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# Living Abroad

A CANADIAN'S GUIDE TO WORKING, STUDYING, VOLUNTEERING  
OR RETIRING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

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Foreign Affairs, Trade and  
Development Canada

Affaires étrangères, Commerce  
et Développement Canada

Canada 

# LIVING ABROAD

A Canadian's guide to working, studying, volunteering or retiring in a foreign country

Published by Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada

To obtain more information or additional free copies of this booklet, visit [travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca), email [enqserv@international.gc.ca](mailto:enqserv@international.gc.ca) or call **1-800-267-8376** (in Canada) or **613-944-4000**.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

*Ce document est aussi disponible en français sous le titre  
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# INTRODUCTION

The world beyond our borders is home to about three million Canadians. Like you, they each have their own reasons for choosing to live in a foreign land, whether to work, study, volunteer, retire or pursue other opportunities. Residing abroad—either permanently or temporarily—can be a rich and rewarding experience.

It can also be challenging, particularly if you move to another country based on a dream, without considering the risks and responsibilities. The decision to leave familiar surroundings and adapt to another social and cultural environment should not be taken lightly. It requires thorough research, knowledge and planning. The better prepared you are before leaving Canada, the better your experience abroad will be.

The Government of Canada assists thousands of Canadians residing in foreign countries each year. With more than 260 offices in 150 countries worldwide—plus an Emergency Watch and Response Centre in Ottawa—we're at your service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. While there are limits to the help we can give you, we offer a vast range of consular services, from replacing lost passports and sharing information on local laws to lending support during natural disasters and medical emergencies.

We're well aware of the challenges you'll face while living abroad. That's why we've developed this booklet to help you:

- inform and prepare yourself before leaving Canada;
- take care of yourself and your loved ones while abroad;
- know what to do if things don't work out as expected; and
- plan for your eventual return.

We urge you to read this booklet as well as our main publication, *Bon Voyage, But... Essential Information for Canadian Travellers*. Also be sure to visit [travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca)—your official source of information on international travel. And have a safe, healthy and happy stay abroad!

## Questions about foreign travel?

- Is it safe to go there?
- Could I get sick?
- Who can I contact for emergency help?
- Can the Government of Canada get me out of a foreign jail?
- What should I do if I lose my passport?
- Do I have to pay taxes on foreign income?
- What can I bring back to Canada?

Answers: [Travel.gc.ca](http://Travel.gc.ca)

# BEFORE LEAVING CANADA

## COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT

It's important to consider not only the rewards but also the risks of relocating abroad. Be sure to complete a risk assessment of each possible host country in order to identify a safe and suitable destination. If you're daunted by the perils and inconveniences of a particular destination, then rule it out.

A risk assessment will pinpoint concerns you should be aware of, such as safety and security, health conditions and the political, economic, cultural and natural environment, as well as precautions you can take. For example:

- Some countries experience continuing wars, insurgencies and civil unrest.
- Others are subject to extreme temperatures and natural disasters, such as typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

- The pace of life may be very different from what you're used to, affecting your work habits and well-being.
- Safe and comfortable housing may be scarce or prohibitively expensive.
- There may be no wheelchair access or allowances for people with hearing, sight or other special needs.
- The consumption of alcohol may be illegal, or persons convicted of drug-related offences may face capital punishment.
- Children may be tried, convicted and incarcerated as adults for their crimes.

## Read up, register, reach us

The Government of Canada encourages Canadians to follow the Three Rs of international travel:

- **Read up** on safety and security, local laws and customs, entry requirements, health conditions and other key travel topics by consulting our Country Travel Advice ([travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice)).
- **Register** with us through the Registration of Canadians Abroad service before leaving Canada, so we can contact and assist you in an emergency abroad, such as a hurricane or civil unrest, or inform you about an emergency at home ([travel.gc.ca/register](http://travel.gc.ca/register)).
- **Reach us** at our Emergency Watch and Response Centre in Ottawa for urgent assistance while abroad ([travel.gc.ca/emergencies](http://travel.gc.ca/emergencies)).

To carry out a risk assessment:

- Start by consulting the Travel Advice for your prospective host country to see if an official Government of Canada Travel Advisory is in effect and to obtain information on safety and security, local laws and customs, health conditions and entry requirements ([travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice)).
- Consult the Country Insights page on the Centre for Intercultural Learning website for cultural information, facts and advice on showing sensitivity to local customs around the world ([intercultures.ca](http://intercultures.ca)).
- Visit [travel.gc.ca/health](http://travel.gc.ca/health) and the World Health Organization's website ([who.int](http://who.int)) for country-specific information on health conditions and standards of medical care.
- Get weather and climate information on countries worldwide on the World Weather Information Service website ([www.worldweather.org](http://www.worldweather.org)).
- Supplement these resources with guidebooks, newsletters, magazines and websites for expatriates. They offer insight into the health, safety, cultural and emotional issues experienced by Canadians living abroad.

## CAREFULLY EVALUATE OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD

A wide range of work, study, volunteer and retirement opportunities can be found outside Canada. To ensure a successful experience abroad, be sure to thoroughly evaluate any opportunity before moving forward:

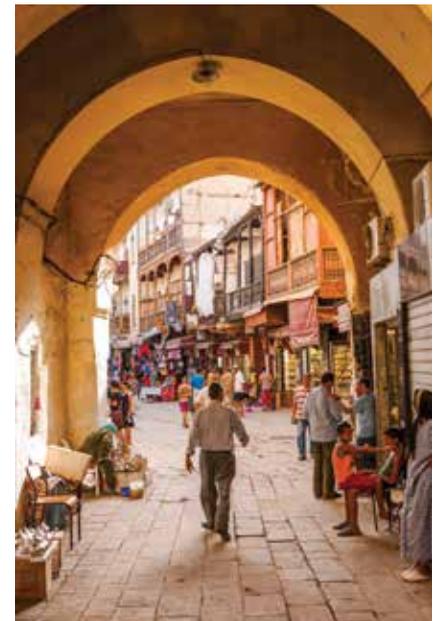
- Beware of international fraud. Steer clear of overseas recruitment agencies that operate solely by email or telephone and organizations that charge placement fees. Bogus groups offering international education opportunities have cheated students out of large sums of money under the pretext of securing admissions, financial aid and study permits. Likewise, phony volunteer placement agencies have charged unsuspecting recruits for opportunities that never pan out. And there's no lack of international scammers who target retirees with empty promises of romance, friendship and financial rewards in faraway lands.
- If you're a woman, be especially wary of offers that sound too good to be true. Beware of the danger of getting trapped into sex or labour trafficking. Criminals often recruit foreign women through fraudulent ads

to work as hostesses, models, entertainers, nannies, maids or in other seemingly legitimate jobs.

- Find out everything you can about any agency that's offering you an opportunity abroad. Ask for references, visit its website and call your local Better Business Bureau (if the organization is Canadian). Contact others who've worked for the organization or speak to someone currently employed there.
- Never accept a job overseas if the details won't be spelled out until you arrive. Examine the terms of your contract carefully and have it reviewed by a lawyer if possible. Verify the conditions to break your contract if things don't work out.
- Make sure you fully understand the financial conditions of any job offer. Know when you'll receive your first paycheque and in what currency you'll be paid. Receiving your salary in Canadian or U.S. dollars could prevent problems caused by exchange rate fluctuations. If you'll be paid in the local currency, find out if it's convertible and if there are restrictions on taking funds out of the country. Check if your employer will cover expenses, such as airfares, residency permits, language training, school tuition, and health and dental insurance (including coverage for family members).

## Are you ready for a cross-cultural move?

Many Canadians who live abroad for the first time are surprised at the cultural isolation they experience, making the transition even more stressful. Before you leave Canada, make an effort to understand the social environment where you'll be living. Are you at ease with stark cultural differences? Are you prepared to be in a minority and to be treated as a foreigner? Do you make new friends easily? Are you open to different ways of doing things? Can you handle a much slower—or faster—pace of life?



