



TorFX Guide to
Emigrating to Canada

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Introduction

In 2015 Canada ranked as the third most popular destination for British expats, second only to the US and Australia.

Canada may have a slightly unfair reputation as the less influential northern neighbour of the US, but for those who ultimately choose to make the move to the nation, it can be a highly rewarding country to settle in.

In fact, in 2015 the country ranked as the third most popular destination for British expats, second only to the US and Australia.

There's good reason for its high ranking: with a great healthcare system and a reputation as one of the safest nations in the world, the Canadian standard of living is particularly desirable.

As a member of the Commonwealth, the country still has relatively close ties with the UK, with English being one of its two official languages, alongside French.

That being said, it is worth noting that there will be some of those little differences between local vernacular and your standard British English, so don't be too surprised if you still occasionally get lost in translation. A hydro bill, for example, refers to electricity rather than water, and a parkade is another term for carpark.

While it's probably safe to say that those considering starting a new life in Canada don't expect tropical sunshine or days on the beach, don't make the mistake of underestimating the Canadian climate.

Temperatures are capable of plummeting far into the sub-zero range as the nights draw in, and even in the south of the country winters are still a lot harsher than here in the UK.

For those not as inclined to seek out Artic climes, the coast is usually a better bet and many of Canada's cities have measures in place to counter the cold, such as heated paths and snow clearing operations.

Quebec is a little bit of an oddity within the Canadian landscape, being the country's one officially French-speaking territory and the occasional source of calls for independence.

Referendums were held on the matter in 1980 and 1995, although both were defeated and the province does not look likely to be seceding from the country any time soon.

The second largest country in the world by area, Canada is not in danger of filling up in the near future and has plenty of space for its inhabitants to spread out.

With a high proportion of its population descended from immigrants the country has a particularly welcoming attitude towards foreign visitors and expats.

As long as you're open, friendly and keen to ingratiate yourself with the locals, there shouldn't be anything to stop you settling easily into your new home in the Great White North.



Things to Consider

This sort of relocation is a major commitment. It's not a holiday and it's going to need a lot more forward planning as a result.

Uprooting yourself and moving to another continent is a really big step, one which requires serious consideration before pulling up anchor and taking the plunge. The most important thing to remember is research, research, research. This sort of relocation is a major (possibly lifelong) commitment. It's not a holiday and it's going to need a lot more forward planning as a result.

So, in order to get your expat life off to the best possible start, throughout the rest of this guide we'll be walking you through all the big points you'll need to think about when considering your move.



International Currency Transfers

To start with, you're going to need to work out how you'll be moving your money abroad and how you can get the best exchange rate to maximise your funds.

We'll also point you towards setting up a Canadian bank account and arranging your other major financial requirements ahead of your departure.

Visas

Getting into Canada will require you to obtain a visa, and there are several to choose from. This can seem like a pretty daunting process, but we're going to do our best to guide you through the basics here.

Removals

Although there are admittedly fairly limited options for taking your household possessions with you to Canada, we've provided you with some useful information on how to select the best removal company and shipping method to suit your individual needs.

Property

Assuming you don't already have your new home lined up, we'll be giving you a quick introduction to property later in the guide, covering some of the more popular expat destinations and some of the things you might need to know about the local buying process.

Schools and Jobs

Towards the end of the guide we'll address the matter of schooling to help those moving with children. We'll also cover the sort of employment opportunities that might await you in Canada – other than becoming a Mountie or hockey player!

Moving Money

Looking into your foreign exchange options can really help you get more for your money so it's worth doing some research in this area.

When moving abroad it goes without saying that you'll need to take your money with you sooner or later.

Whether you're converting your existing savings, purchasing a property or getting ongoing pension payments transferred overseas, you'll be engaging with the foreign exchange market.

Bank or Currency Broker?

There are a number of options open to you when transferring funds abroad, such as using a bank, an institution like the post office or a specialist currency broker.

