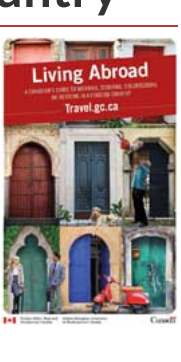
Living abroad – A Canadian's guide to working, studying, volunteering or retiring in a foreign country



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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.

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

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 – your official source of information on international travel. And have a safe, healthy and happy stay abroad!

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.

To carry out a risk assessment:

- Start by consulting the Travel Advice and Advisories 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.
- 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.
- Visit our Travel health and safety page and the World Health Organization's website 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.
- 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.

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 Travel Advice and Advisories.

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.

Reach us at our Emergency Watch and Response Centre in Ottawa for urgent assistance while 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).
- 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.

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?

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. 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** or visit **International Experience Canada**.

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, 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 and Required travel documents 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, 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.
- Carry an Emergency contact card with the coordinates of the nearest Canadian government office in your host country, 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 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.

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 our **Registration of Canadians Abroad page** 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.*

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 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.

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.

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.
- 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 Travelling as a dual citizen.

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.

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.

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**.
- 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**.
- Or complete an **Emergency Contact Form**.

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 our Travel health and safety page.

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, see our Sexually transmitted infections (STI) page.

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**.

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.

More information on travelling while pregnant can be found on our Travelling while pregnant page and in our booklet Her own way: a woman's safe-travel guide.

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 accessibility for disabled travellers, consult the website of Disabled Peoples' International.

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.

Further information on government services for disabled travellers, meeting special needs, parking privileges and travelling with a service animal is available on our Travelling with disabilities page.

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

Two types of private health insurance are available to expatriates: **Supplemental Insurance** provides added benefits to those covered by a provincial or territorial plan. **Replacement Insurance** provides coverage that does not duplicate any provincial or territorial plan, but replaces the provincial plan.

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, you should compare the benefits and premiums of the provincial or territorial plan with those of private plans. Sometimes provincial medical is the more 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 province where you plan to live.

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

- provides coverage anywhere in the world or only in certain countries (e.g., not in your home country)
- offers a worldwide 24-hour/seven-day emergency contact number in English and translation services for medical emergencies (e.g., ambulance, hospital)
- 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
- has a deductible (the amount you pay before the insurance plan pays) and how much
- covers pre-existing conditions (e.g., chronic illness, pregnancy, mental illness) and how (see fine print or 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 treatment
- covers premature births and related neonatal care
- covers expenses associated with a death, including the repatriation to Canada of the ashes or remains of the deceased
- provides coverage for any trips to Canada or other travel while abroad, and
- covers the period before your provincial/territorial plan is renewed upon your return to Canada.

Did you know...?

In addition to health insurance, you should consider getting enhanced life and disability insurance. You'll also need insurance to cover your home, car, personal belongings, and valuables such as furs, luggage, as well as your exposure to accidents, injuries, household goods and other personal effects. Insurance coverage for personal injury disputes and additional costs varies considerably abroad.

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 by persons who travelled to 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 international awareness. But meeting your children's needs can be difficult. Consult the Canada Committee for the International Year of the Child (1979) Limited, which takes steps to ensure a smooth transition for you and your family.

Be sure to have a clear understanding with your employer as to how you will organize their dealings and concerns about your children's education.

Ensure that your children have adequate schooling. Make sure you're satisfied with the standards of education offered in your host country. Contact your country's education ministry for more information about the school system. In addition to public and private schools, most countries have international schools, which are largely for expatriate children and where courses and academic records in case they're needed.

Remember that country officials are vigilant about documentation for children crossing international borders. Unless children under 18 are accompanied by both parents, we strongly recommend that they have a letter of permission from the parent not travelling with them. The letter should state the legal right to travel, the legal relationship to the child and the period of travel. It should be certified, stamped or sealed by an official with the authority to administer an oath or solemn declaration in Canada. If you are not sure, we advise you to check with the consulate of the country in your own letter, are available here.