- If your contract provides for accommodations, ask for photos or a detailed description, floor plan and furniture inventory in advance. “Western” and “furnished” have different meanings in different countries. Ask about the neighbourhood and local transport. Check whether you’ll be sharing accommodations with someone else.
- Note that, while some employers and volunteer agencies may promise to pay for your return flight to Canada upon completion of a contract, this commitment will not necessarily be honoured. It’s best to request an open-ended return ticket in advance.

## A LITTLE PLANNING GOES A LONG WAY

Forward thinking is the key to a safe and successful stay abroad. The following steps will help you pull the pieces together before leaving Canada.

- Read our safe-travel booklet *Bon Voyage, But... Essential Information for Canadian Travellers* (see [travel.gc.ca/publication](http://travel.gc.ca/publication)), which offers the knowledge and advice you need to travel responsibly and with confidence, while avoiding the pitfalls you could experience in foreign countries. It also outlines consular services available to you around the world.
- Ensure that you and all accompanying family members have a Canadian passport that’s valid for at least six months beyond your intended return to Canada.

Obtain any work, study, volunteer, visitor or other visas required by your host country well in advance. Know the terms of each visa, as you could be arrested for violating visa conditions in some countries. See “Moving abroad with children” on page 17 and “Required travel documents” on page 18 for more information.

- Leave copies of important travel documents with family or friends in Canada in case of loss or theft. Scan these documents, if possible, and send them to yourself at an email address you can access anywhere.
- Make sure you have travel health insurance that covers all medical expenses for illness or injury (including hospitalization abroad and medical evacuation), plus insurance for loss or theft of valuables, damage to baggage, and flight cancellations or interruptions.
- Sign up for the Registration of Canadians Abroad service at [travel.gc.ca/register](http://travel.gc.ca/register), so that the Government of Canada can contact and assist you in case of an emergency. Once you’ve registered, remember to keep your account up to date.

## International Experience Canada

Young Canadians can choose from thousands of opportunities to travel and work in foreign countries. These programs are made possible through reciprocal arrangements negotiated with host countries by Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

Participants aged 18 to 35 can enjoy the many benefits of living and working abroad, while gaining valuable global experience and skills.

For more information, call 1-877-461-2346, email [experience@international.gc.ca](mailto:experience@international.gc.ca) or visit [international.gc.ca/experience](http://international.gc.ca/experience).



## REGISTRATION OF CANADIANS ABROAD

*A free service that could save your life*

If you’ll be travelling or living abroad, sign up for the **Registration of Canadians Abroad** service. Registration enables us to reach you in case of an emergency abroad, such as an earthquake or civil unrest, or inform you about an emergency at home.

Sign up online, by mail, by fax or in person. For more information, visit [travel.gc.ca/register](http://travel.gc.ca/register) or call **1-800-267-6788** (in Canada and the U.S.) or **613-944-6788**.

\*Information obtained through registration is confidential and is used in accordance with the provisions of Canada’s Privacy Act.

- Carry an Emergency Contact Card with the coordinates of the nearest Canadian government office in your host country (see [travel.gc.ca/card](https://travel.gc.ca/card)), in case you have problems while abroad.
- Arrange in advance for safe accommodations in your host country. Suitable housing may be scarce and expensive in locations with low vacancy rates, and you may have to book through an agency. If you can't find long-term lodgings beforehand, at least make plans for temporary housing. Before paying a deposit for student housing or other lodgings advertised online, be sure to confirm that the address exists. See "A roof over your head" on page 23 for further advice.
- Find out well in advance what you're allowed to take with you. Keep in mind that most countries have stringent import controls. Obtain any necessary adapters for electrical appliances you intend to bring. If you're bringing valuable items, take advantage of a free service offered by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) offices to identify items with serial numbers or other unique markings. The CBSA can apply a sticker to other items so they can be identified for customs purposes upon your return to Canada.
- If you're taking a pet overseas, contact the embassy or consulate of your host country to obtain information on all requirements. Your pet will need a detailed health certificate and may require an import permit. It may also need to undergo a quarantine period before entering the country.
- Make sure your mail is moving with you. Submit a change of address request to Canada Post and inform all your contacts of your new address.
- Make a will before you leave Canada. If the worst happens, it will reduce the complications associated with a death abroad. Consider making two wills—one for Canada and one for the host country—since different legislation will apply.

## DUAL CITIZENSHIP— BLESSING OR BURDEN?

You're allowed by Canadian law to have more than one nationality. Having dual or multiple citizenships can offer advantages, including employment opportunities, unrestricted residency, property ownership, and entitlement to education, health care, pensions and other social programs abroad.

There are also disadvantages. Your Canadian citizenship may not be recognized in the country of your other nationality, whose authorities may prevent Canada from providing you with consular assistance. This situation is especially likely if you enter that country as one of its citizens, rather than using your Canadian passport. As a citizen, you may be subject to laws that would

### Temporary versus permanent residency

Most Canadians who intend to live abroad for a temporary study period, volunteer service or seasonal retirement will choose to maintain their Canadian residency. Those who don't plan to return regularly to Canada, and who can obtain sufficient health-care protection abroad, may opt for permanent residency—or even citizenship—in their host country. Doing so means establishing legal status in the other country, which entails a variety of conditions, requirements and obligations well beyond those of a tourist or visitor. It could also have serious consequences. For example, Canadian consular officials may be unable to assist you if you run into problems in a foreign country where you have legal status.



## Did you know...?

You cannot use a Certificate of Canadian Citizenship instead of a Canadian passport to travel abroad. **A Certificate of Canadian Citizenship is not a travel document.** A Canadian passport is the only reliable and universally accepted travel and identification document available to Canadians for the purpose of international travel. Canadian citizens returning to Canada who present other documents, such as a Certificate of Canadian Citizenship, birth certificate, provincial driver's licence or foreign passport, instead of a Canadian passport, may face delays or be denied boarding by transport companies.

not apply to a foreigner, compelled to do military service, required to pay taxes, liable for reimbursing educational costs or subject to heightened scrutiny by immigration and security officials. Being a citizen of another country doesn't necessarily mean you can work there. You may not meet the residency requirements. Or you may have lost your citizenship status when you became Canadian. Dual citizenship can also cause problems in a third country if there's confusion over which citizenship you used to gain entry.

You can minimize the risks of living in the country of your other nationality by taking these steps:

- Confirm your citizenship status—and that of accompanying family members—and address your concerns to appropriate officials of the country in question through its embassy or consulate in Canada.

## In case of an emergency...

Consular assistance is available **24 hours a day**, seven days a week. If you run into problems while living abroad:

- Contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate (see [travel.gc.ca/offices](http://travel.gc.ca/offices) for a complete directory).
- Phone our Emergency Watch and Response Centre in Ottawa at **613-996-8885** (call collect where service is available).
- Email us at [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca).
- Or complete an Emergency Contact Form at [travel.gc.ca/emergencies](http://travel.gc.ca/emergencies).

- Find out if you have obligations to that country, such as taxes, military service or repayment of educational costs. Ask for written confirmation.
- If permitted by the laws of the other country, use your Canadian passport to gain entry and present yourself as a Canadian citizen to local authorities.
- Contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate immediately if you run into problems associated with dual citizenship.
- For more information, see our publication *Dual Citizenship: What You Need to Know*.

## YOUR HEALTH ON THE MOVE

No matter where in the world you live, your health is your highest priority. Be sure to plan for long-term health needs before leaving Canada.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recommends that you and each family member visit a travel health clinic or your health-care provider—preferably **six weeks before departure**—for a health assessment. This examination will determine your need for immunizations, preventive medication and any precautions to help avoid disease while abroad. A health assessment could also include check-ups with a dentist and optometrist, as well as a psychological evaluation to help prepare for life in a new environment.



## VACCINATIONS

Living in a foreign country could expose you and accompanying family members to infectious diseases that are rarely, if ever, seen in Canada. Based on your current health status, immunization history and anticipated itinerary, a health-care provider can assess your individual health risks and advise you on vaccination requirements, your need for preventive medication (e.g., for malaria) and personal protective measures.