Although the general assumption may be that using your existing bank would be the simplest choice that can be a misleading mind-set. While you may already have your foot in the door, a bank can rarely offer you the same level of personal customer assistance and tailored financial services as a reputable currency broker.

Some currency brokers offer excellent exchange rates, fee free transfers and access to specialist services – like the ability to manage currency transfers 24/7 with an online trading platform.

Dealing with Exchange Rate Volatility

As one of the world's most volatile trading platforms, massive and dramatic movements can occur on the foreign exchange market within the course of minutes or hours.

Fluctuations can be difficult to predict, especially if you aren't keeping on top of the various economic data releases that routinely move the market. Such releases have the potential to cause a currency to spike or plummet without warning.

Exchange rates typically shift a fair degree throughout the course of a standard week, with the result that a transfer could potentially be worth hundreds (or even thousands) more or less depending on the time at which you choose to make it.

With exchange rate movements having such a significant impact on the amount of money you can expect to receive from a currency transfer, it can be highly beneficial to have the support of industry experts.

To this end, some currency brokers will assign you a personal account manager to keep you informed of the latest market movements and offer invaluable guidance regarding the most suitable transfer option for your needs.

Your Account Manager can also set alerts to inform you of when the exchange rate moves in your favour or reaches a specified level.

Benefit from Specialist Services

For you to get the best bang for your buck, or just Canadian Dollars for your Pounds, it makes sense to shop around in order to find the deal most suited to your individual needs.

The specialist services of a reputable currency broker could help you save yourself a lot of unnecessary stress and enjoy serious savings.

As well as benefiting from excellent exchange rates and fee-free services, using a broker means you'll have access to transfer options like setting up automatic regular overseas payments or fixing a favourable exchange rate for up to two years in advance of a transfer – which can be particularly useful should you be looking to make a future property purchase.

As emigrating can be a costly process it makes sense to ensure your funds are going to stretch as far as possible, and looking into your foreign exchange options can really help you get more for your money.

Visas

While Canada has one of the highest immigration rates in the world, the process of relocating isn't always straightforward.

If you've really researched the option and still want to make the move to Canada, one of the first things you'll need to consider is your visa.

Although UK citizens are permitted to enter the country without a visa for non-work purposes for up to six months, anyone wishing to remain in a longer-term capacity or for employment will need to obtain the relevant visa or work permit in advance of their journey.

While Canada has one of the highest immigration rates in the world and is generally keen to attract expats, the process of relocating to the Great White North is not always the simplest endeavour.

At the time of writing the number of immigration programs numbered more than sixty, which can look like a particularly daunting prospect for the uninitiated expat.

Visa Categories

The categories of permanent residency permits on offer include Skilled Workers, Provincial Nomination Programs, Business Immigration, Family Class Sponsorship and the Canadian Experience Class among others. Each of these categories is tailored to a specific niche, so it's important to read up on the Canadian government's guidelines in order to find yourself the perfect fit and ensure your best chance of success. Of course the diverse options available mean that each expat's journey towards residence in Canada will be unique to them.

Emigrating for Work

A lot of Canada's positive outlook towards immigration is based on a general need for skilled workers to support an expanding economy, with many of its visa options designed to attract professionals of a high calibre to the country.

For a Skilled Worker visa you would need to have a year or more of full-time experience in one of the listed skilled occupations, hold a secure job offer from a Canadian employer or have studied at least two years towards a PhD in Canada. On top of this, the applicant needs to score at least 67 points across assessment categories including education, language skills, adaptability, age and work experience.

