PROGRAM COUNTRY: **CANADA**

STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world

Are you looking for a unique experience that is diverse and exciting? Would you like to expand your horizons and open doors to a bright future? If so, Canada is your destination!

Canada is a vast country in more than one way; you'll experience diversity like you've never seen before. This large country is also a nature lover's paradise. Over 7,000 kilometres separate the temperate waters of the Pacific and the rugged coastline of the Atlantic. It is important to keep in mind that a full day is required to travel by air from East to West! Canada is also home to some of the world's most spectacular natural sights. You'll find deep forests, quiet pastures, beautiful fields of wild flowers, pristine lakes, rushing rivers and the towering peaks of the Rocky Mountains among many other spectacular sights. There is something new and fascinating to explore everywhere you go.

Canada really offers something to satisfy all tastes and interests. Small farming towns, medium sized manufacturing cities and major cosmopolitan centres are scattered all over the country. You will also be pleasantly surprised to learn that culture and tradition are as diverse as Canada's natural wonders. You will be able to experience a combination of several traditions that have been integrated and customized to different regions and families. Your family will also be delighted to learn all about your culture; from food to festivities, you will share so much together. Come and experience it all first hand – you have so much to gain from a year in Canada!

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Canada is the second largest country in the world in area, after Russia, and has the longest coastline of any country in the world, being next to the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. The world's longest city street (Yonge Street in Toronto) is in Canada. Around 32 million people live in Canada's ten provinces and three territories.

Native people lived in what is now Canada for thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived. They are known as the First Nations and the Inuit people. The Métis have part First Nations and part European backgrounds.

The Vikings were the first Europeans known to land in Canada, in what is now Newfoundland. They did not stay there long, however. In the early 16th century, Europeans started exploring Canada's eastern coast. Parts of Canada were settled by France, and parts by England and Scotland. Today, about 25% of Canadians speak French as their first language and many people can speak both French and English. A large number of immigrants from almost every part of the world come to live in Canada. Canada has a greater mix of people with different backgrounds than almost anywhere in the world. Canadian culture is a mix of many different ethnicities, including First Nations, Asian, European, Hispanic, and East Indian ethnic groups.

Because Canada is so multicultural, you will find that Canadian cuisine has been heavily influenced by the myriad cultures that have immigrated to Canada. Canada shows this multicultural background in the wide variety of foods available in restaurants and grocery stores.

But this doesn't tell us if there are any foods that are specifically Canadian. Canada can boast many unique dishes and different regions of the country all have originated their own. Some examples include: Fiddleheads in New Brunswick, tourtière and poutine in Quebec, perogies in the Prairies, ice wine in Ontario, and caribou in the Northwest Territories.

Canadians are known primarily for their sweet tooth. An example of a treat from the great white north is the Beaver Tail, a sweet pastry in the shape of the tail of a beaver. It doesn't get any more Canadian than that. Butter tarts and Nanaimo bars, which originated in Ontario and British Columbia respectively, are also uniquely Canadian treats. And let's not forget "the doughnut". Doughtnuts are not uniquely Canadian, but they are central to our culinary culture. The doughnut is to Canadian cuisine what Hockey is to Canadian sports – our unofficial national obsession.

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During your stay you will no doubt come across a Tim Horton's restaurant, a signature Canadian fast food chain.

Many people from other parts of the world think of Canada as a very cold and snowy place. While it is true that most of Canada's land is very far north (almost to the North Pole), most Canadians live in the southern parts, where the weather is much milder. Over 90% of the people live within 100 miles (160 km) of the U.S. border. In some cities the temperature can get very cold in the winter; however, most of Canada can get quite hot in the summer, often over 30 degrees Celsius. Part of the amazing Canadian landscape is the incredible wildlife that roam the terrain. Bear, moose, deer, whales, caribou, cougar, and beaver are just some of the wildlife you might see while in Canada.

Canadians are known to play winter sports such as ice hockey and skiing, while they also enjoy numerous summer activities. Ice hockey is Canada's national sport – you will find that most Canadians are hockey enthusiasts and many communities across the nation have their own local teams. The game of hockey was invented in Canada in the 1800's. It was invented in Nova Scotia. The National Hockey League was organized in the early 1900s. Two of the six original teams were Canadian. There are now six Canadian teams in the National Hockey League. These are the Vancouver Canucks, the Calgary Flames, the Montreal Canadiens, the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Edmonton Oilers, and the Ottawa Senators.