Make sure your routine immunizations—tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), polio, measles, mumps and rubella—are up to date. Proof of yellow fever vaccination in the past 10 years and an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis may be required to enter some countries. Be aware that some vaccinations and preventive medications can take time to become effective.

If you're moving abroad with infants or children, you may need to arrange an alternative or accelerated childhood immunization schedule for them. Consult your pediatrician, family doctor or travel health practitioner. For more information, visit [travel.gc.ca/health](http://travel.gc.ca/health).

## MEDICATION

If you take medication, pack an extra supply—or arrange for refills—since you'll be abroad for an extended period. Carry a duplicate of your prescription, showing the product's generic and trade names, in case your medication is stolen or lost. Also keep any optical prescriptions on hand for easier replacement of eyeglasses or contacts.

Never try to save luggage space by combining medications in one container. Keep all medications in their original, labelled containers to avoid customs problems.

Some medications sold over the counter in Canada are illegal or require a prescription in other countries. Find out whether your medication is legal in your host country. Obtain a note from your doctor stating the medical reasons for your prescription and the recommended dosage.

If you need syringes for a medical condition or an autoinjector for life-threatening allergies, it's important to take along adequate supplies or to have a plan to replenish them. Also carry a medical certificate confirming that these items are for medical use.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition or allergies that could flare up while you're abroad, consider wearing a MedicAlert® bracelet or

necklace, which will be linked to your medical records and make them accessible 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

## STI PREVENTION

Carry a supply of condoms to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections and to guard against unwanted pregnancy, even if you don't expect to meet a new partner abroad. Condoms may not be available in your destination country or may not meet the safety standards set by the World Health Organization. For more information, consult [travel.gc.ca/STI](http://travel.gc.ca/STI).

## PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

If you'll be pregnant while living abroad or expect to give birth in a foreign country, be sure to see your doctor before leaving Canada. Make sure your supplementary health insurance covers pregnancy-related conditions, pre-term and full-term birth and neonatal care. Try to avoid malarial zones, as expectant mothers are particularly vulnerable

to the illness, which could put their pregnancy at risk. If you're going to give birth outside Canada, identify beforehand a local hospital or birthing facility that's up to Canadian standards, if possible. For information on the citizenship of children born to Canadian parents abroad, see "Canadian birthright" on page 32.

More information on travelling while pregnant can be found at [travel.gc.ca/health](http://travel.gc.ca/health) and in our booklet *Her Own Way: A Woman's Safe-Travel Guide*, available at [travel.gc.ca/publication](http://travel.gc.ca/publication).

## ACCESSIBILITY FOR DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Many countries don't provide specific access for people in wheelchairs or assist those with hearing, sight or other physical requirements. You may need to make special arrangements abroad to obtain the services you'd normally expect in Canada. For country-specific information on

### Well on Your Way

Would you like to learn more about protecting your health while abroad? Our publication *Well on Your Way* offers valuable advice on how to:

- assess travel health risks;
- take preventive measures before, during and after international travel;
- choose an appropriate travel health insurance plan;
- cope with a health emergency abroad; and
- obtain consular services in the event of a medical emergency.

To order your booklet today, call **1-800-267-8376** (in Canada) or **613-944-4000**, or download a copy at [travel.gc.ca/publication](http://travel.gc.ca/publication).

accessibility for disabled travellers, consult the website of Disabled Peoples' International at [dpi.org](http://dpi.org).

Holders of disabled parking permits in Canada may use them in member or associate member countries of the International Transport Forum (ITF). Be sure to check with local authorities to confirm your entitlement. Parking permits for disabled Canadians are rarely recognized in non-ITF countries. For details, see the ITF website at [internationaltransportforum.org](http://internationaltransportforum.org).

Further information on government services for disabled travellers, meeting special needs, parking privileges and travelling with a service animal is available at [travel.gc.ca/disabledtravellers](http://travel.gc.ca/disabledtravellers).

## PURCHASE THE BEST INSURANCE YOU CAN AFFORD

Don't expect your provincial or territorial health plan to cover the costs if you get sick or are injured while living abroad. Out-of-country medical bills can be steep and result in a heavy financial burden. There's nothing worse than being ill in a foreign country while worrying about spiralling medical costs. Your provincial or territorial health plan will cover only part, if any, of medical expenses outside Canada and will not pay up front. Furthermore, it will become invalid if you live elsewhere beyond a certain length of time—generally six to eight months, depending on your province or territory. For more information, contact your regional health authority.



No matter how long you'll be living abroad, **be sure to purchase the best health insurance you can afford**. It's one of the most important investments you can make as an expatriate. Make sure you understand the terms of your policy. It should cover your personal health needs and those of any dependants. If you'll be working in your destination country, check whether your employer will provide health insurance that meets your requirements.

**Always carry proof of your insurance while abroad**, along with contact information for your insurer. Leave a copy with a friend or relative in Canada. If you pay for your own medical care, obtain a detailed invoice from the doctor or hospital in order to make a claim later. Most insurers will not accept copies or faxes.

### Supplemental insurance versus replacement insurance

Two types of private health-care insurance are available to expatriates. **Supplemental insurance** provides added benefits to those covered by a provincial or territorial plan. **Replacement insurance** provides full coverage for those who stay abroad long enough to become ineligible for a Canadian plan.

Full replacement insurance is less readily available than supplemental insurance, but a number of companies do provide insurance specifically designed for expatriates. When considering replacement insurance, carefully assess your own situation, taking into account your age, pre-existing medical conditions and potential needs in the event of a major or long-term illness. Be sure to arrange for replacement insurance before leaving Canada and check that the policy is valid in the country where you plan to stay.



## Did you know...?

In addition to health insurance, you should consider getting enhanced life and disability insurance. You'll also need insurance that offers coverage for flight cancellation, trip interruption and lost luggage, as well as cargo insurance for automobiles, household goods and other personal effects. Insurance coverage can prevent major disruptions and additional costs when relocating abroad.

Shop around for the best health insurance for a long-term stay abroad. Ask if the policy:

- provides coverage whether or not your provincial/territorial health plan remains in effect;
- offers a worldwide 24-hour/seven-day emergency contact number in English and translation services for health-care providers in your host country;
- pays immediately for foreign medical costs or requires you to pay up front and seek reimbursement later;
- provides a cash deposit in advance if required by a hospital;
- covers both health and dental care for the full duration of your stay abroad;

- covers pre-existing medical conditions, such as borderline diabetes and heart disease (ask for written confirmation);
- includes coverage for injuries resulting from adventure activities, such as mountaineering and scuba-diving;
- provides for a medical evacuation to Canada or the nearest location with appropriate medical facilities;
- covers premature births and related neonatal care;
- pays expenses associated with a death abroad, including the repatriation to Canada of cremated or embalmed remains;
- provides coverage during visits to Canada or other travel while abroad; and
- covers the period before your provincial/territorial plan is renewed upon your return to Canada.

For more suggestions on what to look for when buying travel health insurance, consult our booklet *Well on Your Way: A Canadian's Guide to Healthy Travel Abroad*.

## Did you know...?

Some insurance companies will not honour medical claims made for injuries suffered in a country where a Government of Canada Travel Advisory is in effect.

## MOVING ABROAD WITH CHILDREN

Moving to a foreign country can be one of the most enriching experiences a child will ever have, giving rise to greater confidence, adaptability and intercultural awareness. But meeting your children's needs can also add stress to the already considerable challenges of relocating abroad. Before leaving Canada, take steps to ensure a smooth transition for you and your family.

- Be sure to have an open discussion with your children so they can express their feelings and concerns about moving abroad.
- Arrange for appropriate daycare or schooling. Make sure you're satisfied with the standards of daycare offered in your

destination country. Contact the country's education authorities for information about the school system. In addition to public and private schools, most countries have international schools, attended mainly by expatriate children. Have copies of your children's school records in case they're needed.