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 to find out what documentation is required for children travelling alone. Ask if a child's passport must be signed by both parents or if a letter of permission is required from the absent parent.

Keep additional identification in your child's passport in case you're separated. Carry recent photographs of your children in case they're lost or abducted.

Seek advice from a lawyer if a custody dispute might develop while your child is living abroad. Custody laws vary from country to country. Be aware that a parent who takes a child out of the country as part of a custody dispute may be charged with abduction. Check with the destination country's embassy or consulate in Canada before moving abroad.

Be sure your will makes provision for the guardianship of your child's health while living abroad.

For more information, consult our page *Children and travel*.

Required travel documents

Most countries require a valid passport, visas and other documents are in order before leaving Canada.

Your Canadian passport

Your Canadian passport is the only reliable and universally accepted travel and identification document for Canadians. You and each family member over 15 years must have a valid passport to travel or reside outside Canada. Your passport will be issued for a period of five years, except for children under three years of age, whose passport is valid for two years, and for persons 16 or 17 years of age, for the duration of the parent's passport.

Be sure to check the expiration date of your passport and the requirements for visas and entry restrictions concerning passport validity. Some countries require that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond the date you plan to leave the country. Some countries will refuse entry to travellers with less than 6 months if it will expire while you're abroad.

If you're travelling to the United States and transit, the process will before your planned departure from Canada. Allow more time if you need a visa, since you'll need to obtain a passport first.

Ensure that your passport has enough blank pages for the necessary entries and cancellation of Passport offices, Service Canada locations agency, and Canadian government offices abroad.

Keep your passport photo up-to-date. Your passport is required 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 letter from your employer confirming your identity,
- two additional photographs of yourself (as specified by the 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 the nearest office of the Passport Canada or Canadian embassy or consulate.

For more information on how to apply for, care for or replace a Canadian passport, consult our Passport page.

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 transit visa for short stays.

If you plan to visit and re-enter your host country during your stay, inquire about a multiple-entry visa to avoid complications. Be aware that work and residency visas are usually valid for entry only during the tourist or hopes of changing your visa classification later on. Understand and respect visa terms and conditions. Failure to do so can result in fines, detention or deportation. Be sure to apply for your visa well in result in imprisonment, a stiff fine and/or deportation.

Visa 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;
- a medical certificate signed by a doctor, demonstrating that you're in good health and free of specific communicable diseases;
- a letter from your employer confirming your employment; and
- a yellow fever vaccination certificate (if you're arriving from an infected area).

Contact the nearest consular office of your host country (the Travel Advice and Advisories page) or from the embassy or consulate of your destination country. Remember to check the visa requirements of countries you plan to visit during your stay abroad, as well as those of your host country.

Work visa or permit. All countries require you to have special permission to enter if you're employed during your visit. Usually, you must have a job offer before you can apply for a work visa or permit. Be sure to also be your employer's responsibility to obtain the document, or you may have to do so yourself through the local labour office. Work permits are usually granted for a specific job with a specific employer. The work process well before your departure. Know the implications if you decide to change jobs after your arrival. Be aware that work permits are usually granted for a limited period of time and may be renewed for a fee.

Working holiday visa Canada has reciprocal agreements with numerous countries to encourage cultural exchange between young people. Applicants must be between the ages of 18 and 35 (sometimes 30) inclusive.

Student visa. Most countries require you to have a student visa to undertake temporary or long-term studies. Check with the consulate of your host country.

Volunteer visa. Some countries require you to have a volunteer visa to undertake unpaid or charitable work. Check with the consulate of your host country for more information.

Residency visa or permit. If you stay in a country beyond the period allowed by a typical tourist visa (usually three months), you'll need a residency visa or permit. Be sure to apply well in advance of your trip.

Marriage or spousal visa. Some countries will grant you a marriage or spousal visa, usually with a specific period of validity. Check with the consulate of your host country – one of their embassies in Canada.

Alien registration card. Upon arrival in your country, you may be required to obtain an alien registration card. Usually, you'll need a passport for identification purposes and as proof of your visa. Be sure to then return it to local authorities before you depart.