The Canadians usually do well in the winter Olympics in hockey. There are a lot of famous retired hockey players from Canada. The most famous hockey player from Canada is Wayne Gretzky who holds the most goals scored in a career record. Other famous retired hockey players include Mario Lemieux, Gordie Howe, Bobby Orr, and Guy Lafleur. Howe, Orr, Lafleur, and Gretzky all played in the 70's and 80's. Mario Lemieux played during the late 80's and the 90's and retired after the 2005 season. He is now the owner of the Pittsburgh Penguins. Wayne Gretzky is now the head coach for the Phoenix Coyotes. Gretzky still holds the record for most goals in his career. But, a young talented player named Sidney Crosby might break that record in the future.

Currently, Canada is home to many NHL stars: Sidney Crosby, Jarome Iginla, Joe Thornton, Vincent Lecavalier, Martin Brodeur, Roberto Luongo, Rick Nash, Joe Sakic, Martin St Louis, Dany Heatley, Todd Bertuzzi, Chris Pronger, etc. Most of these players were on the Canadian Olympic team, Sidney Crosby is possibly the most popular. He set the record for youngest player to reach 200 points, breaking Wayne Gretzky's previous record.

Total area, including land and freshwater: 9,984,670 sq km.
Population: 33 million
Capital: Ottawa
Language: English & French
National Holiday: July 1st

Canada Day is Canada's national day and is celebrated on July 1, marking the establishment of Canada as new federation with its own constitution on July 1, 1867. Communities throughout the country organize various outdoor festivities almost always including fireworks to mark the end of the day's celebrations. Canada Day is especially celebrated in grand style in the nation's capital. Every year, tens of thousands of people flock to Parliament Hill to take part in the various organized activities. Canadians, young and old, go out dressed in red and white to celebrate Canada!

SCHOOL LIFE

The Canadian school system consists of 12 grades, with high school beginning in Grade 9. As an exchange student, you will be placed in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade, depending on your age, academic standing and the school principal's judgement.

There are two streams of study to choose from. One prepares the students for University studies, and the other for training at a municipal college. Since Canada is a bilingual country, French classes are offered in many English speaking high schools and vice versa. You may also apply to attend a French school. In Canada, most schools follow a two-semester school system, while other have a one, three or even four semester school system. In a two-semester school system, students study 3–4 subjects per semester. In a non-semester school students study 6 to 8 courses per year.

High schools in Canada are governed at the Provincial level and managed at the local level by area School Boards. There are two types of Boards; Public and Catholic. Students in some Catholic schools must wear a school uniform. Other than that, there are not many differences between the two systems. Classes are of equal value in both types of schools. Academic achievement is based on homework, essays, tests and written final exams.

Canadian schools offer many different extra-curricular activities, ranging from drama clubs to students council. Sports are very popular in Canada and many students are involved in the school teams.

Most schools arrange dances, carnivals, theme days and many other events for students. Field trips are also part of the school activities and various day trips and excursions to study a subject more carefully are made on a regular basis.

School in Canada is in session every Monday through Friday, starting at approximately 9:00am to 3:00pm. This is the typical school week in Canada. The times may vary slightly from school to school.

The school year begins in September and finishes in June. July and August are summer holiday months. Schools close for Christmas

break in December (usually for 2 weeks) and for spring break in March (usually 1–2 weeks). Aside from those major holidays, you will have several "long weekends" throughout the year.

All public high schools and most separate (Catholic or Christian) schools are co-ed and do not require you to wear school uniforms. Most schools do not allow students to wear hats or clothing with racist or violent remarks on them. Aside from that, you can pretty well dress as you please.

Some schools provide a cafeteria where lunches may be purchased. Vending machines filled with pop, snacks, candy, etc are located in most schools as well. It is wise to bring a healthy lunch from home, though, and cheaper, too!

Upon your arrival in Canada, you will need to meet with a counselor at the high school. Your host family will be advised of this and will help you make the appropriate arrangements. Your school counselor will help set up a reasonable timetable. Students must take a full course load (4 subject per semester), with no "spare classes." As you are on a cultural exchange, you may not request that you be placed in any specific courses. You will be subject to whichever courses are available at the time of your enrollment at the end of August.