- Remember that immigration officials are vigilant about documentation for children crossing international borders. Unless children under 18 are accompanied by both parents, we strongly recommend that they carry a consent letter proving they have permission to travel from every person with the legal right to make major decisions on their behalf. We advise you to have the consent letter certified, stamped or sealed by an official with the authority to administer an oath or solemn



declaration. See [travel.gc.ca/letter](http://travel.gc.ca/letter) for a sample consent letter, as well as an interactive form that you can use to compose your own letter.

- Make sure each child has a valid Canadian passport and supporting identification, such as a birth certificate or citizenship card. Check with the destination country's embassy or consulate in Canada regarding additional entry conditions and documentation that may be required, including divorce papers, custody court orders or a death certificate (if one parent is deceased).
- Keep additional identification in your child's pocket in case you're separated. Carry recent photographs of the child for emergency identification purposes.
- Seek advice from a lawyer if a custody dispute might develop while your child is living abroad. Custody arrangements in Canada may not be recognized in another country. In extreme cases, you or your child may not be allowed to return to Canada. Check with the destination country's embassy or consulate in Canada before moving abroad.
- Consult with a pediatrician on how best to protect your child's health while living abroad.

## REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Make sure your passport, necessary visas and other documents are in order before leaving Canada.

### YOUR CANADIAN PASSPORT

A Canadian passport is the only reliable and universally accepted travel and identification document for Canadians. You and each family member must have a valid passport to travel or reside outside Canada.

Canadian passports for children up to 15 years of age are valid for five years. Passports for persons 16 years of age and older are valid for five or 10 years, depending on the chosen validity period.

Contact the embassy or consulate of your destination country to determine its rules and restrictions concerning passport validity. Some countries require that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected return to Canada. Plan to renew your passport before your return date if it will expire while you're abroad.

If you need to apply for or renew your passport, start the process well before your planned departure from Canada. Allow more time if you need a visa, since you'll need to obtain a passport first.

Application forms are available online at [passportcanada.gc.ca](http://passportcanada.gc.ca) and in person at all Passport Canada offices, Service Canada centres, Canada Post outlets and Canadian government offices abroad.

Keep the following items on hand to make it easier to replace a passport that's lost or stolen while you're abroad:

- a photocopy of the identification (photo) page of your passport;
- the original of your birth or citizenship certificate;
- a copy of at least one other document to support your identity;
- contact information for a Canadian government office in your destination country; and
- two recent photos meeting Passport Canada specifications (taken within one year and reflecting your current appearance).

If your passport is lost or stolen while you're outside Canada, report the incident to the local police and to Passport Canada or the nearest Canadian government office abroad.

For more information on how to apply for, care for or replace a Canadian passport, consult [travel.gc.ca/passport](http://travel.gc.ca/passport).

## Did you know...?

Only the government of your host country has the authority to grant you a visa. The Government of Canada cannot intervene on your behalf.

### VISAS

You need a visa to stay in most countries for more than three months. The most common categories are work, student, volunteer and residency visas. However, you may also need a tourist, business, visitor or other visa for a short-term stay.

If you plan to exit and re-enter your host country during your stay, inquire about a multiple-entry visa to avoid future problems. Be sure to obtain visas well in advance. Don't count on entering a country as a tourist in hopes of changing your visa classification later on. Understand and respect visa terms and conditions. Staying in a country without the right visa or overstaying a visa expiry date is illegal and may result in imprisonment, a stiff fine and/or deportation.

Requirements and processing times will vary, depending on the type of visa you need. In order to grant you a visa, some countries require:

- a certified criminal record check through the RCMP or your local police;

For more information, consult [travel.gc.ca/child](http://travel.gc.ca/child).

- a medical certificate signed by a doctor, demonstrating that you're in good health and free of specific contagious diseases;
- a certificate of a negative test for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV); and
- a yellow fever vaccination certificate (if you're arriving from an infected area).

Further details on visa requirements are available at [travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice) or from the embassy or consulate of your destination country. Remember to check the visa requirements of countries you may transit en route to your host country or visit during your stay abroad.

**Work visa or permit:** All countries require you to have special permission to enter if you'll be employed while living there. Your prospective employer may have to sponsor you for a work visa or permit. It may also be your employer's responsibility to obtain the document, or you may have to do so yourself through your host country's embassy or consulate in Canada. It can take months to obtain a work visa, so start the process well before your departure. Know the implications if you decide to change jobs after your arrival. Doing so may render your visa invalid, or you may have to leave and re-enter the country under a different one.

**Working holiday visa:** Canada has reciprocal agreements with numerous countries to encourage cultural

exchanges by enabling travellers to experience living abroad while undertaking short-term employment.

**Student visa:** Most countries require you to have a student visa to undertake temporary or long-term studies. A residency visa or permit may also be required.

**Volunteer visa:** Some countries require you to have a volunteer visa to undertake unpaid or charitable activities. Others demand a work visa or permit, even if you're a volunteer.

**Residency visa or permit:** If you stay in a country beyond the period allowed by a typical tourist visa (usually three to six months) for reasons such as retirement abroad, you'll need a residency visa or permit.

**Marriage or spousal visa:** Some countries will grant you a marriage or spousal visa, usually with a specific validity period, if you're married to—or intend to marry—one of their citizens or permanent residents.

**Alien registration card:** Upon arrival in your host country, you may be required to obtain an alien registration card. You'll have to carry it at all times for identification purposes and as proof of your status, then return it to local authorities before your departure.

## CALCULATE THE COSTS

Before leaving Canada, make sure you can afford to relocate abroad.

- **Look into the cost of living in your destination country,** since an average salary in Canada isn't adequate everywhere. Allow for inflation and exchange rate fluctuations that will likely occur while you're abroad.
- **Know the cost of shipping personal and household effects.** Take only what you need and find out what you can buy in your destination country. If you'll be working or volunteering, find out if your employer or recruiter will cover the cost of moving your belongings or provide you with essentials when you arrive.
- **Make sure you have enough money to get properly settled,** including funds to cover expenses such as a rental security deposit and utility connections. Good accommodations are expensive in many countries, especially if you need a furnished home.
- **Establish an emergency fund** or make arrangements with family or friends to assist you in case you run out of money while abroad or need to return home unexpectedly.

- **Take into account all duties, fees and taxes you'll pay on retirement income or other revenue.** Non-residents of Canada are taxed on income received from sources in Canada and may also be subject to taxation in their host country.
- **Keep in mind not only the cost of travelling to your host country but also the cost of returning to Canada,** possibly on a regular basis. Many countries require foreign visitors to have a valid return ticket with a departure date within the time limits allowed by immigration authorities. If you have to make an unplanned trip home, be prepared to pay much more than the average economy airfare.
- **See "Manage your money" on page 26** for tips on banking, budgeting and other financial issues while living abroad.



# WHILE LIVING ABROAD

## STAY SAFE

No matter how secure you may feel in your host country, it's essential to crime-proof yourself:

- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings. Minimize alcohol consumption and don't use, carry or get involved with illegal drugs.
- Always pack your own luggage and never let it out of your sight. Never carry another person's luggage or transport anything—even an envelope—across a border or through customs for anyone else. Conceal in a money belt or neck pouch necessities that can't be easily replaced: your passport, credit and debit cards, cash, airline and train tickets, a copy of your insurance policy, medical prescriptions and contact information for your doctor. Keep copies of all important documents in a secure place, in case the originals are stolen or lost.
- Watch out for criminals who target foreigners. They may work individually or in teams, often posing as good Samaritans or creating distractions to steal belongings. Be wary of new "friends," including locals, fellow foreigners and even Canadians you meet abroad.
- Make an effort not to stand out or to give the impression that you're lost or vulnerable. Know where you're going, what you're doing and how to find your way back. Always carry the address of your accommodations. Study a street map before going out. Avoid opening a map in a public area or keep it hidden under a newspaper. Steer clear of isolated areas.
- Avoid displaying expensive-looking cameras, jewellery and other showy accessories that mark you as a wealthy foreigner.
- Use only legal and reputable taxis. Never hire a taxi if the driver approaches you in an airport arrival area. Such services are usually illegal and may be unsafe. Ask someone you trust to recommend taxi services and

### Drugs and Travel

Most countries impose severe penalties for the possession of only a minuscule amount of illegal drugs. Even prescription drugs and syringes used for legitimate medical purposes come under intense scrutiny and should have proper accompanying documentation. For more information, consult [travel.gc.ca/drugs](http://travel.gc.ca/drugs).

avoid the risk of hailing an unlicensed cab on the street.