Canada Child Tax Benefit

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 necessarily enough to live on in a country with a higher exchange rate, including the cost of living and the cost of housing abroad.
- **Know the cost of shipping personnel and household effects.** Take only what you need and find out what it will cost to ship your household goods. If you'll be working, you may be able to have your employer or recover with the cost of moving your belongings or provide you with essential tools and equipment.
- **Make sure you have adequate insurance and properly vested** including funds to cover expenses during your move, such as temporary accommodation, transportation, meals, communications and other day-to-day costs.
- **Establish an emergency fund** to make arrangements with family or friends to assist you in case you run out of money and to help you get back to Canada in an emergency.
- **Take into account all duties, fees and taxes you'll pay on retirement income or other revenues** you receive from Canada. Be aware of your obligations to file a Canadian income tax return. Ask Revenue Canada for a booklet on the subject.
- **Keep in mind not only the cost of travelling to your host country but also the cost of returning to Canada.** Generally, you'll be entitled to a return passage to Canada at public expense if you're laid-off with a departure date within the time limits allowed by immigration authorities. If you have to make an unplanned trip to Canada, be sure to have the funds on hand to arrange economy airfare.
- **See Manage your money** 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 accept illegal drugs.
- Always pack your own luggage and never let it out of your sight. Never carry another person's luggage unless you're certain of its contents – across customs. Be aware of pickpockets in crowded areas. Conceal in a money belt or neck pouch documents that can't be easily replaced: your passport, airline tickets, credit cards and cash. Don't carry valuables in your hand luggage or purse.
- Remember to maintain a low profile and don't draw attention to yourself. Don't wear flashy clothes or wear jewelry. Be discreet with your money. Don't count it in public. Keep it in various pockets, in several places, in case the emigrants are stolen or lost.
- Be aware that the risk of injury in a traffic accident is higher. You may work individually or in teams, often posing by good Samaritans or creating distractions to steal belongings. Be wary of new "friends," including those who approach you in restaurants, bars, nightclubs or on the street.
- Make an effort not to carry large amounts of cash. Keep it to a minimum and only what you'll need while you're going; what you're doing and how to find your way back. Always carry the address of your accommodation with you. Don't rely on memory to remember where you're going or how to get there if a hidden under a newspaper. Steer clear of isolated areas.
- Avoid third-party transportation (buses, taxis, trains) and other shady accessories that mark you as a wealthy foreigner.
- Be aware of your immediate surroundings. Never hire a taxi if the driver approaches you in an airport arrival area. Be cautious with security dogs and they may be trouble. Ask someone you've recommended taxi services and avoid the risk of hailing an unlicensed cab on the street.
- Beware of crowds of any kind. Never approach the scene of a car crash. If you see an ATM, do its during business hours at a location in a hotel, supermarket or large commercial building. Make sure it's monitored by security staff. Be careful when using ATMs at night.

Drugs and travel

Most countries impose severe penalties for the possession of only small amounts of illegal drugs. Some countries impose life sentences for trafficking. Consult your consulate or embassy about foreign drug laws and travel page.

A roof over your head

Chances are you'll need temporary accommodations before you get settled in your host country. Exercise caution when choosing a hotel, hostel or other temporary lodgings.

