

NORTH AMERICA · MOUNTAINS · HIKING · WILDLIFE · ROAD TRIPS · WINTER SPORTS · CITY BREAKS

 Canada

Canada is built for road trips and big landscapes: the turquoise lakes of Banff and Jasper, the thunder of Niagara Falls, French-speaking Québec City and the cliff roads of Cape Breton. Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver are easy, multicultural cities, but the country is enormous, so internal flights and long scenic drives shape most itineraries.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Canada and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 2 June 2026.

 CAPITAL Ottawa	 CURRENCY Canadian dollar (CAD) £1 ≈ CA\$1.88	 LANGUAGE English, French	 BEST TIME Jun-Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £75-£340 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type A, B 120V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h direct ~£450-£900 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-3:30, UTC-4... standard time

Canada is the world's second-largest country, and the first rule of planning is not to try to see it all. Most first trips pick one region: the Rockies (fly into Calgary or Vancouver, then drive Banff, Lake Louise and the Icefields Parkway to Jasper); Ontario and Québec (Toronto, Niagara, Ottawa, Montreal and Québec City, linked by VIA Rail); or the Atlantic provinces, with Nova Scotia's Cabot Trail and Newfoundland's fjords. Popular add-ons include polar bears at Churchill, whale-watching at Tadoussac or off Vancouver Island, and the northern lights in Yukon.

Travel is straightforward and English-speaking outside Québec, where French dominates and a few phrases are appreciated. It is not cheap: summer hotel rates in Banff and Vancouver are among the highest in North America, displayed prices exclude sales tax, and restaurants expect a 15-20% tip on top. The summer season is short and busy in the national parks, so book accommodation and car hire months ahead. People are often surprised by the distances (Toronto to Vancouver is a flight of four to five hours) and by how quickly wilderness begins outside the cities. It suits road-trippers, hikers, skiers and families.

Top 5 highlights

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NATURE

Lake Louise and Moraine Lake

Banff National Park's two most famous lakes glow turquoise from glacial rock flour. Moraine Lake is reached only by shuttle or tour bus, so book Parks Canada seats early, and hike to the Lake Agnes Tea House above Lake Louise.
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NATURE

Niagara Falls

The Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side carry most of the river's flow. Take the boat into the spray at the base, walk the tunnels behind the falls, then escape the neon strip to Niagara-on-the-Lake's wineries.

3

HISTORY

Old Québec

The only walled city in North America north of Mexico, a UNESCO site of ramparts, stone houses and steep stairways below the turreted Château Frontenac. It is at its most atmospheric in winter, during Carnaval.

4

WILDLIFE

Churchill's polar bears

Each October and November, polar bears gather on the Hudson Bay shore at Churchill, Manitoba, waiting for the sea ice to form. Tundra-vehicle tours get you close; in summer, thousands of beluga whales fill the river estuary.

5

NATURE

Cabot Trail

A roughly 300 km loop around Cape Breton Island through Cape Breton Highlands National Park, with cliff-top roads, the Skyline Trail boardwalk above the Gulf of St Lawrence, whale-watching and Gaelic fiddle music. Glorious in early October.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Toronto

≈ 6.2 million people

Canada's largest city: lakefront neighbourhoods, the CN Tower, food from every corner of the world, and the obvious base for Niagara Falls, about 90 minutes' drive away.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Montreal

≈ 4.3 million people

A French-speaking city with a bilingual edge: cobbled Old Montreal, Mount Royal, bagels and smoked meat, a packed summer festival calendar and an underground city for winter.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Vancouver

≈ 2.6 million people

Mountains meet the Pacific: Stanley Park's seawall, Granville Island's market and quick escapes to Whistler or Vancouver Island. A common starting point for road trips into the Rockies.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Canada

