer maintain a service centre that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Always carry a copy of your insurance policy with you, along with the telephone contact numbers of the insurer's service centre. This information should also be left with a friend or relative at home. If you receive medical attention, obtain a detailed invoice from the doctor or hospital.

When you arrive in the country in which you will be working, make a point of locating the nearest reputable clinic or hospital. Don't wait for an emergency: it may be too late! The local Canadian government office will be able to provide information on clinics and hospitals (for a list of Canadian government offices abroad, consult DFAIT's publication *Bon Voyage, But...*).

It is unlikely that your existing health insurance in Canada will provide coverage while you are overseas. Remember that, when you return to Canada, there is a three-month waiting period before your provincial health insurance becomes effective.

Other Insurance

Planning to drive while abroad? Keep in mind that most countries have laws that require drivers to

have adequate insurance. Personal insurance is important, too. There are companies in Canada that will sell you insurance no matter where you are going to be. Where possible, purchase your insurance from one of these companies, as their procedures may be more familiar to you.

It is possible that the company employing you overseas will make arrangements for health and other types of insurance for you. However, rather than making this assumption, check with the company's human resources department to find out your status and coverage. If you are not totally covered, take the necessary steps to rectify this. Also, if you are accompanied by a spouse, partner or children, find out the status of their coverage – they may not be included in your policy.

Regulations for Pets

If you are planning to take your pet overseas, call the host country's embassy or consulate in Canada well in advance of your departure to obtain information on all the necessary requirements. At a minimum, your pet will need vaccinations and a detailed health certificate. Your pet may also be required to undergo a period of quarantine before entering another country. When you are planning to return home,

you may need to follow similar procedures and present a certificate stating that the pet was vaccinated for rabies within the preceding three years. For more information, contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Practical and Financial Issues

Money Matters

Before you leave Canada, make sure that you will have enough money with you to get properly settled. Although some companies may provide a settlement allowance, keep in mind that it may be several weeks before you receive your first pay cheque. Consult a bank or a foreign currency agent to find out the most appropriate currency to take with you. Canadian currency and traveller's cheques in Canadian dollars are not always accepted. Traveller's cheques in U.S. dollars are often the safest and most convenient option.

Be aware that your bank machine card or credit card may not necessarily be usable or honoured in another country.

Planning Your Finances

Before leaving Canada, make sure that you have settled all your financial obligations or make arrangements to do so while you

are working abroad. This may involve setting up automatic payments from your Canadian bank account to cover outstanding or ongoing commitments. You should advise your bank that you will be working overseas and supply your new address. Most banks can provide a variety of services to assist you in managing your finances from outside Canada.

It is always a good idea to take at least one credit card with you. Although you may choose not to use it, it will definitely provide you with some peace of mind. Keep it in a safe place for unexpected expenses or emergencies.

Taxes

If you are living abroad but maintain residential ties in Canada, you are usually considered a factual resident of Canada for taxation purposes. However, there may be other factors involved, so you should review your situation with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) before you leave in order to avoid surprises. The CCRA publication *Canadian Residents Abroad* provides excellent information for individuals.

The CCRA's International Tax Services Office processes income tax returns for non-residents and deemed residents of Canada, including Canadians working

overseas. It also provides general assistance by telephone, correspondence and counter service, and looks after all non-resident tax withholding accounts.

You may also wish to consult a private financial planner, who can provide advice and guidance on such matters as contributing to Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs) and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) while you are abroad.

Mail

If you are overseas for an extended period, you can arrange to have your mail sent to a post office box or, where possible, to the nearest Canadian government office abroad. In the latter case, the office will hold on to letter-size mail (not parcels) for you to pick up in person. This mail cannot be forwarded to another address.

Shipping Your Belongings

Shipping your goods and household effects to another country can be costly. Find out what you need to take and ship only what you will not find locally. Ask if your employer will partially or fully cover the costs of moving your belongings or provide you with essential items when you arrive.

As well, find out ahead of time what you are allowed to take with

you. Most countries have very stringent import controls.