- Make sure you feel comfortable about your accommodations and their location. Do the doors lock and windows close properly? Are they accessible to fire and police services? Don't be afraid to ask questions or change your mind. Be wary of locations that are too secluded.
- Understand the risks of staying in low-budget hotels. Unscrupulous owners, such as push hookers and prostitutes. Never leave valuables or travel documents behind in your room. Keep them close to you or stay in a safe deposit box at the hotel. Be aware of the risk of fire and other hazards in the event of a disaster.
- Consider home-sharing arrangements. Be careful when you accept these arrangements. Ensure that the person you're staying with has been screened by a reputable organization. Be aware of the risks of sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Make an effort not to stay in a room that's on the ground floor or that's easily accessible from outside. If you're going, what you're doing and how to find your way back. Always carry the address of your accommodation with you. Don't rely on memory to remember where you're going or how to get there if a hidden under a newspaper. Steer clear of isolated areas.
- Avoid third-party transportation (buses, taxis, trains) and other showy accessories that mark you as a wealthy foreigner.
- Be aware of your immediate surroundings. Never hire a taxi if the driver approaches you in an airport arrival area. Be cautious with security dogs and they may be trouble. Ask someone you've recommended taxi services and avoid the risk of hailing an unlicensed cab on the street.
- Beware of crowds of any kind. Never approach the scene of a car crash. If you see an ATM, do its during business hours at a location in a hotel, supermarket or large commercial building. Make sure it's monitored by security staff. Be careful when using ATMs at night.

Did you know...?

When you arrive in your host country, you should make a point of locating the nearest police office or hospital and noting the hours of operation. Don't wait for an emergency – it may be too late. Ask your consulate or embassy to recommend a doctor who speaks English or French.

Keep in mind that it's best to avoid hospitals and dental facilities in countries with poor hygiene standards. For specific information, see our Travel Advice and Advisories page.

Culture shock

Most people bring abroad experience a period of adaptation known as culture shock. This form of temporary disorientation can be accompanied by depression and social withdrawal, and sometimes by physical problems.

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 understand and recognize culture shock in order to overcome it. Some of the symptoms are:

- feelings of anger, frustration and irritability, especially a loss of one's sense of humour,
- a longing for familiar surroundings, food and the host country, and
- boredom, fatigue and inability to concentrate or work effectively.

To overcome culture shock, learn as much as you can about your surroundings and make a comparison between the homegrown and emigrates country.

Confronting the impact

The best strategy for coping with culture shock is to make a conscious effort to accept the new environment.

- **Learn the social do's and don'ts of your host country** and make an effort to mix with locals. Communicate with them easier if you know how to greet people, make appointments and say "thank you."
- **Take time to study the language** it will make the simple tasks of everyday life much easier. Even if you only learn a few simple phrases, they'll gradually expand over time.
- **Get involved in some aspect of the local culture.** Be open to new ideas and willing to try new things, even if only a little at a time. 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 your new environment.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat well, get enough rest and get enough sleep, and avoid heavy alcohol consumption. If you take medication for a mental health condition, don't stop or discontinue your dosage during this period.
- **Take time to travel and explore your country's sights and attractions.**
- **Avoid spending too much time with people from the same country** and keep an open mind.
- **Consider getting involved with the Canadian expatriate community** to lessen your sense of isolation.

Manage your money

Money is power – both budgeting and banking to paying taxes and purchasing property – is an integral part of being abroad. It may be difficult to assess how much money you can spend due to fluctuating exchange rates and the cost of living in your host country. Be sure to keep track of your finances and to be aware of your obligations and currency fluctuations. Keeping up to date with your finances, your income and repercussions, stock market crashes and the devaluation of the currency in which your pension or savings are invested can help you avoid unpleasant surprises when you return home.

It's also a good idea to consult a private financial planner, who can provide advice on such matters as investments, retirement savings, estate planning, taxation and insurance. Be sure to check out the fees first.

Opening a foreign bank account

You'll almost certainly want to get 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 or work permit (where applicable), proof of your address (lease or rental agreement) and number). Usually someone who can speak English will be available to assist you. The process can be time-consuming, however, especially if you have an alternative source of funds during this period.

Banking tips on banking abroad

- Advise your Canadian bank and credit card company about the period you'll be abroad.
- Be sure to find out the banking and borrowing resources available 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 currency exchange documents.
- Exchange money using only authorized agents to avoid violating local laws.
- Keep your personal banking information secure, such as credit cards, debit cards and cash.

Receiving a public pension abroad

Canada's Pension Plan (CPP), Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) benefits may be paid to you if you're living outside Canada temporarily or permanently.