Best time: **Jun–Sep.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

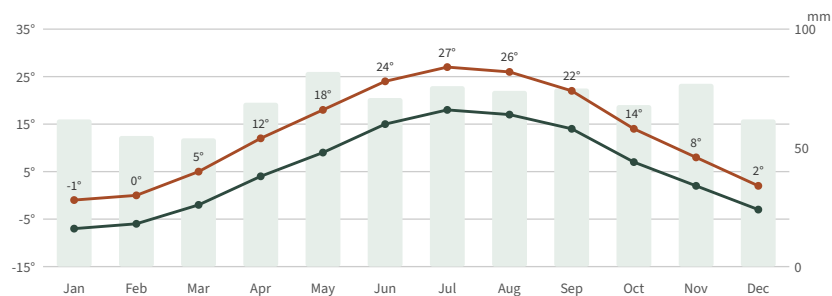
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Toronto

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan–Feb	Carnaval de Québec Québec City's winter carnival, presided over by the snowman Bonhomme, brings an ice palace, night parades, canoe races across the frozen St Lawrence and snow baths for the brave.
Jun–Jul	Montreal International Jazz Festival From late June into early July, hundreds of free outdoor concerts fill the Quartier des Spectacles alongside ticketed shows by international names.
Jul	Calgary Stampede Ten days in July of rodeo, chuckwagon races, free pancake breakfasts and cowboy hats across Calgary; a lively start to a road trip into the Rockies.

How much does Canada cost?

SHOESTRING £75 per person / day ≈ CA\$141 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £170 per person / day ≈ CA\$320 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £340 per person / day ≈ CA\$639 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Poutine Québec's late-night classic: chips topped with squeaky fresh cheese curds and hot gravy. Try it at a roadside casse-croûte or a Montreal institution such as La Banquise.	Montreal smoked meat Spice-cured, smoked beef brisket sliced thick and piled high on rye with yellow mustard; Schwartz's on Saint-Laurent Boulevard has served it since 1928.	Butter tarts Small pastry cases filled with a runny butter, sugar and egg mixture, sometimes with raisins or pecans; an Ontario bakery staple and a fierce subject of debate.
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Getting around

Domestic flights with Air Canada, WestJet, Porter and Flair are the practical way to cover long distances. VIA Rail serves the Québec City–Windsor corridor well and runs the scenic Canadian between Toronto and Vancouver, but trains elsewhere are sparse. Car hire is essential for the Rockies, the Maritimes and most national parks. Cities have good public transport, Uber and Lyft operate widely, and BC Ferries serves Vancouver Island.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  A B 120V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 911 (ambulance, fire, police) Coastguard maritime emergencies: Telephone: 1 800 463 4393 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +1	TIME ZONES UTC-3:30, UTC-4, UTC-5, UTC-6, UTC-7, UTC-8 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Tip 15–20% in restaurants and bars, usually calculated on the pre-tax total, and around 10–15% for taxis, hairdressers and tour guides.

ETIQUETTE

Canadians queue patiently, apologise often and value politeness. In Québec, open with 'Bonjour' before switching to English. Respect Indigenous cultural sites, and never feed or approach wildlife in national parks.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ), Toronto; Vancouver International Airport (YVR), Vancouver; Montréal–Trudeau International Airport (YUL), Montreal

Visas & entry for Canada

Shown for a British passport.

Apply online before you go (travel authorisation)

To enter or transit through Canada, most people need a visa or an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) – not both.

Check if you need a visa or an eTA online.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Rabies

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Canada

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Fri 1 Jan 2027

New Year's Day

Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Thu 1 Jul 2027	Canada Day
Mon 6 Sep 2027	Labour Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in French

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SAY IT
Hello	Bonjour	<i>bon-ZHOOR</i>
Thank you	Merci	<i>mair-SEE</i>
Please	S'il vous plaît	<i>seel voo PLAY</i>
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	<i>ex-kew-zay MWAH</i>
How much is this?	Combien ça coûte?	<i>kom-BYAN sa KOOT</i>

Know before you go

Displayed prices exclude sales tax, which adds roughly 5–15% depending on the province, so budget for the till total and then a tip on top.

The Moraine Lake road is closed to private cars and Lake Louise's car parks fill early in summer: book the Parks Canada shuttle, and buy a Discovery Pass if visiting several parks.

Carry bear spray when hiking in the Rockies and British Columbia, make noise on the trail and hike in groups. It cannot go in hold or cabin luggage, so buy it locally.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.