Canadian Customs and Border Services

Before going abroad with valuable items, you can take advantage of a free identification procedure at any Canadian customs office. This service is available for items that have serial numbers or other unique markings. Alternatively, if you request it, customs officers can apply a sticker to any item and give it a serial number.

Jewellery often has significant value and can be difficult to identify. To make it easier to re-enter Canada with jewellery, contact your nearest customs office to find out the steps you should take to identify items of jewellery prior to your departure.

Personal Issues and Concerns

People with Special Needs

Many countries do not provide access for people in wheelchairs or make allowances for those with special hearing, sight or other physical requirements. Contact your local access organization or talk to others who have lived in your host country in the past. There are also several guides published about international

travel for people with special needs. Check your local library or bookstore or contact the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Women Working Abroad

If you are a woman planning to work overseas, find out everything you can about the culture and customs, and the role of women, in the country in which you will be working. Knowing what to expect will help you prepare yourself. For practical advice specifically of interest to women going overseas, obtain a copy of DFAIT's booklet *Her Own Way: Advice for the Woman Traveller*.

Preparing Your Family for the Move

Researching the country's customs, culture and history before you leave Canada will make your overseas experience more meaningful and will enable you to better prepare yourself and your family for different living conditions abroad. In addition to using library and Internet resources, contact the National Film Board to borrow videos that you and your family can watch together. Also, use the informal network of friends, co-workers and other people who can offer specific advice about living overseas and adjusting to life in a new country.

Moving Overseas with Children

Immigration authorities in most countries, including Canada, are vigilant about documentation for children crossing international borders. Unless a child has a valid Canadian passport or is accompanied by both natural parents, he or she needs special documentation in addition to proof of citizenship.

If only one parent is escorting the child, notarized consent from the other parent must be presented, in addition to a copy of any separation or divorce decree. This consent is required even if the separation or divorce documents award custody of the child to the accompanying parent.

If you have school-age children, education is probably the most significant issue you will need to consider. It is important that you secure appropriate schooling for your children before leaving Canada. You can make your children's adjustment to a new culture easier by getting them actively involved in extracurricular activities or sports, where they can make friends and feel more a part of their new surroundings.

Working abroad can put an added strain on family relationships. If you are moving to another country with your child and there is a possibility

of a custody dispute developing while you are there, you should talk to a lawyer before you leave. A special publication, *International Child Abductions: A Manual for Parents*, is available from DFAIT.

Language Training

If you are proficient in English, French or both, you have a good language base for working in many areas of the world and communicating effectively. But if you are planning to work in a country that is neither Anglophone nor Francophone, you will have communication problems. If you are planning to learn the language of your host country, you might consider beginning your studies before your departure by obtaining audio tapes or registering in a language course.

Culture Shock

Many people who go overseas to work experience what is commonly referred to as culture shock.

Although its intensity varies from one individual to another, most people experience a period of cultural adjustment. Symptoms include:

- a feeling of anger, frustration and irritability, and loss of sense of humour;
- withdrawal, spending excessive amounts of time alone, or spending time only with

Canadians or other foreigners and avoiding contact with local citizens;

- negative feelings about the people and culture of the host country;
- compulsive eating and drinking, and a need for excessive amounts of sleep; and
- boredom, tiredness and an inability to concentrate or work effectively.

You should also be aware that you might experience a reverse form of culture shock after living abroad. Be prepared to face a period of readjustment when you return to Canada. For more information about the symptoms of culture shock and coping strategies, see "For More Information."

Preparing for Your Return Before You Leave

Before you leave Canada, it is a good idea to assess how working abroad fits into the context of your career and life goals. Bear in mind that, after living overseas, returning to Canada can be difficult and stressful. Coming home can make some people feel very unsettled and can even lead to depression.