The school you will be attending has accepted you understanding that our exchange students are exemplary students. We have a responsibility to insure our exchange students are well-behaved, with a focus on cultural and academic learning during their stay in Canada. Remember, your performance at school during your stay could affect a future student's opportunity to participate in a high school year abroad. In order to maintain a rewarding relationship with your school, we emphasize that it is up to you to make a positive, lasting impression on the school administration, teachers and peers.

HOST FAMILY LIFE

Canadians are considered as one of the most friendly and generous people in the world. They are known for their hospitality and warmth towards foreign visitors. They are also generally considered reserved and polite.

Generally, Canadian teenagers do not travel on their own for vacation, this is because the distances are so great that to get anywhere, it can be very expensive. Most families' vacation duration is for 2 weeks. Popular vacation times are Christmas, March spring-break and Easter when people go south.

Canadians like being active and outdoors. There is a lot of open space and beautiful scenery to take advantage of. Host families come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Host families may include single parent households, adults with no children or grown children, and families with small children. Your host family will be genuinely interested in you, in learning about your home and family, and experiencing all the aspects of this exchange with you. Host parents provide a caring and safe environment, meals and a place to sleep and study. Most host families will include their exchange student in their family activities. We expect that you will be an active participant in the home by helping with household tasks such as keeping your bedroom clean and helping with meal preparation and clean up, taking an interest in the family, including host siblings. Your relationship with your host family is in many ways the most important part of your exchange. The relationship you develop with your host family will likely last a lifetime.

While we encourage students to be actively involved in their host family's life, we also understand the interest many students have in extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, etc. You will have ample opportunity to become involved in different clubs at school and in your host community.

Most exchange students are placed in small to medium rural communities. Placements are typically not in large, urban centers. You will have a local Area Representative who will support you and your host family throughout your exchange. Communities in Canada enjoy hosting exchange students and we are sure you will feel welcome. You will find your Canadian host family and school peers will find your accent "cool" and will be keen on learning about you and your home country, and will be excited to show you what Canadian life is all about.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Students participating in the Fall program will arrive at the end of August, in time for the start of school the first week of September. Students participating in the Spring program will arrive at the end of January, in time for the second semester starting the first week of February. Your host family will help you settle in and your Area Representative will be in touch with you to ensure everything goes smoothly.

During your first week, you will meet with your school counselor to set up an appropriate timetable. You will be expected to carry a full course load (4 subjects); please note that certain course subjects are not guaranteed as this is a cultural exchange.

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Once school starts you will gradually form a day-to-day and week-to-week routine. You will be amazed at how quickly time moves on – before you know it, the first quarter of your exchange will have passed, hopefully along with any culture shock and homesickness you may experience. Your Area Representative will be in contact with you and your host family on a monthly basis, to check in and find out how things are going, and your progress will be reported to the Inbound Administrator on a monthly basis. If any problems arise you will be able to contact your Area Rep at any time – he/she will be there to support you!

You will be invited to join our Facebook group which will give you the latest news, feature students and families, tips for a successful stay, and upcoming trips. These trips are an opportunity of a lifetime – it is a great way to make some international connections, as you will be touring great cities with your fellow exchange students, plus experiencing the amazing sights of these popular destinations. The trips usually offered depend on the Province where you will be placed. They could be: Toronto and Niagara Falls, New York City, Montreal and Quebec City, Whistler, Vancouver, Ski & Snowboarding weekend…

These trips are a great opportunity for you to discover new places in a fun, safe and economical way. You will also be able to meet other STS exchange students and share your experiences together. More details will be provided upon your arrival in Canada. Don't miss out! Canada is a smart choice. Sign up today; spaces are limited!

LANGUAGE POSSIBILITIES:
3 POSSIBILITIES IN 1 RY!

Canada has two official languages: English and French. STS Canada offers you the possibility to choose between 3 options:
English Canada: You will attend an English Canadian school and live with an English speaking family.
French Canada: You will attend a French Canadian school and live with a French speaking family.
Bilingual Canada: You will either go to a French Canadian school and live in an English speaking province. Very often, the host families speak both languages to help you out as much as possible.

This last option offers you the best of both worlds along with the possibility to return home fluent in 2 languages!

The choice is yours. Canada is your choice.

All information is subject to change.