- Beware of credit card fraud. Never let your credit card out of your sight. If you use an ATM, do so during business hours at a location inside a bank, super-market or large commercial building. Make note of credit and debit card numbers so they can be cancelled quickly.

### Did you know...?

Some countries require visitors to carry photo identification, such as a passport or resident card, at all times. Failure to do so could result in arrest, a fine or other serious consequences.



## A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD

Chances are you'll need temporary accommodations before you get settled in your host country. Exercise caution when choosing both short-term and long-term lodgings:

- Make sure you feel comfortable about your accommodations and their location. Do the doors lock properly? Are there fire alarms and escape routes? Don't stay anywhere unless you feel safe.
- Avoid lodgings on the ground floor or with easy access from the outside, such as from a balcony or fire escape.
- Understand the risks of staying in low-budget accommodations, such as youth hostels and dormitories. Never leave valuables or travel documents behind in your room. Keep them close to you if you sleep in a dorm. Bear in mind that accepting lodgings from a stranger could be an invitation to danger.
- Even if you choose luxury accommodations, you should always be vigilant. Ensure that the door of your room is locked, even when you're inside. Never open your door to anyone without looking through the peephole, using a door chain or confirming the visitor's identity.
- Never leave your window open, especially if your lodgings are on the ground floor or have a balcony.

## HEALTH CARE

If you spend a significant period abroad, you may be more exposed to health risks than a short-term traveller. You may need to learn how to shop for and prepare food safely, in addition to ensuring access to safe and potable water. You'll also have to arrange for health care for yourself and accompanying family members.

Health care is a serious issue for Canadian expatriates because few countries have systems as comprehensive or as inexpensive as Canada's. Some countries have comprehensive health-care plans that will cover you, after a waiting period, if you immigrate. However, most countries don't offer such programs.



Many developing countries provide free health care to citizens and permanent residents. But most Canadians living in these countries seek private health care, which is usually of a higher quality and involves shorter wait times. Private medical facilities are reasonably advanced in most countries and will usually see you immediately for a fee. Faced with these trade-offs, most Canadians choose the private alternative and make sure they're well covered by supplemental or replacement insurance. See "Purchase the best insurance you can afford" on page 14 for more information.

### Did you know...?

When you arrive in your hostcountry, you should make a point of locating the nearest reputable clinic or hospital and noting the hours of operation. Don't wait for an emergency—it may be too late! Contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate for a list of local doctors and hospitals.

Keep in mind that it's best to avoid hospitals and dental facilities in countries with poor hygiene standards. For country-specific information, see [travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice).

## CULTURE SHOCK

Most people living abroad experience a period of adaptation known as culture shock. This form of psychological stress affects even seasoned expatriates and occurs when familiar cues and patterns are no longer present.

The symptoms may be fleeting or last several months, and their intensity varies from person to person. Individuals facing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, prior to departure are most at risk. It's important to recognize the symptoms of culture shock, which usually follow a familiar pattern.

During the first phase, often described as the "honeymoon stage," most encounters in the new country are perceived as exciting and positive.



During the second phase, sometimes called the "emptiness stage," foreigners typically feel a sense of dislocation and unease. Symptoms may include:

- feelings of anger, frustration and irritability, especially a loss of one's sense of humour;
- negative feelings about the people and culture of the host country; and
- boredom, fatigue and inability to concentrate or work effectively.

During the third and final phase, foreigners start to accept their surroundings and make a compromise between the honeymoon and emptiness stages.

## Cushioning the impact

The best strategy for coping with culture shock is to make a conscious effort to adjust to your new environment:

- **Learn the social do's and don'ts of your host country** and make an effort to meet the locals. Communication will be easier if you know how to greet people, how to dress and how to behave.
- **Take time to study the language.** It will make life simpler and show your desire to be part of the community. Start with a few simple phrases, then gradually expand your vocabulary.
- **Get involved in some aspect of the local culture,** such as the music or cuisine, or learn a new sport or martial art. You'll meet new people and get a greater sense of belonging.
- **Maintain contact with family and friends back home.** Sharing your experiences and problems can help you adapt to the local environment.
- **Take care of yourself.** Be sure to eat well, exercise and get enough sleep, and avoid heavy alcohol consumption. If you take medication for a mental health condition, don't reduce or discontinue your dosage during this period.
- **Take time to travel and explore the country's sights and attractions.**
- **Avoid idealizing life back home.** Make the most of your stay and keep an open mind.
- **Consider getting involved with the Canadian expatriate community** to lessen your sense of isolation.

## MANAGE YOUR MONEY

Managing your finances—from budgeting and banking to paying taxes and purchasing property—is an integral part of living abroad. It may be difficult to assess how much money you can spend due to unforeseen expenses or unfamiliarity with local currency and costs. If you're paid in the local currency, you may be vulnerable to inflation and currency fluctuations. Among the factors that

could diminish your income are recessions, stock market crashes and the devaluation of the currency in which your pension or other benefits are paid. Ensure that your income is, and remains, enough to live on.

It's also a good idea to consult a private financial planner, who can provide advice on such matters as contributing to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan and the Canada Pension Plan while you're abroad.

## OPENING A FOREIGN BANK ACCOUNT

You'll almost certainly want to set up a bank account in your host country, preferably one that can be fed by funds from a Canadian account. To do so, you'll need to go to a local foreign exchange bank with your passport, residency permit and Canadian banking information (including your branch and account number). Usually someone who can speak English will be available to assist you. The process can be complicated and time-consuming, so ensure that you have an alternative source of funds during this period.

### ADDITIONAL TIPS ON BANKING ABROAD

- Advise your Canadian bank and credit card company about the period you'll be abroad.
- Look into the feasibility of transferring money between accounts in Canada and your host country. Know how much money you're allowed to send home. The amount may be strictly regulated by your host country.
- Retain all receipts, transaction records and documentation on financial transfers.
- Exchange money using only authorized agents to avoid violating local laws.
- Have a variety of ways of accessing your money overseas, such as credit cards, debit cards and cash.

## RECEIVING A PUBLIC PENSION ABROAD

Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) benefits may be paid to you while living abroad, subject to certain conditions.

CPP and QPP benefits are paid outside Canada, as long as all conditions of eligibility are met. OAS is paid outside Canada if the pensioner lived in Canada for at least 20 years after age 18. The OAS system is intended to guarantee a minimum income to seniors. Eligibility is determined by an income test. To receive OAS benefits outside Canada, you're generally required to file an annual tax return reporting your worldwide income. For details, see [canadabenefits.gc.ca](http://canadabenefits.gc.ca).

### TAXATION

Your tax obligations while living abroad depend largely on whether you're a resident or non-resident of Canada. Your status is determined by a number of factors, including the purpose and permanence of your stay abroad, the duration and frequency of your visits to Canada and whether you've severed your residential ties with Canada. Be sure to review your situation with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to avoid surprises.

The CRA publication T4131, *Canadian Residents Abroad*, is an excellent source of information to determine your residency status, the specific tax package you should use, and your eligibility for the Foreign Tax Credit and Overseas Employment Tax Credit, in addition to other ways of reducing the taxes you owe in Canada. It also addresses tax treaties between Canada and certain countries, which allow you to avoid being taxed in two countries on the same income.

The CRA's International Tax Services Office processes income tax returns for non-residents and



deemed residents of Canada, including Canadians working abroad. It also provides assistance by telephone and postal correspondence and looks after all non-resident tax withholding accounts.