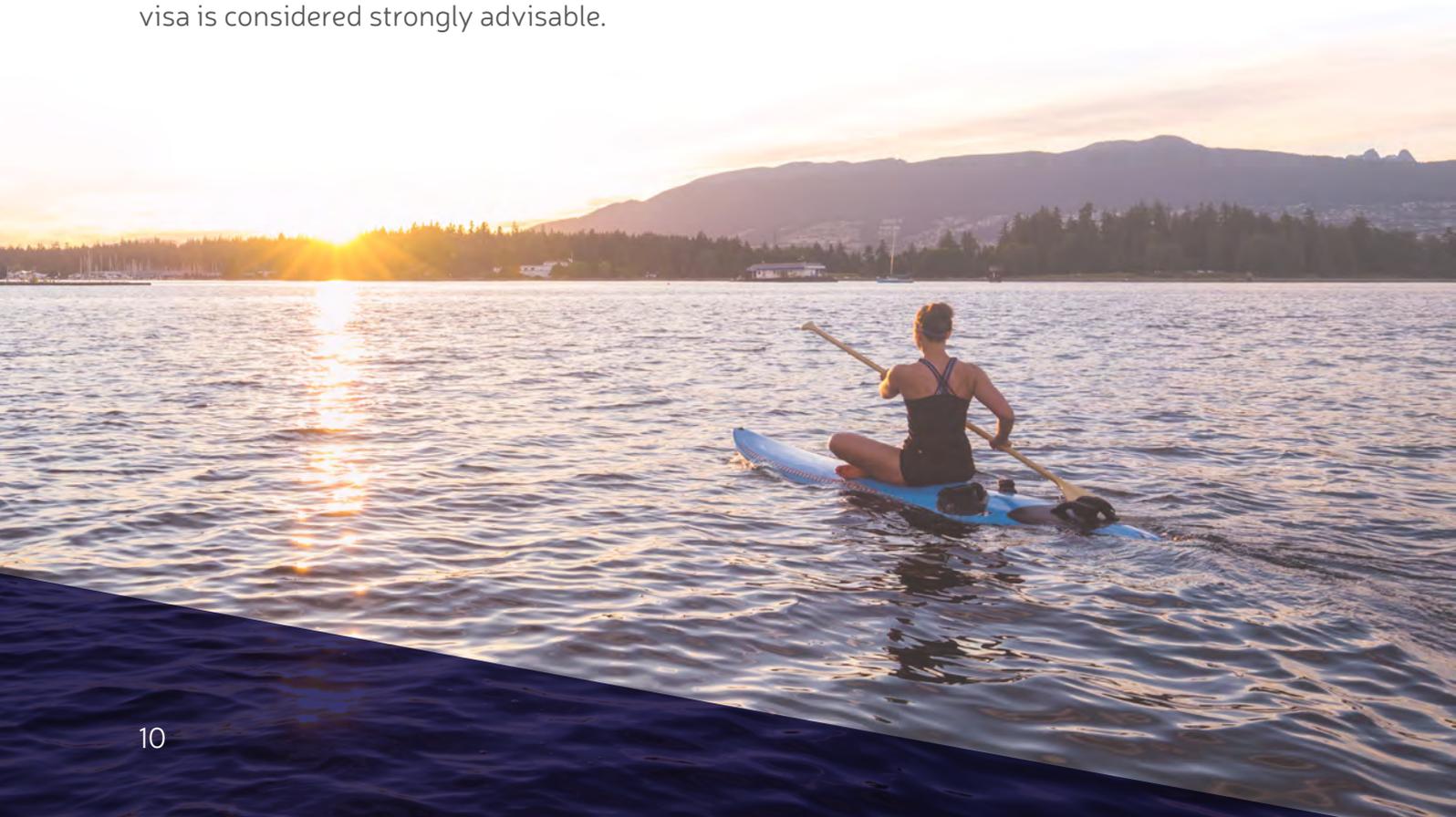
Retirement Visas

In common with a number of other popular expat destinations, Canada is not quite as easy to access for the purpose of permanent retirement, as much of the residence process relies on the expat's ability to support themselves without having to draw too heavily on the domestic support system.

Even so, with a high level of education and significant savings it's still quite possible to spend your golden years in Canada. There might be quite a few hoops to jump through but if you're committed to retiring in the nation it's still quite possible to spend your golden years in Canada.

Moving to Quebec

For anyone specifically interested in moving to Quebec, meanwhile, the province also has its own specific visa programs, and in this case attaining a decent level of French language skills before applying for a visa is considered strongly advisable.