Canada has a social security agreement with Canada so long as all contributions are taken into account. Contact Canada if the pensioner lived in Canada for at least 20 years after age 18. The OAS system is designed 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. See the Canada Benefits booklet.

Online banking

Most financial institutions allow you to access your accounts online. Be aware that online banking is not available in all countries. It's not advisable to conduct transactions in countries or other areas where Internet service is available to the public, as it's difficult to ensure that computers are free of keystroke loggers that can capture personal and account information. If you must conduct transactions in such areas, be sure to close all of your banking sessions by clearing the Internet browser's cache.

Taxation

Your tax obligations while living abroad depend largely on whether you're a resident or non-resident for tax purposes. Your status is determined by your personal ties to Canada, such as your spouse, dependants, property and social ties. Maintaining your status as a resident for tax purposes can be difficult if you've been residential ties with Canada. Be sure to review your situation with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to determine your status.

For information to determine your residency status, see the CRA's "Individuals – Severing or entering Canada and non-residents". Before you leave Canada or become a resident, you can find information specific to your situation as a Canadian living abroad, such as the tax package you should use, your eligibility for the goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax credit, your obligations to report your foreign property and the Canada-living abroad, and details on tax treaties between Canada and certain countries, which will help you avoid double taxation. Consult our booklet *Tax Information for Canadians Abroad*.

Non-residents of Canada are subject to withholding taxes on certain types of income. Unlike residents of Canada, including Canadians working abroad. It also provides assistance by telephone and in person at various locations across Canada and at Canadian embassies abroad.

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.

Did you know...?

If a child custody dispute arises while you're abroad, you can contact Global Affairs Canada through our Emergency Watch and Response Centre. Visit our Respond emergency assistance page for contact information.

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 rigid restrictions on marriage, even if you're a resident. For instance, a Canadian woman who marries a citizen of a Muslim 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 the implications for children. Be aware of the rights of parents and guardians. For rules concerning child custody and property settlement. If you spouse is a citizen of your host country, he or she may be required to obtain the permission of a court or a family council. Be aware of the risk of losing your 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 marriage or divorce performed in your host country will be legally recognized upon your return to Canada (this is something that can be difficult to resolve if you leave the country in a hurry or under duress).
- If your future spouse is not a 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 Canadian visa office (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada office).
- For additional details, see our Marriage overseas page.

Did you know...?

While same-sex marriages are legal in Canada, they aren't recognized in many countries. In fact, there are 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, check our Travel Advice and Advisories page 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 from those at home, leaving you in unforeseen risks or 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.

Did you know...?

Not all countries regulate lawyers and real estate agents as exceptionally 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 operating in cities in which they have a vested interest. Furthermore, local authorities may disregard complaints from foreign residents about contractors' delays, especially if the lawyer or agent concerned is an established member of the community.

- Proceed with caution if you plan to buy property. It's usually best to rent for a while before committing to a purchase. Obtain legal advice from a lawyer and investigate all aspects of the purchase, including such claims as "branch access," which may be false. Consult our Travel Advice and Advisories page for information on the country you're visiting. Also, see our Buying property abroad page.
- Ensure that you obtain clear title to the property. Be certain that the seller's ownership of it is independent of anyone else involved in the transaction (e.g., a real estate agent or vendor). If ownership is shared, ensure that you're not vulnerable to the whim of your co-owners. Keep in mind anything that hasn't been confirmed by a lawyer (or agent) is worthless. 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 the heirs to your property or other assets.

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 benefit to a foreign public official (or another person on behalf of an official) can be prosecuted in a Canadian or foreign court. Violators of the law face up to 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're visiting. Also consider investigating legal status beyond that of a Canadian visitor. Be aware of the implications, including the likelihood of being prevented from obtaining Canadian citizenship or entering another country. For more information, see Dual citizenship – keeping or burden?, or visit Travelling as a dual citizen.

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 professional qualifications that are in demand, while others require substantial financial investments. Mexico classifies all eligible retirees as either permanent residents at an immigrant window, or long-term immigrants. Think about these options carefully, as the new status may be 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 workers, 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.