See [travel.gc.ca/taxation](http://travel.gc.ca/taxation) for more information.

### Online banking

Most financial institutions allow you to access your account to check balances, pay bills and transfer funds anywhere in the world. It's not advisable to conduct transactions in cybercafés or other areas where Internet service is available to the public, as it's difficult to ensure that computers are free of hacking programs that can capture personal and account information. If you must complete transactions on a public computer, be sure to erase all traces afterwards by clearing the Internet browser's cache.

### Did you know...?

As a rule, you cannot receive welfare, disability or other forms of social assistance while living abroad. Contact your provincial or territorial authorities for details.

## LEGAL MATTERS

**While abroad, you're subject to the laws and regulations of your host country. Your Canadian citizenship offers no immunity.**

When in doubt, seek professional legal advice. The nearest Canadian embassy or consulate can provide you with a list of English-speaking lawyers who may be able to assist you.

### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Laws and procedures regarding marriage and divorce vary widely from country to country, often resulting in unexpected complications.

- If you plan to marry while living abroad, understand that some countries enforce tight restrictions on a woman's right to seek property entitlement, inheritance, divorce, alimony and child custody. A husband may be entitled to impose strict controls on his wife and children, preventing their return to Canada without his permission.
- Make sure you understand the laws and conventions of your host country regarding relationships and marriage, as well as their implications for children. In case of separation or divorce, investigate the rules concerning child custody and property settlement. If your spouse is a citizen of your host

country, he or she may have more rights than you do as a foreigner. You could also be at a disadvantage if the country has a tradition of deciding child custody cases on the basis of gender or religious belief. Contact a legal representative or the appropriate authorities of your host country for more information.

- Find out if a marriage or divorce performed in your host country will be legally recognized upon your return to Canada by consulting with the vital statistics office of the province or territory where you will live.
- If your future spouse is not Canadian, confirm if he or she will be eligible to return to Canada with you on a temporary or permanent basis by contacting the nearest Citizenship and Immigration Canada office abroad.
- For additional details, see our "Marriage Overseas" page at [travel.gc.ca/marriage](http://travel.gc.ca/marriage).

### Did you know...?

If a child custody dispute arises while you're abroad, you can contact Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada through our Emergency Watch and Response Centre (see page 10).

## Did you know...?

While same-sex marriages are legal in Canada, they aren't recognized in many countries. Same-sex civil unions are more widely recognized abroad. Canadians attempting to visit a foreign country as a same-sex married couple may be refused entry by border officials. Moreover, homosexual activity is a criminal offence in certain countries and could result in severe punishment, including imprisonment or the death penalty. For country-specific information, consult [travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice) or your host country's embassy or consulate in Canada.

## BUYING PROPERTY

Purchasing property in another country is a major decision. The laws and customs pertaining to real estate can be very different abroad than at home, resulting in unforeseen risks and problems with ownership rights. For example, in Mexico, foreigners require a special permit to purchase land and can only buy property in coastal and border zones through a bank trust.

- Proceed with caution if you plan to buy property. It's usually best to rent for a while before committing to purchase a home. Research local property laws and investigate all aspects of the purchase, including such claims as "beach access," which may be false. Consult [travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice) to find out if problems, such as real estate fraud, are widespread in your host country.

- Hire a legal representative with expertise in local real estate law, who only represents you and is independent of anyone else involved in the transaction (e.g., a real estate agent or vendor). If possible, appoint a Canadian lawyer with expertise in the laws of your host country. Never sign anything that hasn't been carefully reviewed by your lawyer. If things go wrong, remember that property disputes are private legal matters that can only be resolved through local courts. The Government of Canada cannot intervene.
- Make a will to avoid creating problems for heirs to your property or other assets you hold abroad.

## Bribery

Canada's Corruption of *Foreign Public Officials Act* prohibits Canadian citizens or businesses from bribing foreign public officials to obtain or retain a business advantage. A Canadian who gives or offers a loan, reward, advantage or any other benefit to a foreign public official (or another person on behalf of an official) can be prosecuted in a Canadian or foreign court. Violation of the act is a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment for up to five years.

## IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

You may wish to seek permanent residency, citizenship status or both, depending on the immigration regulations of the country you live in. Either involves establishing legal status beyond that of a short-term visitor. Be aware of the implications, including the likelihood of being prevented from obtaining Canadian consular assistance in your host country. For more information, see "Dual citizenship—blessing or burden?" on page 9, or consult our publication *Dual Citizenship: What You Need to Know*.

## Did you know...?

Not all countries regulate lawyers and real estate agents as scrupulously as Canada does. For example, rules governing conflict of interest by lawyers can be lax in many parts of the world. Real estate agents in Latin America and the Caribbean generally require no qualifications and aren't prevented from promoting sales in which they have an undisclosed interest. Furthermore, local authorities may disregard complaints from foreign residents about crooked dealings, especially if the lawyer or agent concerned is an established member of the community.



## REGULATIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS

Immigration regulations vary enormously from country to country, but are usually based on three principles: employment, investment and family connections. Some countries accept individuals with adequate guaranteed income—including pension benefits—as potential immigrants. For example, Mexico classifies an eligible retiree or other permanent resident as an *inmigrante rentista*, or long-term immigrant. However, the United States doesn't recognize retirement as a reason for establishing permanent residency.

Many countries require you to apply to immigrate before you arrive. Others will allow you to enter as a tourist and apply for immigration later. Contact the immigration authorities of your destination country for details.

## REGULATIONS FOR TEMPORARY VISITORS

Seasonal retirees, volunteers, students and other Canadians who reside abroad for less than six months each year can visit many countries as tourists. A valid passport is often the only entry requirement.

However, some countries impose tight restrictions on the length of time temporary visitors can stay. For example, Costa Rica limits tourists to a maximum stay of 90 days. Students must obtain an

appropriate visa from Costa Rican immigration authorities and provide confirmation of enrolment in an accredited institution.

Think twice about settling in a country where you can only enter as a tourist, especially if you're planning to purchase a home. Instead, you may wish to apply for legal residency, which removes restrictions on the length of your stay and gives reasonable assurance that you'll be able to re-enter the country at any time. Taking out legal residency in another country doesn't prevent you from maintaining Canadian residency.

## Canadian birthright

Canadian parents are not required to register the birth of a child abroad. Even so, you may wish to get proof of your baby's citizenship, as it will be needed to obtain a Canadian passport. Contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate abroad to apply for a Certificate of Canadian Citizenship as well as a passport for your child. Start the process early, as it may take a while. For more information, see Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website ([cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca)).

## DRIVING

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of injury and death among international travellers. Take special precautions when driving abroad:

- Find out if you're required by local laws to hold an International Driving Permit (IDP). Available through the Canadian Automobile Association ([caa.ca](http://caa.ca)), the IDP is proof that you hold a valid driver's licence in Canada. Keep in mind that the IDP is valid for only one year from the date of issue *or* until your Canadian licence expires, whichever comes first. Remember to safeguard your Canadian licence and renew it before the expiry date, as it may be difficult to replace from abroad. Note that some countries require foreign drivers to obtain a local licence after a specified period.
- Confirm that you're insured to drive abroad and have comprehensive coverage for loss or damage, liability, collision, medical expenses resulting from an accident and other risks.
- Educate yourself on local traffic laws and comply with speed limits, legal alcohol levels, road safety procedures and mechanical requirements.
- Drive defensively. Motorist habits and road conditions vary markedly from country to country. Carefully plan road trips in advance and know where you're going at all times. Always lock the doors to prevent carjackers and thieves from getting in with you.
- If you operate a vehicle imported from Canada, ensure that it's equipped for local driving—for example, headlight converters for left-hand driving, an approved emergency breakdown kit, an oval sticker on the rear indicating "CDN" (the licence plate country code for Canada).
- Before buying an automobile abroad, confirm if you're allowed to bring it home. For details, see the Canada Border Services Agency publication *Importing a Vehicle into Canada* ([cbsa.gc.ca](http://cbsa.gc.ca)).



