

50 Tips

FROM NEWCOMERS TO CANADA



WHAT WE WISH WE KNEW **BEFORE** WE MOVED...

1

Time your arrival for Spring or Summer. Avoid the shock of winter while you're adjusting to your new life. If you arrive in the fall, prepare to compete with international students for accommodation.

2

If you plan to arrive without a job, ensure you have enough money saved to live here for 6 months. This will give you plenty of time to find your feet and be able to pay for unexpected expenses (e.g. high accommodation costs.)

3

Join newcomer Facebook groups. Search your native country + new city. There are so many available and the people there are always happy to share their personal recommendations and experiences.

4

It is really important to notify services back home that you have moved abroad or you could be heavily penalized (e.g. student loans, township/council, jury duty, etc.)

5

Moving abroad is a rollercoaster! All emotions are valid and don't need to be 'fixed.' Everyone is going through the same struggles. Give it at least 1 year before you make a final judgement.



6

Be prepared for LONG winter seasons (September - May)! Invest in good quality snow boots & a winter coat. Recommended brands: Sorel boots & Helly Hansen coat; or wears lots of layers / thermals if you're on a budget.

7

The cost of housing & rent in large cities can be very expensive. Take advantage of 'first-time home buyers' incentives and Facebook rental groups.

8

As soon as you arrive, head to a Service Canada office to get your Social Insurance Number for employment - Prepare to wait in a long line-up!

9

There are SO many organizations, services, and products set up to help newcomers to Canada. Research what you need support on and you'll be pleasantly surprised. Settlement agencies are fantastic.

10

Be prepared to "start from scratch" and understand it will take time to re-establish yourself. Canadian experience is more valuable (e.g. employment, driving, etc.) Start building your Canadian experience in all areas as soon as you arrive.

11

There are lots of mosquitoes & other nasty bugs in the warmer months - Stock up on bug repellent spray! Check your body and pets for ticks after walking / hiking outdoors.



12

If English is not your 1st language, schedule in some practice lessons before you move & watch lots of American Netflix shows. You'll feel so much more confident when you arrive after a refresher.

13

Attend as many networking events as possible. Use **[MeetUp.com](#)** to meet other newcomers in your local area who are going through the same transition as you. It's great to have a support system!

14

Research Canadian culture before you arrive (e.g. common slang, interview etiquette, social expectations, etc.) Look up your local hockey or baseball team for instant ice-breaker conversations!

15

Once outside of major cities, it can be very difficult to get around by public transport. A car is often the best option.

16

Don't leave immigration preparation until the last minute. There can be unexpected delays and challenges. If you plan to apply for Permanent Residency, start the process as soon as possible.

17

Research the tax system. Learn about RSPs and try to contribute from the start (**[Read more here.](#)**)



18

If you are applying for jobs whilst you are outside of Canada, if possible, put a Canadian address on your resume (or clearly state when you will be in Canada.)

19

Canada is a huge spread-out country and travelling between different cities takes a long time. Domestic flights can be *as expensive* as international ones.

20

Accept that you will get homesick. The distance between you and family and friends will be tough; especially when you miss milestones and important events. Regularly schedule those Skype calls.

21

The "standard" entry-level offer for most companies is 10 days of paid vacation per year. However there are many statutory holidays for each province as well - So lots of long weekends to make up for it!

22

Stock up on foods from your native country. You might not be able to buy them in Canada and having access to your favourite snack can really help when you're homesick.

23

Canadian summers are HOT! It definitely makes up for the crazy winters. Look into booking a lakefront cottage or a hike/camping weekend via **Parks Canada** to experience true Canadian nature.

**# 24**

Don't set yourself deadlines (e.g. I should have found a job "by now")
Moving to a new place is a HUGE change and everybody's timelines are different.

25

Often online job applications will not be sufficient. Be persistent, network on LinkedIn and at in-person events. Reach out to recruiters and take advantage of all references and introductions offered to you.

26

A "loonie" is a \$1 coin. A "toonie" is a \$2 coin. A "toque" is a winter hat. "Timmies" is short for "Tim Hortons" the popular coffee shop (they are literally everywhere.) A "double-double" is a coffee with 2 creams / 2 sugars (yuck!)

27

The amount of tax you pay on goods & services is different depending on which province you live in. E.g. In Ontario, the price you see in-store does not include 13% HST. This is added to your final bill which can lead to a more expensive purchase that you budgeted for!

28

It will take longer than you expect to get to know people and make friends. Accept that making new connections will be challenging and don't put pressure on yourself to replicate your friendships from home.

29

Canada is BEAUTIFUL. There are so many incredible sights to see across the country. Start making your adventure list now! Sunsets are breathtaking too.

**# 30**

Canadians take house decorations very seriously: Fall/Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas theme... You'll catch the 'wreath' fever!

31

Mailing offices (Canada Post) are often located inside pharmacies (such as Shoppers Drug Mart)

32

Take the time to research different provinces if you have the luxury to choose your destination! You can learn about the cost of living and 'vibe' of each one from Facebook groups; as they can differ drastically. MB & SK are generally considered cheaper to live than ON, BC & AB.

33

The price of some items may be higher than you expect such as bedding, cheese, pantyhose/tights, over-counter medications, make up, stationary, and phone plans.

34

Banks usually charge a monthly fee for their accounts. Look into 'newcomer' offers!

35

Don't bring too much with you or spend a lot of money on shipping belongings overseas. You can buy most things in Canada.

**# 36**

If you have a strong accent, speak slowly. I once ordered 'water' and was brought a plate of 'butter' at a restaurant!!

37

If you plan to drive a car, budget for a very high insurance quote. The majority of Canadian insurance companies do not take into account driving experience abroad and may treat you as a brand-new driver. There may also be unexpected taxes (even when buying used vehicles.)

38

Alcohol is regulated by the LCBO in Ontario. You can only purchase it from an LCBO approved store for the prices they set.

39

Many jobs offer great benefits packages with your employment (including dental, prescriptions, eyewear, massages, and more.) Check whether your employer will be paying for your entire coverage, or if you will also be paying towards it from your paycheck.

40

If you're a tea lover, bring your favourite brand to Canada. They love 'orange pekoe' and 'english breakfast' which just don't cut it!

41

When renting accommodation, it is common that the landlord will ask for upfront rent (e.g. Ontario: first and last month / British Columbia: month and a half.) You may also need a cheque book.

**# 42**

Tax returns can be complicated. It's best to ask advice from a professional to ensure you're claiming everything you're eligible for.

43

If you want to research average house prices in different areas, look up the local Real Estate Board's website and they will have that data available.

44

Appreciate every little thing that you love in your home country before you leave - Many of them might be gone soon! Don't take it for granted.

45

You can use the 'drive-through' not just for fast food; but for banking and pharmacy too!

46

Go to your Provincial Service office as soon as you arrive to sign up for your medical coverage (e.g. OHIP in Ontario) and learn about car registration procedures.

47

Take Vitamin D during the winter season.



48

Tipping your servers and other personal service providers is common. Look into what percentage is expected in your province (e.g. in Ontario, it is custom to tip 15-20% at restaurants.)

49

The grass isn't always greener. Your visits back 'home' when you see friends & family every day isn't an accurate depiction of what your life would be like if you moved back!

50

Don't look for what you left behind or criticize what you find. Integrate and enjoy what this wonderful country has to offer.



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