

Unforgettable Canada

The high mountains, fast rivers and vast swathes of countryside in Canada combined with its lively cities and towns promise an unforgettable experience for language travellers, as GILLIAN EVANS finds out.

Until you have actually travelled around Canada, it is difficult to imagine how big and unspoilt it really is. Although it is the second-largest country in world after the Russian Federation, it has a population of less than 30 million. Much of the countryside is virtually untouched; dense forests are home to moose and bears, whales surface off the country's vast coastline and lakes teem with freshwa-

ter fish. In addition, there are plenty of outdoor sports opportunities, from canoeing down fast-moving rivers to skiing and snowboarding in one of Canada's resorts.

But these are not the only reasons why students choose to study in Canada. "It is a country of harmonious contrast where cultural differences, geographical opposites and social contrasts peacefully co-exist," says Adelia Frade, Senior Liaison Officer at Columbia International College in Hamilton, Ontario. Canada also offers international

students real value for money, says Michi Juteau, Marketing Assistant at the International Language Institute (ILI) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "The Canadian dollar enjoys a very favourable rate in relation to other major world currencies," she underlines.

Being so big and offering its visitors such a wide range of experiences means that Canada has language schools in a location to fit everyone's needs and expectations. Between Toronto and Niagara Falls, at the tip of Lake Ontario, is Discovery Language

Agent viewpoint



"Fifty per cent of my clients go to big cities like Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto because their friends and relatives are living in those areas. [The other] 50 per cent go to smaller cities or [towns], like Regina, Lethbridge, Kelowna, Cranbrook, Saskatchewan and Medicine Hat because they want to avoid Korean students and towns [where there are lots of permanent residents from Korea], so that they can speak more English. Students

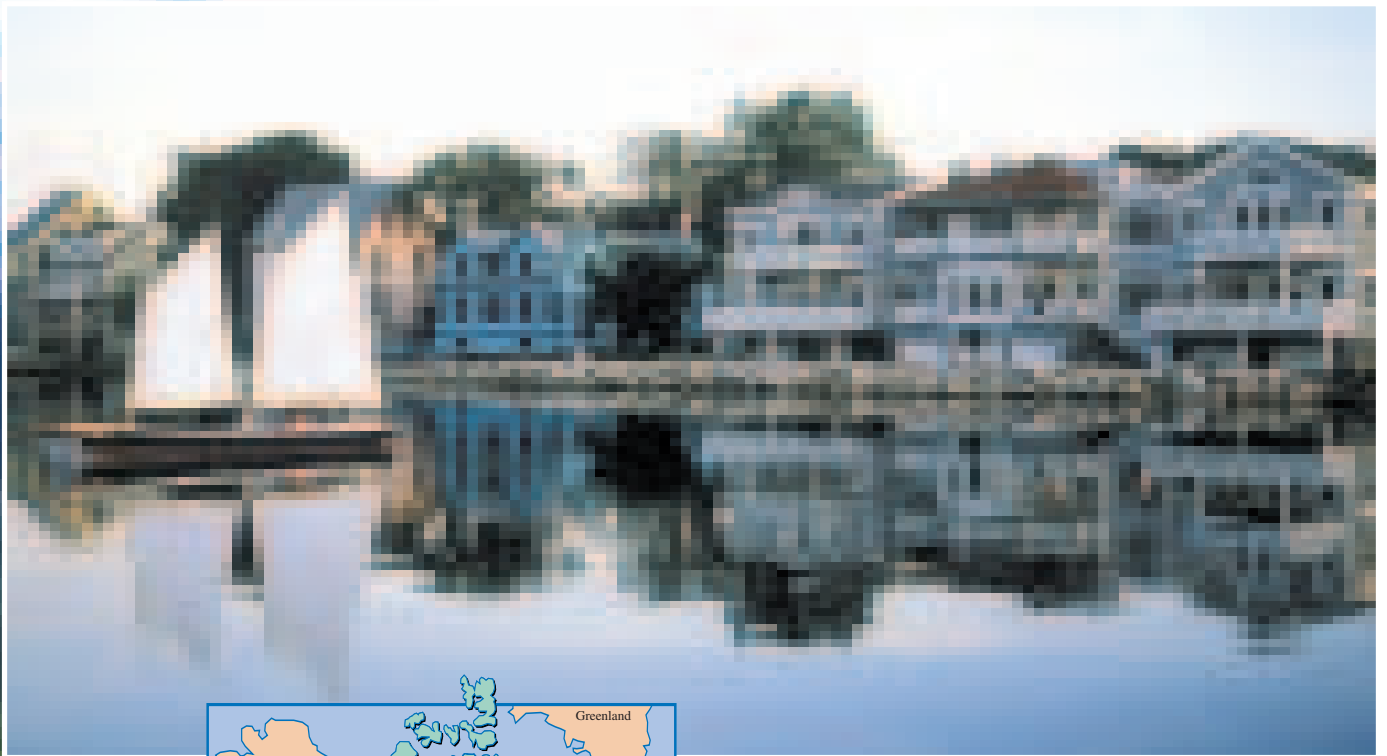
who go to the big cities like the atmosphere of busy city life, the convenient way of living and going to famous attractions. Students who go to the smaller cities like the atmosphere of safe and quiet rural life and people around are kind and seem to try to understand international students."