Buying Property

If you're moving to Canada on a permanent or semi-permanent basis, you'll need to look into the local property market.

At present the Canadian housing market is quite a friendly one for the expat buyer, with no particular restrictions upon foreign ownership of property.

Property Prices

The asking prices of houses throughout the country have also been on the decline in recent years. Of course, property values will vary slightly depending on your personal needs and the particular area you wish to settle in, with major population hubs like Toronto and Vancouver tending to be slightly costlier than less popular settlements like Calgary or Winnipeg.

Thoroughly research the property market of the area you're considering moving to, and find out the answers to questions like are prices currently higher or lower than the historical average? Is it a buyers' market or a sellers' market? Having these facts to hand can help you make an informed decision.

Remember the Weather

As Canada is a particularly large country (the second largest in the world by area after Russia) it goes rather without saying that there is quite a wide difference in climate across the various provinces and territories of the Great White North. More southerly cities such as Toronto, Ottawa and Victoria will still get a little more cold than the average UK expat might be used to, but the nation's more northern Arctic settlements of Iqaluit or Whitehorse could be a substantially greater shock to the system.

It's likely that your choice in destination will be at least partially determined by employment opportunities but even so it's well worth checking out the local conditions before taking the final plunge.

Save Money on Your Foreign Property Purchase

With additional costs (such as property transfer tax) to consider, the exchange rate you achieve for your Pound to Canadian Dollar currency transfer could make a very significant difference to your buying power.

Even the difference of a few cents per Pound could see you thousands better or worse off, so using a currency transfer provider who's able to secure you a competitive exchange rate is key.

Particularly worth considering is a forward contract, offered by some reputable currency brokers. A forward contract enables you to fix a transfer at a favourable exchange rate up to two years in advance, enabling you to budget more effectively and be sure that you can afford that dream house when the time comes.

Rent or Buy?

It could also be a good plan to rent a property for your first few months in the country in order to give yourself adequate opportunity to get a feel for both the place in general and the particular neighbourhood where you may want to put down some permanent roots.

As the summer and winter months can see a sharp variance in temperature, it's certainly worth making sure that you're prepared for both ends of the seasonal spectrum before you commit to a property.



Removals

You've picked your Canadian property, but if you want to fill it you need to figure out how to move your possessions to the nation.

It goes without saying that it's not cheap to move possessions across the Atlantic. This is largely due to the fact it's such a sizable distance for your sofa to cover.

Shipping and Removals Services

Given the distance and the fact that there's an entire ocean between you and your new home, sticking everything in a trailer and driving is rather out of the question here.

So, unless the only things you're planning to take will fit in a suitcase, you'll need to engage a shipping and removal service to help with your move to Canada.

If you can escape having to ship some of your more bulky items out with you then by all means do so.

While you might be attached to some of your larger belongings, others can be easily replaced and a lot of basic household furnishing are readily available to buy once on location in Canada.

The basic rule of thumb is the more you're moving, the more it will cost. So cutting back your 'to take' list to only those things you really can't live without – or can't afford to replace – is advisable.

Consider Furnished Accommodation

There will also be ample opportunities to rent furnished accommodation, although rentable furnished houses/apartments tend to be more predominantly located in the major cities than in rural locales. Rent is also likely to be slightly higher on these properties than their unfurnished counterparts, so you need to do the sums to see whether it makes financial sense.

If you aren't planning a permanent relocation and you can arrange to store your goods in the UK during your time overseas, renting a place with all the furniture supplied could be a cost-effective solution.

Air or Sea?

Shipping your possessions overseas can be done either by air or by sea, with there being pros and cons to each approach.

Aeroplanes are a faster method of transport but it's usually considerably cheaper to send items by boat.

When shipping by sea you can save further on the hefty fees by opting for a shared container, rather than securing a sole use one.

Of course, this only works on the assumption that your possessions aren't going to be filling up the full container on their own.