Immigration officials usually have restrictions on the length of the temporary visitors can stay. For example, Costa Rica limits tourists to a maximum stay of 90 days. Students must obtain an appropriate visa from the host country. Some countries and provinces require a visa for Canadians in transit, even if they don't leave the airport.

Think twice about working 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 makes it easier to purchase property. Be aware that you'll be able to enter the country. Taking out legal residency in another country doesn't prevent you from maintaining Canadian residency.

Consular highlight

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 birth in order to be entitled to obtain a Canadian passport. Contact the nearest Canadian consular office (embassy, consulate or high commission) for information on how to register your baby's birth abroad. For more information, see the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website.

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, the IDP is proof that you hold a valid driver's licence in Canada. It translates your licence into several languages and is valid for the same period of time as your Canadian licence expires, whichever comes first. Remember to safeguard your Canadian licence and to inform issuers that you have it, 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 and that your policy provides comprehensive coverage for loss or damage, liability, collision, medical expenses resulting from an accident and other risks.
- Observe posted speed limits and other traffic regulations. Avoid driving at night, and carefully read safety procedures and mechanical requirements.
- Be aware that police and other law enforcement officials sometimes carry markedly fewer controls to country traffic (such as speed cameras and know-where-you're-going at all times, always look for directions to prevent carjackers and thieves from getting in with you).
- Ensure that your vehicle is in good working condition and that it's equipped for local driving – for example, headlight converters for left-hand driving, an approved emergency breakdown kit, an oval sign if you're driving in Europe, and snow chains for winter driving (safe for Canada).

Before buying an automobile abroad, confirm if you're allowed to bring it home. For details, see the Canada Border Services Agency video Importing a vehicle into Canada.

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 adequate emergency treatment is not available locally (fees apply).
- Provide advice and contact information on local police and medical services to victims of robbery, assault or other violent crimes.
- Supply you with a list of local lawyers.
- Provide general information on matters about local laws and regulations.
- Seek to ensure you're treated fairly under the host country's laws if you're arrested or detained.
- Replace a lost, stolen, damaged or expired passport (fees apply).
- Contact relatives or friends in Canada on your behalf in cases of serious money or active tickets.
- Contact next of kin, with your authorization, if you have an accident or are detained by police.
- Provide a loan without having a Canadian demand or assist in repatriating the remains to Canada (fees apply).

However, we cannot:

- Intervene in private legal matters.
- Investigate a crime.
- Ask local authorities to give you preferential treatment.
- Provide room and board.
- Assist with job hunting.
- Help pay hotel accommodations.

A complete list of services we can and cannot provide is available on our Consular services page. See our Embassies and consulates page for a list of Canadian embassies and consulates worldwide.

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 supplies.

For more information on creating an emergency plan, visit the Government of Canada website Get Prepared.

Death abroad

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

- 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
- direct you to sources of your loved one's assets.

Fees may apply. For more information, see our Death abroad page.

Did you know...?

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

Nothing

Eligible Canadians can enter or leave federal elections while temporarily living abroad. To vote by special mail-in ballot, you must first send an application for Registration as a Special Ballot Elector to Elections Canada. At the call of an election, you'll receive a voting kit with instructions. For further details, see our Elections Living Abroad – Special page.

Keep connected

Despite the enchantment of living abroad, you may find you depend more than ever on contact with friends and family to help you overcome problems with the host country and friends and relatives need to know. It can have a stabilizing influence why you're getting accustomed to being a foreigner in a faraway land. Here are some suggestions to help you keep in touch and to ensure you're not forgotten by loved ones.

Keep your contacts in Canada informed of your whereabouts and any changes in your plans. Canadian consular officials can't provide information about you to anyone, including family members, unless you've given written consent. Don't expect communications to be answered in every corner of the world as in Canada.

Did you know...?

Telephone: Telecommunications services in many countries are unreliable and more expensive than in Canada. You may be unable to use your cellular phone in many countries. Making long-distance calls from hotels can be very expensive, and long-distance charges may be automatically billed to your hotel room. Pay phones are rare. Consider bringing a calling card or purchase a local phone card.