Hyuk-Jin Choi, Study ESL, Korea

"Canada is highly demanded by [Turkish] students who would like to be educated at the best



[institutions] in terms of comfort, safety and excellent educational opportunities. It has a large selection of universities and these universities are internationally known for their high quality of education, skilled instructors and various research possibilities. The tuition price of the universities and the courses are much more economical when compared with other countries. Canada's standard of living is among the highest in



Kinaskan Lake in British Columbia is an example of Canada's great outdoors (above left); Mahone Bay on the Lighthouse Route in Nova Scotia (above right)

Centre in Hamilton. According to Kristine Banakiewicz at the school, Hamilton is just the right size for students to feel at home quickly. "The population [of Hamilton] is four million – not too big, but large enough to have first-class cultural, recreational, academic and sport facilities," she says. Frade of Columbia International College, also in Hamilton, adds that it is also good for students looking for outdoor activities. "Hamilton has over 1,500 kilometres of trails for hikers, bikers, roller-bladers and

naturalists," she says. North of Hamilton is Canada's largest city, Toronto, the financial hub of the country, which according to Paul Keefe, President of

Centre Linguista, actor Peter Ustinov described as "New York organised by the Swiss". Centre Linguista has branches in Toronto, Montreal and, from the beginning of this year, Ottawa, Canada's capital city. "[Ottawa is] smaller than Montreal and Toronto, [and] students will enjoy a small city feel and its outdoor sports, culture and museums," says Keefe.

Sharen Craig, President of National School of Languages in Ottawa, describes the city as "the greenest capital in world", as it is surrounded by forests, hills and lakes. She

continues, "It is very easy to meet people [in Ottawa] as most people, including Canadians, are new to the city. Therefore, you find people to be very outgoing, very energetic and with a true love of education, culture and the outdoors."

East of Ontario is Canada's largest province, Quebec, the centre of French Canada. Its difference from the rest of Canada is not only marked by its language but also its architecture, cuisine and culture. Blending both English and French culture, Montreal has, according to Keefe, "a European flavour combined with North American

dynamism". It is a lively, fun city with plenty of history and character. "There are many museums ranging from archaeological themes, early French Canadian life, architecture and art. It has a great nightlife, wonderful shopping, and it is one of the world's safest cities," comments Keefe. In all



Skiing in Alberta
The province of Alberta has numerous ski and snowboarding resorts, including Canada Olympic Park, used in the Winter Olympics, and Lake Louise, voted Canada's number-one ski resort for scenery

the world. Besides this, Canada has a very low crime rate. [For this] reason, families prefer to send their children to Canada instead of other countries."

Caglayan Ozer, CDS, Turkey

"Canada is one of the countries that is quite familiar to the Vietnamese public in general, and Vietnamese students in particular. Through various kinds of information channels, they know a lot



about Canada for both studying and in terms of living conditions. The most popular destinations in Canada for our clients are Toronto and Vancouver Island. In fact, most of our clients are now studying in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. Here, foreign students are offered a friendly and supportive community. I am told that they feel at home while studying in this area. The teaching methods and social activities are both areas that schools in

Canada are particular good at."
Hoang Lan Hoa, Pan-Asia Education, Vietnam

"Beyond Vancouver and Toronto, small and medium-sized communities have been growing in popularity, according to my experience. These communities offer students a safe affordable place to study English or French without having large Asian populations. Many of the existing language schools have well over 10 years of

three of Centre Linguista's locations, Keefe says, "Students enjoy the ambience of our major shopping streets as well as the entertainment districts which are safe and fun."