However, it should be noted that a sole use container can be less stressful when it comes to storage and collection and may provide you with a greater level of security than a shared use container.

Where possible try to collect your belongings as soon after they arrive in the country as possible in order to avoid the potentially hefty additional storage fees that can result from a company having to hold your container for prolonged periods.

When picking a removals firm make sure they're accredited by a reputable organisation. You may also find it worthwhile to contact several different companies and obtain quotes as costs can vary markedly.

Banking

If you're going to be living in Canada for over six months, opening a local bank account could make managing your finances simpler.

The Canadian banking system has a particularly solid reputation. Lack of notable crises or volatility in the banking sector has resulted in the Canadian financial system being considered one of the safest and most reliable systems in the world.

This is positive news given that the majority of expats living in Canada find that they have to deal with local banks at some time or another.

Main Canadian Banks

As is the case in many other countries, the Canadian banking sector is dominated by a small number of big name institutions. In Canada's case there are five big banks to be aware of:

- **The Royal Bank of Canada**
- **Toronto Dominion Bank**
- **Bank of Nova Scotia (or Scotiabank)**
- **Bank of Montreal**
- **Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce**

While there are many more second tier banks, the chances are that anyone looking to open a bank account in Canada will do so through one of these larger national banks. Nevertheless, be sure to shop around in order to find yourself the bank with the best rates, services and incentives for your personal needs.

Opening a Canadian Bank Account

In order to open an account in Canada you will generally need to have a Social Insurance Number (SIN). Although there are circumstances in which an expat can create an account before obtaining their SIN, you would need to consult with the bank of your choice in order to determine if this would be possible.

When opening a bank account there is certain documentation which must be taken with you to the branch.

Key documents include your passport, work permit, driver's licence, a letter of reference from your UK bank and papers from your employer detailing your income and contract terms.

Although a number of international banking organisations do have branches based in the country, it would be considered advisable to create an account with a local bank at the first opportunity in order to make sure you have easy access to a branch when you need it.



Work

Demand for skilled workers is high in Canada so this could be a great opportunity for you to advance your career.

Expat Job Opportunities

Expat employees are in high demand in Canada, with a number of occupations actively encouraging immigration in order to boost the nation's skilled workforce.

Due to rapid expansion, there are a number of particular areas of demand.

Job opportunities for expats are subsequently better in areas like real estate, financial services and more communications based industries.

While the Canadian oil fields are well known as an important part of the domestic economy, the volatility in market demand and global oil prices seen in recent years may make this a more difficult industry to find a secure job in than it once was.

For a more comprehensive list of occupations with a high success rate among expat applicants, be sure to visit the Canadian visa site.

As well as more general immigration advice, this site also provides a job search facility.

Canadian Work Permits

Given the nature of Canadian work permits, it's highly likely that you will need to secure yourself a firm offer of employment before you can go ahead with your plans to relocate.

One should always bear in mind that available jobs and desired skillsets will vary between the various territories and provinces of the Great White North, so you may have to wait and cater your property search around where you are able to secure employment.

It's also important to note that the process of obtaining a work visa could be more streamlined if you have the specific nomination of one of Canada's provinces or territories, with different professions in demand depending on the location in question.

Finding Work in Canada

Thanks to the proliferation of the internet, it's a lot easier these days to find, apply for and even secure a job without having to take the long flight out to Canada.

In addition to specialist sites, a number of national newspapers also run employment adverts on their websites, so as long as you're ready to do the necessary research, schedule calls around different time zones and send plenty of emails, you should be able to find that perfect vacancy with a little bit of persistence.

It's also worth casting a close eye over the tax rates that will apply to your new salary, as Canada does have higher taxation than some other popular expat destinations.

However, as these taxes go to pay for the country's healthcare coverage and public education facilities this is not a particularly bad trade-off to make.



Pensions

If you're planning to see out your golden years in Canada, you'll need to be able to access your pension.

Do You Qualify for a Canadian Pension?