## CONSULAR SERVICES

Canadian consular officials are ready to assist you at embassies and consulates around the world.

### We can:

- Arrange help in a medical emergency by providing you with a list of local doctors and hospitals.
- Help coordinate a medical evacuation if a necessary treatment is not available locally (fees apply).
- Provide advice and contact information on local police and medical services to victims of robbery, sexual assault or other violence.
- Supply you with a list of local lawyers.
- Provide you with sources of information about local laws and regulations.
- Seek to ensure you're treated fairly under the country's laws if you're arrested or detained.
- Replace a lost, stolen, damaged or expired passport (fees apply).
- Contact relatives or friends to request assistance in sending you money or airline tickets.
- Contact next of kin, with your authorization, if you have an accident or are detained by police.

- Provide advice about burying a Canadian abroad or assist in repatriating the remains to Canada (fees apply).

### However, we cannot:

- Intervene in private legal matters.
- Investigate a crime or death.
- Ask local authorities to give you preferential treatment.
- Make travel arrangements.
- Assist with job hunting.
- Help you find accommodations.

A complete list of services we can and cannot provide is available at [travel.gc.ca/servicesoffered](https://travel.gc.ca/servicesoffered). See [travel.gc.ca/offices](https://travel.gc.ca/offices) for a list of Canadian embassies and consulates worldwide.

## Did you know...?

Emergency consular assistance is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. See "In case of an emergency..." on page 10 for more information.

## Have an emergency plan

When living abroad, it's essential for you and your loved ones to have an emergency plan. It will help you:

- **know what to do** in case of a major crisis, such as a natural disaster or civil unrest;
- **identify escape routes** from your home and workplace and a safe meeting place to reunite; and
- **build a 72-hour emergency kit**, including food, water, a flashlight and other essentials.

For more information on creating an emergency plan, visit [getprepared.gc.ca](https://getprepared.gc.ca).

## DEATH ABROAD

If a Canadian relative or friend dies abroad, you should immediately contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate or our Emergency Watch and Response Centre. Consular officials can assist you in making the necessary arrangements to:

- register the death with local and Canadian provincial or territorial authorities;
- obtain documentation, including a death certificate, autopsy report or police report;
- acquire information on the circumstances surrounding the death; and
- return the remains of your loved one to Canada.

Fees may apply. For more information, see [travel.gc.ca/servicesoffered](https://travel.gc.ca/servicesoffered).





## Voting

Eligible Canadians can vote in federal elections while temporarily living abroad. To vote by special mail-in ballot, you must first send an Application for Registration and Special Ballot form to Elections Canada. At the call of an election, you'll receive a voting kit with instructions. For further details, see [travel.gc.ca/voting](http://travel.gc.ca/voting).

## KEEP CONNECTED

Despite the enchantment of living abroad, you may find that you depend more than ever on contact with Canada. Sharing your experiences and problems with family and friends and receiving news from home can have a stabilizing influence while you're getting accustomed to being a foreigner in a faraway land. Having a strong support network in Canada will also make your eventual homecoming easier.

Keep your contacts in Canada informed of your whereabouts and any changes in your plans. Canadian consular officials receive countless calls from distraught friends and family who haven't heard from loved ones abroad. Don't expect communications to be as advanced in every corner of the world as in Canada.

**Telephone:** Telecommunications services in many countries are unreliable and more expensive than in Canada. You may be unable to get a land line immediately. Waiting times in some countries can run into months, and large cash deposits may be required, especially from foreigners. A cell phone is often a better bet than a land line in countries with mobile services.

**Internet:** Web access is widely available worldwide but is limited by each country's infrastructure and networking technologies. Private Internet connections may be difficult to obtain. Don't expect the same high-speed access in developing nations as you would in Canada.

**Television and radio:** Canadian television broadcasts are available worldwide via Internet and satellite. Tune in to Radio Canada International at [rcinet.ca](http://rcinet.ca) for online programming about Canada.

**Mail:** Postal services tend to be slow and undependable in developing countries. It may be more practical to have your mail sent to a forwarding service in Canada, then periodically couriered to you.

**Canadian expatriate community:** Plugging into the expat network can soften your sense of culture shock and give you vital support while you're settling into your new environment and seeking connections.

**Travel information:** Get the latest information through Country Travel Advice ([travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice)), Latest News and Warnings ([travel.gc.ca/issues](http://travel.gc.ca/issues)), Travel Updates ([travel.gc.ca/updates](http://travel.gc.ca/updates)), RSS feeds ([travel.gc.ca/rssfeeds](http://travel.gc.ca/rssfeeds)) or by connecting with us through Twitter ([@travelGoC](https://twitter.com/travelGoC)), Facebook ([facebook.com/travelGoC](https://facebook.com/travelGoC)) or Foursquare ([foursquare.com/travelgoc](https://foursquare.com/travelgoc)).

**Pack the app:** For essential travel information on the go, download the **Travel Smart** mobile app at [travel.gc.ca/mobile](http://travel.gc.ca/mobile).

# COMING BACK TO CANADA

## PLANNING FOR YOUR RETURN

Expect to face a period of readjustment when returning to Canada. You may experience a reverse form of culture shock, including feelings of anxiety, groundlessness and even depression. A little planning can go a long way toward facilitating your homecoming.

### DEPARTURE CLEARANCE AND TAX

It's important to settle any obligations before leaving your host country. Make sure you've paid your local bills or made arrangements to do so. If you've obtained citizenship, permanent residency or any other form of legal status in the country, you may need departure clearance to leave. Approval usually depends on the satisfactory inspection of travel documents, permits or other official forms. For example, some countries ask for a statement from local tax authorities that you've met all obligations. Others will terminate your residency permit if you're leaving for an extended period.

Be prepared to pay a departure tax in the local currency when you leave. Other countries you pass through en route to Canada may also charge fees.

### BRINGING IT HOME

Depending on how long you've lived abroad, you may be subject to import provisions for personal belongings and household goods upon your return to Canada. Declare all items acquired abroad, whether they're intended for you or as gifts. Keep original receipts for possible inspection.



### Importing pets

When returning to Canada with a dog or cat, you'll have to present a certificate stating that the animal has been vaccinated for rabies. Other pets may require an import permit. For more information, see [travel.gc.ca/pets](https://travel.gc.ca/pets).

There are no restrictions on how much money you can bring into Canada, but you must report a sum of \$10,000 or more to a customs officer.

For more information on what you can bring home, see [travel.gc.ca/customs](https://travel.gc.ca/customs).

### ILLEGAL SOUVENIRS

There are restrictions on bringing certain goods into Canada. If you're thinking of importing meat, eggs, dairy products, fresh fruits or vegetables, plants, animals or items made from their feathers or skins, contact the Canada Border Services Agency beforehand for guidance. For up-to-date information on import requirements, see [travel.gc.ca/customs](https://travel.gc.ca/customs).

Many items brought illegally into Canada, such as elephant ivory, coral jewellery and sea turtle shells, are made from endangered animals and plants. They're among the 34,000 species 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. Consult Environment Canada's CITES website at [ec.gc.ca/cites](https://ec.gc.ca/cites) for details.

### Did you know...?

#### Post-travel medical matters

If you become sick or feel unwell after returning to Canada, you should see your doctor immediately. Remember to mention that you've been living abroad, what countries you've visited, if you were ill while outside Canada and what medical treatment you received.

- It's illegal to bring obscene materials, child pornography or hate propaganda of any kind into Canada.
- Products banned in Canada due to safety hazards are listed on Health Canada's website under "Consumer Product Safety" ([hc-sc.gc.ca](https://hc-sc.gc.ca)).
- Information on importing weapons is available on the Canadian Firearms Program website ([rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp](https://rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp)).

Also, be aware that it may be illegal to bring home cultural property, such as antiques and fossils, whose export is banned or controlled by your host country. Strict penalties may be imposed, and cultural property may be confiscated and returned to the country of origin. For more information, consult with your host country's border authorities or Canadian Heritage at [canadianheritage.gc.ca/travel](http://canadianheritage.gc.ca/travel).