If possible, make some preparations for your return before you leave. For example, if you already

Coping with Culture Shock

Probably the best overall strategy for coping with the various manifestations of culture shock is to make a conscious effort to adjust to the new culture. Here are some suggestions on how to make yourself feel more at home in your new surroundings:

- **Get involved in some aspect of the new culture.** Whether you study art, music, or learn a new sport or martial art, being an interested student will make a world of difference.
- **Take the time to learn the language.** It always helps to understand as much as possible of what people are saying. They will appreciate your effort to communicate with them in their own language, even if it is just a few simple phrases, and it will make your daily life much easier, too. Carry a small notebook with you and jot down a couple of new phrases each day.
- **Travel.** Take the time to be a tourist and explore the country's sights and attractions.
- **Make friends and develop relationships.** Make an effort to meet others. This will help you overcome cultural differences and come to a better understanding of the country and its people. Interacting with local people will also show you how to be more sensitive to cultural norms and expectations.
- **Maintain contact with friends and family back home.** Writing home about your experiences and problems can help you sort through them. It is also a good idea to keep a journal of your feelings and thoughts.
- **Do something that reminds you of home.** This can really boost your spirits when you are feeling homesick. So, make sure you have packed your favourite music or hobbies.

have a job in Canada, you might want to enquire about taking a leave of absence. If you are planning to return to college or university, make sure that you have all the necessary applications and forms with you or arrange to have them sent overseas, so that you do not miss application deadlines. Keep in mind that maintaining a

strong support network in Canada while you are abroad is likely to make coming back much easier. Trying to envisage your return before you have even left may seem unnecessary, but a little forward planning could go a long way towards easing your return to Canada.

Working Abroad

Registering at a Canadian Government Office Abroad

If you plan to stay longer than three months in a country, it is recommended that you formally register at the nearest Canadian government office abroad. This will make it easier for you to be contacted in case of an emergency or crisis. Registration is voluntary, and the information you provide is not shared with any other Canadian government department. Registration is not usually available in the countries of western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand or the United States.

In countries where Canada has no direct representation, there may be arrangements in place for you to register with another country's embassy or consulate. For instance, Canada has a formal reciprocal agreement with Australia.

Consular Assistance

Canadian government offices abroad are ready to help you in case of an emergency. In some instances, there may be a fee for services.

What can they do for you?

- They can contact, at your request, your relatives or friends and ask them to send you emergency funds.
- They can help you during emergencies such as natural disasters and civil and military uprisings.
- They can direct you to sources of information about local laws, regulations, cultural customs and how to obtain visas.
- They can assist with medical emergencies.

- They can replace passports. However, not all offices are authorized to issue regular passports.
- If you are arrested, they can try to ensure equitable treatment under local laws. At your request, they can inform relatives and friends about your arrest and try to ensure that legal rights and processes are extended to you consistent with the standards of the host country. However, they cannot set aside local laws if you are charged with an offence, or intervene in the judicial process of a foreign country. They cannot post bail, pay for a lawyer or pay your fines.
- If you wish, they can notify your next of kin regarding accidents or deaths and let them know whether, and how, they can help.

Emergency Consular Services

Canadian government offices abroad offer 24-hour assistance. During non-office hours, a telephone call you make to an office abroad will be automatically transferred to a consular officer in Ottawa or you will be asked to leave a message on an answering machine. In either case, there will be a prompt response. If you leave a recorded message, make sure that it is clear and that you leave

a telephone number or a full contact address. In addition, you can make a collect call to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa at (613) 996-8885. You may wish to use the *Canada Direct* service if it is available.

Voting While Overseas

Canadians who reside abroad are eligible to vote by absentee ballot in all federal elections. For additional information, consult the nearest Canadian government office abroad.

Banking

You may wish to set up a bank account in your host country that is fed by funds from your Canadian account. To do this, you will need to go to a local foreign exchange bank with your passport, your Alien Registration Card and Canadian banking information (your branch and account number). Usually, someone who can speak English or French will be available to assist you. The process can be complicated and time-consuming, and you should make sure that you have a source of funding during this period. Retain all documentation on financial transfers, as you may need it for local income tax purposes.