For those of you planning to work in Canada, the domestic retirement age is currently set at 65 for both men and women, although this is generally considered more of a guideline than a rigid limit.

In order to qualify for the state pension scheme – known as the Old Age Security or OAS – you will need to have been living in Canada for a minimum of ten years past the age of eighteen.

Although at present the age of eligibility at which the OAS will start to pay out is set at 65 (in line with the retirement age).

It may be worth noting that the Old Age Security eligibility age will be gradually increased to 67 starting in 2023.

Canadian Pension Plan

Another pension option is the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), or Quebec Pension Plan if you happen to live in that particular province, which involves payments from both the employee and the employer over the course of their time with the company.

While the standard age to begin taking CPP payments is 65, workers can opt to receive a reduced rate of payment as early as 60, with an increased rate should they defer past their 65th birthday.

The CPP can be supplemented by the Post-Retirement Benefit (PRB) if you continue to work between the ages of 65-70, which tops up your retirement income.

Employees past the age of 65 may also opt out of paying further contributions to the CPP.

Transferring Pension Payments Abroad

If, on the other hand, you are moving to Canada for the express purpose of living out your retirement then you will need to look into setting up a regular payment method in order to move your monthly instalments overseas.

Bank transfers may be subject to repetitive conversion charges that can all too quickly start to eat into your funds, however, you could instead choose to set up a Regular Overseas Payments (ROP) account with a reputable currency broker.

As some currency brokers do not charge fees this could ultimately leave you with more 'Loonies' with which to enjoy your new life in Canada.



Schooling

If you're moving abroad with children you'll need to consider Canada's education structure.

Canadian Education Structure

In Canada the school year runs from September to June, much in line with the British timetable, which should spare children some of the culture shock of acclimatising to a new education system.

Rather than being run purely by central government, education is regulated at the level of the provinces and territories, so there will be some (potentially substantial) differences in curriculum and assessment depending on where in the country you choose to settle.

School Years

Similarly the compulsory ages for education can be subject to slight variance between jurisdictions, although as a general rule, school attendance will be expected from those aged between six and sixteen.

Some jurisdictions also require that children undergo a year of pre-school education, while all others have the same service on offer at parents' discretion.

If education is a major consideration when choosing where to settle within the wide Canadian expanse be sure to have a proper look into the policies of the local councils so that you know what your kids should expect.