### **SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER**

If you've lived abroad for an extended period and haven't filed a tax return in Canada for at least five years, your social insurance number (SIN) may be deactivated. To have it reactivated, you'll need to provide proof of identity and an acceptable explanation for the period of inactivity. For more information, consult the Service Canada website at [servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca), visit the nearest Service Canada office or call **1-800-206-7218** (in Canada) or **506-548-7961** (from abroad).

### **PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL HEALTH INSURANCE**

Your provincial or territorial health plan will become invalid if you've been abroad beyond a certain length of time, typically six months. There could be a requalification period before your coverage is reinstated. This period may be covered by replacement insurance you purchased while abroad. If not, health insurance plans are available for temporary visitors to Canada, usually purchased upon arrival.

Be sure to apply for reinstatement of your provincial/territorial health plan upon your return to Canada. For more information or to find out what conditions apply to you, contact your regional health-care authority. Links to the official government websites of Canada's provinces and territories may be found at [canada.gc.ca/othergov-autregouv/prov-eng.html](http://canada.gc.ca/othergov-autregouv/prov-eng.html).

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT CANADA**

[travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca)  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2

#### **General**

1-800-267-6788 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-944-6788  
TTY: 1-800-394-3472 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-944-1310  
[travel@international.gc.ca](mailto:travel@international.gc.ca)

#### **Emergencies**

[travel.gc.ca/emergencies](http://travel.gc.ca/emergencies)  
613-996-8885 (call collect from abroad, where service is available)  
[sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca)

#### **Publications (free)**

Access or order our safe-travel publications at [travel.gc.ca/publication](http://travel.gc.ca/publication) or by calling 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada) or 613-944-4000.

#### **Country Travel Advice**

See [travel.gc.ca/advice](http://travel.gc.ca/advice) for essential information on safety and security, local laws and customs, health conditions and entry requirements for more than 200 destinations. Advice is also available by phone: 1-800-267-6788 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-944-6788.

#### **Travel health information**

See [travel.gc.ca/health](http://travel.gc.ca/health) for travel health advisories and a directory of travel health clinics in Canada.

#### **Stay connected**

Twitter (@travelGoC)  
Facebook ([facebook.com/travelGoC](https://facebook.com/travelGoC))  
Foursquare ([foursquare.com/travelgoc](https://foursquare.com/travelgoc))  
Email Travel Updates ([travel.gc.ca/updates](mailto:travel.gc.ca/updates))  
RSS feeds ([travel.gc.ca/rss](http://travel.gc.ca/rss))

#### **Accessibility for disabled travellers**

[travel.gc.ca/disabledtravellers](http://travel.gc.ca/disabledtravellers)

#### **Canadian government offices abroad**

[travel.gc.ca/offices](http://travel.gc.ca/offices)

#### **Canadian passports**

[travel.gc.ca/passport](http://travel.gc.ca/passport)

#### **Consent letter for children travelling abroad**

[travel.gc.ca/letter](http://travel.gc.ca/letter)

#### **Consular services for Canadians**

[travel.gc.ca/servicesoffered](http://travel.gc.ca/servicesoffered)

#### **Feedback on consular services**

[travel.gc.ca/feedback](http://travel.gc.ca/feedback)

#### **Import requirements for Canadians**

[travel.gc.ca/customs](http://travel.gc.ca/customs)

#### **Registration of Canadians Abroad**

[travel.gc.ca/register](http://travel.gc.ca/register)

#### **Tax obligations while abroad**

[travel.gc.ca/taxation](http://travel.gc.ca/taxation)

#### **Travelling with animals**

[travel.gc.ca/pets](http://travel.gc.ca/pets)

#### **Travelling with children**

[travel.gc.ca/child](http://travel.gc.ca/child)

#### **Voting from abroad**

[travel.gc.ca/voting](http://travel.gc.ca/voting)

## Canada Border Services Agency

cbsa.gc.ca

### Border Information Service Line

1-800-461-9999 (in Canada) or  
204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064

## Canada Revenue Agency

cra.gc.ca

### International Tax Services Office

1-800-267-5177 (in Canada  
and the U.S.) or 613-952-3741

### Non-Resident Withholding Accounts

1-800-267-3395 (in Canada and the  
U.S.) or 613-952-2344 (collect calls  
accepted)

## Canadian Food Inspection Agency

beaware.gc.ca  
1-800-442-2342

### National Import Service Centre (ISC)

1-800-835-4486

## Canadian Heritage

canadianheritage.gc.ca/travel

### Movable Cultural Property Program

1-866-811-0055 or 819-997-7761  
bcm-mcp@pch.gc.ca

## Citizenship and Immigration Canada

cic.gc.ca

### CIC Call Centre

1-888-242-2100 (in Canada)  
TTY: 1-888-576-8502 (in Canada,  
from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time)

## Elections Canada

elections.ca

### General questions

1- 800-463-6868 (in Canada and  
the U.S.) or 613-993-2975  
TTY: 1-800-361-8935 (in Canada  
and the U.S.)

## Environment Canada

ec.gc.ca/cites  
1-800-668-6767 (in Canada)  
or 819-997-1840  
cites@ec.gc.ca

## Passport Canada

passportcanada.gc.ca

### Passports, certificates of identity and travel documents

1-800-567-6868 (in Canada  
and the continental U.S.) or  
819-997-8338 (from abroad)  
TTY: 1-866-255-7655 (in Canada  
and the continental U.S.) or  
514-283-5197 (from abroad)

## Public Health Agency of Canada

travelhealth.gc.ca

### General Information and Recommendations on Travel Health Topics

phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/info/  
index-eng.php

## Public Safety Canada

getprepared.gc.ca  
1-800-622-6232  
info@GetPrepared.ca



Foreign Affairs, Trade and  
Development Canada

Affaires étrangères, Commerce  
et Développement Canada

# International Experience Internationale

TRAVEL&WORK *Abroad*

[www.international.gc.ca/experience](http://www.international.gc.ca/experience)  
1-877-461-2346



Canada

# Living Abroad Checklist

Remember to take these important steps before leaving Canada:

- Assess your readiness to live abroad by weighing the rewards and risks of adapting to another language, pace of life, laws and customs, climate and security conditions.
- Confirm the legitimacy of work, study, volunteer, retirement or other opportunities abroad.
- Consult our Country Travel Advice ([travel.gc.ca/advice](https://travel.gc.ca/advice)) and the publication *Bon Voyage, But... Essential Information for Canadian Travellers* ([travel.gc.ca/publication](https://travel.gc.ca/publication)).
- Ensure that you can afford to move abroad by calculating the costs (e.g., transportation, shipping household effects, settling into a new home, the cost of living).
- Plan for long-term health needs by obtaining a pre-departure health assessment, vaccinations, prescriptions, medical supplies, extra eyeglasses, supplemental or replacement insurance.
- Check whether dual citizenship could cause complications for you in your host country.
- Obtain all required travel documentation (e.g., passports, visas, medical certificates, criminal record checks). Leave copies of your documents and insurance policy with friends or family in Canada.
- If you're going abroad with children, carry a consent letter proving they have permission to travel from every non-accompanying person with the legal right to make major decisions on their behalf ([travel.gc.ca/letter](https://travel.gc.ca/letter)); check with your host country's immigration authorities regarding additional entry requirements; arrange for appropriate daycare or schooling.
- Sign up for the Registration of Canadians Abroad service ([travel.gc.ca/register](https://travel.gc.ca/register)) so that we can contact and assist you in case of an emergency.
- Carry an Emergency Contact Card with the coordinates of the nearest Canadian government office in your host country ([travel.gc.ca/card](https://travel.gc.ca/card)).



## Feedback

Your views are important to us and will help us continue to offer world-class consular services. To share your comments, visit [travel.gc.ca/feedback](https://travel.gc.ca/feedback).