It is also important that you establish how much money you

are allowed to send home. The amount of money you are permitted to leave with or to transfer may be strictly regulated by your host country. Keep all receipts and transaction records.

When working overseas, you should try to have your salary paid in Canadian or U.S. dollars. If you are paid in local currency, make sure that you know the exchange rate; the relative value of your salary could be seriously affected by changes to that rate.

Marriage and Divorce While Abroad

In other countries, the procedures surrounding relationships can be more difficult than at home. If you decide to marry while you are abroad, make sure you understand the local requirements and laws. If your future spouse is not a Canadian citizen, find out whether he or she would be eligible to travel back to Canada with you on either a temporary or a permanent basis. This information can be obtained from the nearest Canadian government office abroad.

Divorce or separation could be more complicated abroad than in Canada. Property settlement and child custody issues will be different too. If your spouse is a citizen of the country in which you

are living, he or she may have more rights than you do as a foreigner. Always make sure that you understand the laws and local procedures. Establish whether what you do locally will be legally recognized on your return to Canada. Do nothing without the advice and guidance of a lawyer.

Respecting Local Customs and Laws

Difficult situations or frustrating confrontations can sometimes occur if you are unaware of the local customs and laws of your host country. Be wise and learn ahead of time what behaviour is appropriate and what is likely to offend the local citizens.

More than 2,000 Canadians are currently imprisoned abroad for various offences. Keep in mind that, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and regulations. Ignorance is no defence, and your Canadian citizenship offers you no immunity.

If you are arrested or detained, you can request that the arresting officer inform the nearest Canadian government office abroad. You will need a lawyer, and the consular official can refer you to one who speaks English or French. In the meantime, be aware that what you say can be used against you. Avoid making any statements

unless your lawyer is present. Do not sign anything in a language you do not understand without the permission of your lawyer.

Drugs

Most countries impose severe penalties for the possession of even a minuscule amount of illegal drugs. Even prescription drugs and syringes used for legitimate medical purposes come

under intense scrutiny and should therefore have proper accompanying documentation. As previously mentioned, keep all drugs in their original containers and carry the necessary prescriptions with you. Choose your travelling companions wisely. Never agree to take across a border any parcel that is not yours. For more information, consult the Anti-Drug Information Program's Web site.

Returning to Canada

Departure Tax

Some countries impose a departure tax or service fee at the airport or point of departure. Prior to leaving such a country, make sure you set aside enough money, in local funds, to pay this tax.

Settling Your Obligations Before You Return

It is important that you settle all your obligations before you leave your host country. For example, make sure that you pay all your local bills or make acceptable arrangements to do so. It may also be a good idea to obtain a letter of release from domestic or other employees, if applicable, stating that you are free of any obligation to them. In addition, you will need to meet all local tax requirements and obtain clear-

ance from the local tax authorities before you will be allowed to leave.

Bringing Home Your Belongings

Depending on how long you have resided outside Canada, you may be subject to special import provisions for household items and personal belongings on your return. When you go through Immigration and Customs at the port of entry, have your passport ready. Where possible, pack the articles you have acquired abroad separately to make inspection easier. Have your receipts handy in case you need to support your customs declaration. For specific details, obtain a copy of the brochure *Moving Back to Canada*, published by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

Illegal Souvenirs

Before you purchase an animal or plant, or a product made from animals or plants, be sure you know what rules and regulations apply. Many attractive items sold in foreign countries are made from endangered plants or animals. Live cactus and orchid plants, ivory bracelets and carvings, marine turtle shells and turtle-shell products, whalebone carvings, and cat skins, teeth and claws are some of the more common items illegally brought back to Canada. These items are included in the more than 30,000 species of wild animals and plants regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). A violation of CITES could lead to seizure of your purchase, as well as a fine and/or prison term.

Since many other countries also have strict laws protecting wildlife, it is often wise to leave any items you already own at home.

When in doubt, don't buy it!
Contact Environment Canada for details.