There is also plenty of fun to be had in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "The number of bars in Halifax per capita is the largest in North America," says Juteau. Situated around one of the world's largest

natural harbours, Halifax looks out over the Atlantic Ocean. "Halifax attracts 35,000 students to its five universities and has

been judged one of Canada's top five 'smart cities'," adds Juteau. Historic fishing villages such as Lunenburg and Peggy's Cove, as well as trips into the wilderness of Kejimikujik National Park are all popular excursions among students at ILI. For longer trips, Prince Edward Island, famous for its lobster suppers, is a ferry ride away, while New Brunswick – Canada's only officially bilingual province – is to the west and boasts the world's highest waves at the Bay of Fundy.

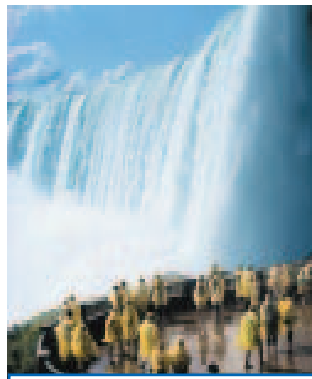
While much of Nova Scotia's character has been etched by the sea that surrounds it, Alberta's has been shaped by its vast wheat farms and cattle

ranches. It is also home to the famous Rocky Mountain resorts of Jasper and Banff and two of Canada's largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton. "Our school is in the heart of the trendy and lively area of Edmonton," says Steven Smith, Director of Smith School of

English. "There are lots of shops, restaurants, coffee shops and nightclubs in the area, and this is where the young people of Edmonton come to."

For a language school in a "no-crowds, spectacular mountain setting", College of the Rockies in Cranbrook, British Columbia is the perfect choice, according to Cheryl Webber, International Education Coordinator at the college. "Surrounded by the Rocky Mountains, the college is in the centre of the world-famous, outdoor recreation environment," she says. "The region features famous hot spring resorts, beautiful forests and some of Canada's finest skiing and golfing areas – all with no crowds."

Of all of Canada's provinces, British Columbia is one of the most popular with overseas students, with thousands



Niagara Falls
A truly astonishing natural wonder, Niagara Falls drops 100,000 cubic metres of water per second over its crestline. The thundering attraction was a highlight in one of the Superman films

choosing to study in Vancouver, a city with many parks and open spaces, a lively cultural scene and plenty of outdoor activities. Just across the water from Vancouver – a ferry ride that takes under two hours – is Vancouver Island. It is 450 kilometres long and boasts the mildest climate in Canada.

Vancouver Island's largest two cities are Victoria, the provincial capital of British Columbia, and Nanaimo, home to

Malaspina University-College. "[Nanaimo] is a medium-sized city that is close to Vancouver and Victoria, so students get the best of both worlds – a safe friendly learning environment, close to lots of recreational opportunities [and] close enough to big cities to visit during their free time," comments Mark Herringer, Manager of International Recruitment Services at the university-college. He adds, "Nanaimo is also a multicultural community, so we have all kinds of great food, and some funky restaurants and nightclubs."

Both Malaspina University-College and the College of the Rockies are mainstream education institutions that attract predominantly Canadian students, which means that international students can easily mix with locals. In addition, international students with sufficient English skills at the College of the Rockies can take one or two academic courses with Canadian students at no extra cost. Other language schools also ensure their students mix with Canadians. "ILI organises a few trips to a local high school as a social activity so that students can meet Canadian students," explains Juteau.

Wherever students choose to study in Canada, there is plenty to do. "We organise activities that appeal to every taste," asserts Keefe at Centre Linguista. This includes karaoke nights and trips to the cinema, theatre, museums and festivals.

Any study trip to Canada is sure to leave students with some unforgettable memories. Banakiewicz tells of a group of Mexican students who had experienced snow for the first time while studying in Canada. "The pictures and memories of this day are with everyone," she says. □

"One of our Japanese students climbed to the top of one of the Rocky Mountains, then changed into a traditional kimono, which she had carried up the mountain with her, so she could have a special souvenir photo."

Cheryl Webber, College of the Rockies, Cranbrook, BC



Windmill, Quebec
When the British regained Canada from the French in 1759, Quebec was permitted to maintain its own language and Catholic religion. This was the origin of its separate culture and lifestyle



experience and they are undergoing rapid expansion with the establishment of branch schools across Canada and other countries. The prosperity of these programmes, both public and private, has allowed them to develop high quality programmes with particularly good student services. Our agency offers students a complete follow-up service after they arrive in Canada. So,

it is crucial that the schools we work with are able to not only offer an excellent academic programme, but also take care of our students outside of school as well. One area that I feel Canadian schools excel in is the selection of host families and dispute settlement if any problems arise with the living arrangements. Canadian schools also arrange a wide variety of interesting extra-curricular activities for our students."

Brian Hockertz, Oh Canada, Taiwan