

British Columbia

Blessed with a variety of natural landscapes, British Columbia offers international students many opportunities to make the most of their study experience. Students with an interest in the outdoors will find plenty to do.

Our province is unparalleled in its beauty, range of recreational and cultural attractions, and mild climate," says Mark Herringer, Manager of the British Columbia Centre for International Education in Victoria. "British Columbia isn't called the California of Canada by other Canadians for nothing."

Bordered by the US states of Washington, Montana and Idaho to the South, Alberta to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, British Columbia contains some of the most varied and spectacular scenery in the world. "From the cosmopolitan cities of Vancouver and Victoria on the coast to the smaller centres on Vancouver Island, the ranching and wine growing country of the interior, the colleges nestled in the Canadian Rockies of eastern British Columbia and the friendly towns of the rugged north, there is an institution located in British Columbia to suit every student's need," says Herringer.

Agent comments

"I would say about one-third of all our enquiries are for British Columbia. One of British Columbia's main attractions is its great outdoor environment. We encourage students to get out, to go camping and hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter. All cities in British Columbia have extensive public parks and walkways and students can enjoy these areas without worrying about air pollution or big crowds. [Students] come back [having had] excellent experiences and [made] close friendships with the local Canadian students and their homestays."

Brian Hockertz, Oh! Canada Education and Business Consulting Centre, Taiwan

"My feeling is that prospective students usually don't have a specific city in mind when they contact us first. They just want to go to Canada. We usually recommend Vancouver, British Columbia to them. I say it is easy to adapt yourself to Vancouver because this city consists of nearly 30 per cent Chinese people. People there are used to living with Asian people."

Kei Obara, Canadian ESL Consulting Service, Japan

"Toronto and Vancouver are the most popular destinations in Canada and, compared to Toronto, Vancouver is more popular because the weather is warmer. I personally think that British Columbia is a great place to live and study. It has a nice environment, gentle climate, friendly people and reasonable cost of living. I tell my student to expect less people in British Columbia compared to China, even big cities like Vancouver."

Lucy Shih, Haiyi Company, China

"This province in Canada is very [popular] mostly because of the fact that it is safe and clean and because of the friendliness of its people. It is a nice place to stay and live. I personally encourage [students] to go there not only because of the exchange rate but also the high quality of life."

Enrique Corrales, Kino Travel SA, Mexico

The varied landscape means that there are many opportunities for students to participate in outdoor pursuits all year round. "Overseas students love the chance to travel in Canada, to explore their own freedom in a country known for its nature, safety and excellent educational resources," says Linda Wilkinson, Head of International Education at Selkirk College in Castlegar. "Students can ski or snowboard in winter in world-class ski areas and go hiking, swimming [and] golfing."

For many international students the appeal of an outdoor lifestyle is important when deciding where to study. "Many of the students come with a passion for the outdoors and enjoy many of the activities British Columbia has to offer, such as skiing, biking, hiking, fishing and hunting," says Carolyn Russell, Coordinator of the International Centre at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. "There are four ski resorts within 200 kilometres of the university."

For students preferring the excitement of city life, there is Vancouver, British Columbia's largest city. "The United Nations consistently ranks Vancouver high as one of the most desirable cities in the world to live," says Donna Hooker, Managing Director of Kester Grant College in Vancouver. "Popular activities in Vancouver include shopping, enjoying multi-cultural restaurants, professional sports and theatre."

Despite being the province's major conurbation, Vancouver is not all about city life, as Barbara Onstad, Manager of International Education Programmes at the Vancouver School Board stresses. "Vancouver has quiet, residential areas where host families live, [and] students are only one hour away from local mountains," she says.

The friendly, relaxed attitude of the local population also makes British Columbia an enjoyable place for international students to study. "The people here are unique," says Kelly Duncan, Coordinator of Communications at Vancouver School of Theology. "We are famous all over Canada for being laid-back and more casual than our east-coast neighbours. British Columbia is also home to some of the best schools in Canada, so not only can international students receive a quality education, but they can have fun doing it."



People throughout British Columbia pride themselves on their friendliness to strangers. Jacqueline Prowse, Director of Long Term Programmes at the English Language Centre in the University of Victoria, says, "People in Victoria are extremely friendly and helpful to foreign students. [Victoria] is big enough to have all the amenities of a large city but small enough to get around easily."

Canada as a whole has a good reputation for the quality of its education programmes and many institutions in British Columbia believe that the flexibility of the education system is a big attraction for international students. "Students can start their university-level academic programmes at a broad selection of public colleges, provincial institutes and university colleges with the opportunity to transfer to a university or university college after their first or second year of study to complete their degree," says Herringer.

The variety of educational institutions in British Columbia also means that international students have a lot of choice and flexibility when it comes to selecting an education programme most suitable for their needs. Gary Henkelmann, from Capilano College in Vancouver, has noticed a steady increase in the number of international students enrolling at the college over the last five years. "Overseas students are becoming more familiar with the advantages of studying at a community college versus universities and private institutions. Community colleges in general provide a very welcoming atmosphere for international students." ○

PHOTOGRAPH: TOURISM BRITISH COLUMBIA

Selection of institutions in British Columbia		
	Total students	% int. studs.
Capilano College, Vancouver	7425	6
College of New Caledonia, Prince George	6,000	1
Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design*, Vancouver	1,246	6
Kester Grant College, Vancouver	300	100
Langara College, Vancouver	7,500	7
Okanagan University College, Kelowna	7,000	5
Selkirk College, Castlegar	2,200	7
University of Northern British Columbia*, Prince George	3,400	3
English Language Centre, University of Victoria, Victoria	400	90
Vancouver School of Theology*, Vancouver	416	43

*institutions that do not currently use education consultants