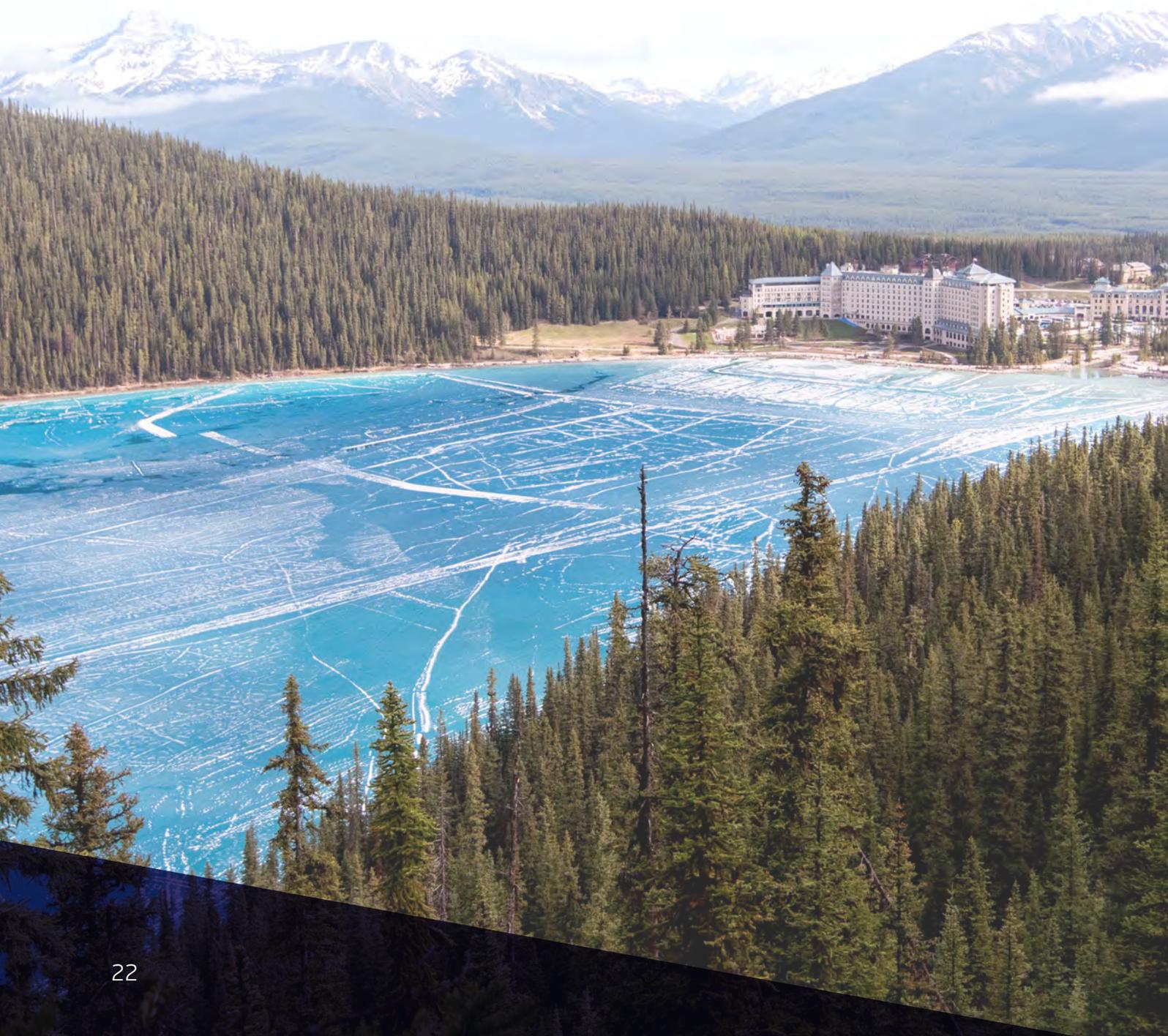
Public or Private?

Deciding on whether to choose a public or private school can be tricky, and you should be sure to carefully weigh up the pros and cons of each institution. While public schools are generally free to expat students, providing they have a residence permit, the price of private institutions can range into the tens of thousands of Canadian Dollars.

Annual report cards are published for all of the country's public and private schools, offering parents a good opportunity to assess their options without having to travel to each potential choice.

It's important to note that if Quebec is your destination of choice the primary language within public schools will be French rather than English, which may make an international school a better choice in some cases.

However, under Canadian law all provinces and territories are required to offer schools which teach in each of its official languages, so there will always be English-language schools for you to choose from.



Emigration Checklist

To help you on your way we've included a quick checklist of all the big emigration musts for you to go over.

- Get your visa and/or work permit sorted before you do anything else; if you don't have an appropriate visa, you won't be staying in Canada for long.
- Check your passport is up to date and in your hand when you get to the airport.
- Decide which of your belongings will be making the journey with you and which you can afford to replace once you arrive; keep the clutter to a minimum to cut down on hefty shipping costs.
- Book one-way tickets for yourself and all those going with you, and make sure to get the shipping sorted on your worldly possessions well ahead of time.
- Consider opening a Canadian bank account before you depart in order to save yourself some worries and give yourself one less thing to do once you arrive.
- Sort out your finances and make sure that you find the most competitive exchange rate for your Pounds to Canadian Dollars, considering your options between the banks, post office or a currency broker.
- If you want to take any animals with you be sure to research the requirements you'll have to meet in order to get your pets into the country legally, and check for any additional costs you may incur as a result.
- Ensure that you've told the tax office that you're going and have made any necessary arrangements regarding your pension and other social security benefits. Remember to register for a new Canadian tax number while you're at it.



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