Internet: Web access is widely available worldwide but is limited in some countries. Internet cafés are popular in many countries. Private Internet connections may be difficult to obtain. Don't expect the same high-speed service in developing nations as you do in Canada.

Television and radio: Canadian television broadcasters are available worldwide via Internet and satellite. Tune in to Radio Canada International at short-wave or via 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 courier it to you.

Canadian consulates anywhere!: 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 our Travel Advice and Advisories, Travel updates, RSS feeds or by connecting with us through Twitter or Facebook.

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 to ease the transition.

Departure clearance and tax

It's important to settle any obligations before leaving your host country. Make sure you've paid your local taxes, utility bills and other debts. Also, be aware that you may be required to obtain a departure tax or clearance certificate in the country you may need departure clearance to leave. Appraisal usually depends on the satisfactory inspection of travel documents, permits or other official forms. For example, some countries require you to show your tax assessment notice for the previous year before you can depart. Enquire well before your departure if you're leaving for good or for an extended period.

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

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 our Travelling with animals page.

Bringing it home

Depending on how long you've been 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.

For more information 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 our Customs page.

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've had a whole outside Canada and what medical treatment you received.

Illegal souvenirs

There are restrictions on bringing certain goods into Canada. If you're thinking of importing meat, eggs, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, plants, animals or items made from them (feathers or skins), contact the Canada Border Services Agency beforehand for guidance. For accurate and timely information on import requirements, see our Customs page.

Many items brought illegally into Canada, such as elephant ivory, coral jewellery and sea turtle shells, are made from endangered species. For more information, see the 36,000 species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). A violation of CITES could lead to seizure of your purchases, as well as a large penalty or prison time. Consult Environment Canada's CITES website for details.

Be careful if you're thinking of bringing home ancient property, such as antiques and fossils, whose export is banned or controlled by your host country. Strict penalties may be imposed, and you could be prosecuted in Canada for violating the laws of a foreign country. For more information, consult with your host country's border authorities or Canadian Heritage.

Did you know...?

- It's illegal to bring obscene materials, child pornography or any other pornographic items into Canada.
- Products banned in Canada due to safety hazards are listed on Health Canada's website.
- Information on importing weapons is available on the Canadian Firearms Program website.

Social insurance number

If you've been 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 documentation to prove your identity and to present the card itself if matching. For more information, contact the Service Canada website, visit the nearest Service Canada office or call **1-800-206-7218** (in Canada) or **506-548-7961** (from elsewhere).

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. Some provinces require that you buy replacement insurance to 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 healthcare authorities. For links to the federal government website of Canada's provinces and territories, visit the Moving back to Canada page.

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 culture, the ease of life, laws and customs, climate and security conditions.
- Confirm the legitimacy of any offer of employment, retirement or other opportunities abroad.
- Consult our Travel Advice and Advisories and the publication Bon voyage, but ... essential information for Canadian travellers.
- Ensure you can afford to live abroad by calculating the costs (e.g., transportation, shipping household effects, moving into a new home, the cost of living).
- Plan for long-term health needs by obtaining a pre-departure health assessment, vaccinations, prescription medicines, supplies, extra eyeglasses, supplemental or replacement insurance.
- Check whether dual-citizenship could cause complications for you in your host country.
- Obtain an required travel documentation (e.g., passports, visas, permits) and ensure you have enough photocopies of important documents (insurance policy and friends or family in Canada).
- If you're moving abroad with children, carry a consent letter proving they have permission to travel from every non-accompanying parent who has legal rights to make major decisions on their behalf, which could prevent you from encountering difficulties with immigration officials. Meet requirements, arrange for appropriate daycare or schooling.
- Sign up for the Canadian Embassy Registration Abroad service that we can contact and assist you in case of an emergency.

Feedback

Your views are important to us and will help us continue to offer world-class consular services. To share your comments, please fill out our Client feedback form.

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