Health Concerns

If you become sick or feel unwell on your return to Canada, see a doctor promptly. Inform the doctor that you have been living outside Canada, and where. Likewise, if you were ill while you were abroad, see your doctor on your return and explain your medical history and any treatment you received.

If you were in a malarial area and develop fever during the first year after your return (especially in the first two months), see your doctor immediately and inform him or her that:

- anti-malarial pills do not guarantee protection against malaria; and
- malaria must be ruled out by one or more thick and thin blood film examinations.

For More Information

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Consular Affairs Bureau

Web site: <http://www.voyage.gc.ca>

E-mail: voyage@dfait-maeci.gc.ca

Publications (free)

Bon Voyage, But... Information for the Canadian Traveller

Canadian Performers: How to Enter the United States

China (Including Hong Kong): A Guide for Canadian Visitors

Crossing the 49th: Advice for Canadians Travelling to the United States

Destination: Success – Services for Business Travellers

Guide for Canadians Imprisoned Abroad

Her Own Way: Advice for the Woman Traveller

International Child Abductions: A Manual for Parents

México: ¿Qué pasa? A Guide for Canadian Visitors

Out on a Limb: Advice for the Adventure Traveller

Retirement Abroad: Seeing the Sunsets

Teaching English in Korea
(available on the Internet only)

What No Child Should Endure

To access or order:
Consult the Consular Web site
(see above) or
Tel.: 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada)
or (613) 944-4000

Country Travel Reports
(free)

Country Travel Reports provide information on safety and security conditions, health issues and entry requirements for over 220 travel destinations. This information is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

To access or order:
Consult the Consular Web site
(see above) or
Tel.: 1-800-267-6788 (in Canada)
or (613) 944-6788
Fax: 1-800-575-2500 (in Canada)
or (613) 944-2500

Publication (approximately \$19.95 plus GST and shipping costs)

Diplomatic, Consular and Other Representatives in Canada

To order:
Canadian Government Publishing,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0S9
Tel.: 1-800-635-7943 (in Canada)
or (613) 956-4800

Anti-Drug Information Program
Web site: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/antidrug>

Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA)
Web site: <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca>

Customs

Customs border services
Automated Customs Information Service
Tel.: 1-800-461-9999 (in Canada)
or (204) 983-3500 or
(506) 636-5064

Publications (free)

I Declare

Importing a Firearm into Canada

Importing a Motor Vehicle into Canada

Moving Back to Canada

To order:
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Ottawa, ON K1A 0L5
Tel.: 1-800-461-9999 (in Canada)
or (204) 983-3500 or
(506) 636-5064, consult the CCRA Web site, or contact your local Customs border services office.

Taxation

International Tax Services Office,
2204 Walkley Road, Ottawa, ON K1A 1A8
Tel. (collect calls are accepted):
1-800-267-5177 (in Canada) or
(613) 952-3741
Non-Resident Withholding Accounts: (613) 952-2344
Problem Resolution Program:
(613) 952-3502
Fax: (613) 941-2505

Publication (free)

Canadian Residents Abroad

To order:
Consult the CCRA Web site (see above) or call the International Tax Services Office.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Web site:
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca>
Import Service Centres (ISC):
Tel.:
Eastern ISC 1-877-493-0468
Central ISC 1-800-835-4486
Western ISC 1-888-732-6222

Publication (free)

What Can I Bring into Canada?

To order:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency,
Public Affairs, 59 Camelot Drive,
2nd Floor East, Nepean, ON
K1A 0Y9
Tel.: 1-800-442-2342 or
(613) 225-2342

Canadian Transportation Agency

Web site:
<http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca>

**Citizenship and Immigration
Canada (CIC)**

Web site: <http://www.cic.gc.ca>

CIC Call Centres

Tel.: 1-888-242-2100 (in Canada)
or

Montreal (514) 496-1010

Toronto (416) 973-4444

Vancouver (604) 666-2171

Publications (free)

Dual Citizenship

*How to Prove You Are
a Canadian Citizen*

To order:

Consult the CIC Web site (see
above) or

Tel.: (613) 954-9019

Environment Canada – CITES

Web site:

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/cites>

Tel.: 1-800-668-6767 or

(819) 997-1840

Fax: (819) 953-6283

Health Canada

Web sites:

Health Canada:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>

Travel Medicine Program:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb/lcdc/osh/tmp_e.html

Tel.: (613) 957-8739

FAXCall: (613) 941-3900

MediAlert®

Web site:

<http://www.medicalert.ca>

Tel.: 1-800-668-1507

National Film Board

Web site: <http://www.nfb.ca>

Tel.: 1-800-267-7710 (in Canada)

or (514) 283-9000

Passport Office

Web site: <http://www.ppt.gc.ca>

Tel.: 1-800-567-6868 (in Canada)

Montreal (514) 283-2152

Ottawa-Hull (819) 994-3500

Toronto (416) 973-3251

Vancouver (604) 586-2500

Radio Canada International (RCI)

Web site: <http://www.rcinet.ca>

Tel.: (514) 597-7555 (Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation)

Scams

Publications (\$)

Scam Watch

Son of Scam

These booklets describe scenarios used by criminals around the world to target travellers.

To order:

Canadian Institute of Travel
Counsellors of Ontario,
55 Eglinton Avenue East,
Suite 209, Toronto, ON M4P 1G8
Tel.: 1-800-589-5776 or
(416) 484-4450

Web site:

<http://www.citcontario.com>

Transport Canada

Web sites:

European Conference of Ministers
of Transport – parking permits:

[http://www.tc.gc.ca/pol/en/
accessibility/Resolution97.htm](http://www.tc.gc.ca/pol/en/accessibility/Resolution97.htm)

Transport of dangerous goods:

[http://www.tc.gc.ca/aviation/
commerce/dgs/index_e.htm](http://www.tc.gc.ca/aviation/commerce/dgs/index_e.htm)

Other Recommended Reading

Axtell, Roger E. 1993.

*Do's and Taboos Around the World:
A Guide to International
Behaviour.*

3rd ed. New York, NY: John Wiley &
Sons.

Cumyn, Alan. 2001.

*What in the World Is Going On? A
Guide for Canadians Wishing to
Work, Volunteer or Study in Other
Countries.*

Ottawa, ON: Canadian Bureau for
International Education.

Available on the Internet only:

<http://www.cbie.ca/world.html>

Griffith, Susan. 1999.

Work Your Way Around the World.
9th ed. Oxford, U.K.: Vacation
Work.

Hachey, Jean-Marc. 1998.

*The Canadian Guide to Working
and Living Overseas.*

3rd ed. Toronto University Press.

Web site: [http://workingover
seas.com](http://workingoverseas.com)

Landes, Michael. 1997.

*The Back Door Guide to Short Term
Job Adventures.*

Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Pascoe, Robin. 1992.

Culture Shock! A Wife's Guide.
Times Books International.

Web site: [http://www.expatexp
ert.com](http://www.expatexpert.com)

Pascoe, Robin. 1993.

Culture Shock! A Parent's Guide.
Times Books International.

Web site: [http://www.expatexp
ert.com](http://www.expatexpert.com)

Pascoe, Robin. 1993.
*Homeward Bound: A Spouse's
Guide to Repatriation.*
Expatriate Press.
Web site: <http://www.expatriatepress.com>

Other Resources

Tourisme Jeunesse
Web site:
<http://www.tourismej.qc.ca>
Tel.: 1-800-461-8585 (in Canada)
or (514) 252-3117

Tourisme Jeunesse, a non-profit organization, helps young people who want to work abroad. As part of its services, it holds a conference called "Working Abroad" and distributes handbooks (in English and French) through stores and universities.

Notes

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CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Travelling Abroad?

Contact us...

**For information on
safe travel issues:**

E-mail:

voyage@dfait-maeci.gc.ca

Web site:

<http://www.voyage.gc.ca>

**For urgent assistance
abroad, call:**

(613) 996-8885