

Behind the maple leaf

THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT CANADA

The Canadian Rocky Mountains, Alberta



The name “Canada” comes from the ancient Iroquois Indian word “kanata”, which means “village”, or “settlement”. However, the country Canada has grown into something much larger than that. Canada is the second-largest country in the world by area (Russia is the largest). But many people who visit Canada **are still struck by the “small-town feeling” they get.**

Perhaps this is because Canada, despite its size, has a population of only 33 million people. A significant reason for this low number is the fact that a lot of the Canadian terrain is **rough** and **uninhabitable** and the climate is arctic in the north. A large percentage of Canadians live in cities along the Canada–US border. The three largest urban centres: Toronto (5.5 million people), Montréal (4 million people), and Vancouver (2.5 million people) are very **ethnically diverse**. **The United Nations has actually ranked** Toronto as the

most multicultural city in the world. Despite this, many of the country’s original inhabitants, the Native Indian populations, live segregated and in very poor conditions in reservations. The Inuits (Eskimos) inhabit the northern territories of Canada. Canada’s capital city, Ottawa, only has a population of about 1 million.

HISTORY OF CANADIAN SETTLEMENT

The **beaver** is the national animal of Canada because beavers were so **abundant** in Canada that the French decided to send permanent settlers in the 1500s. Clothing made of beaver **fur** was very popular in France back then. When the French landed in Canada and discovered a new **wilderness** full of beavers, they saw a good business opportunity and created the first permanent settlement in present-day Québec City.

After the American Revolution and the signing of the Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1776, many British settlers in America who were loyal to Britain **fled** the new United States to resettle further



These Inuit children have built a stone figure. Such structures have many functions: they serve for giving directions or marking a special place. The Inuit tradition forbids their destruction.

north in Canada. Eventually a confederation of Canadian provinces was established in 1867 and Canada gained independence from Britain with the status of a dominion.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Canadian government was modeled directly on the British parliamentary system. Like in Britain there are two chambers: the House of Commons (for **passing laws**) and the Senate (for a secondary vote to pass laws). The British monarch is still the official head of state and all laws passed by the Canadian government must **be ratified** by the **reigning** monarch (currently Queen Elizabeth II). Instead of ratifying every law personally, the British monarch is represented by the Governor General. The Governor General is appointed by the elected prime minister of Canada, so the British royal family has very little influence on Canadian government today. In 1982, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s government **drafted** and passed the first ever Canadian **constitution**. This document, which was signed by Queen Elizabeth II in Ottawa, was the first document which enabled full political independence for Canada from Britain.

CANADIAN ADMINISTRATION

Canada is politically divided into 10 provinces and three territories:

The Maritimes

The four provinces on the Atlantic are Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island (the smallest of the Canadian provinces), and New Brunswick. There is still rich Scottish and Irish heritage in these provinces, which can be clearly seen in the

annual summer **bagpipe** and **fiddle** festivals and competitions. Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, lived in Nova Scotia for some time, and his home is now a museum **in his honour**. Though the entire country of Canada is considered bilingual, New Brunswick is the only province that is officially bilingual.

The Frenchman's province

Moving west, Québec is the country's largest province by area, and is officially Canada's only French-speaking province. Many visitors say that Québec City and Montréal are the most "European-feeling" cities in Canada. There have been political movements in Québec over the past 50 years trying to separate the province from the rest of Canada. They often **reference** the Czechoslovakian separation agreement of 1993 as a model.

The Old Upper Canada

Further west, Ontario is the original British province, with many towns recalling the mother country, such as London and Stanford. Ontario has two sides. Southern Ontario has the highest concentration of urban population in the entire country; elsewhere the rest of this rather large province is mainly agricultural and wilderness. The cities of southern Ontario outside of Toronto are primarily industrial and manufacturing centres. The area surrounding the western end of Ontario Lake has been nicknamed "The Golden **Horseshoe**" because of its shape; there has been a lot of



Ottawa skaters using the Rideau Canal as an ice rink.



The Port of Montreal on the St. Lawrence River is the largest inland port in the world.

development in this area. In the very south of Ontario, on the border with New York state, you can visit one of the wonders of the world, Niagara Falls. As well as being one of the great tourist destinations in Canada, Niagara Falls is a major producer of hydro-electricity for the country.

The Prairies

The three prairie provinces lying west of Ontario are Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. These provinces produce most of the **wheat and other**

grains in Canada, thanks to the flat surface and **rich soil** there. Alberta is where the prairies end and the Rocky Mountains begin. Alberta, as well as having favourable farming conditions, is also rich in **oil deposits** (which is why Edmonton's NHL team is called the "Oilers"). Calgary, Alberta was home to the 1988 Winter Olympic games, and is just a few hours away from beautiful Banff, a popular tourist destination in the Rocky Mountains. Alberta is also well-known in the paleontology world for its deposits

of dinosaur fossils. There is even a dinosaur, *Albertosaurus*, named after the province.

The Pacific Canada

British Columbia is the westernmost province in Canada, sitting on the Pacific coast. It is physically divided from the rest of Canada by the great Rocky Mountains, and many British Columbians claim to feel a **psychological alienation** too. Its largest city, Vancouver, will be home to the 2010 Winter Olympic games.

The Far North

The three territories that occupy the north of Canada are the least inhabited areas. The Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, consist mainly of ice and tundra, and the permafrost on the ground makes agriculture, building, and development nearly impossible. Yet it is an ideal environment for whales, wolves, and **dogsledding races**. The largest city in all of the territories is Whitehorse, Yukon, with a population of 21,000 people.

Jeff Gully (Canada)



VOCABULARY

maple leaf ['meɪp(ə)lɪ:f] - javorový list
are struck by the "small-town feeling"
they get [s'trʌk] - nabývají pocitu, že jsou na maloměstě
rough [rʌf] - tvrdý
uninhabitable [ʌnɪn'hæbɪtəb(ə)l] - neobyvatelný
ethnically diverse ['eθnɪkəlɪ daɪ'vɜ:s] - etnický rozmanitý
the United Nations has ranked [ræŋkɪd] - Organizace spojených národů ohodnotila

settlement - osídlení
beaver ['bi:və] - bobr
abundant [ə'bʌnd(ə)nt] - hojný
fur [fɜ:] - kožešina
wilderness ['wɪldənɪs] - divočina
to flee (fled) - uprchnout
passing laws - schvalování zákonů
to ratify ['ræɪfai] - schválit, ratifikovat
reigning [reɪnɪŋ] - vládnoucí
to draft - vypracovat
constitution [kɒnstɪ'tju:ʃ(ə)n] - ústava
bagpipes ['bægpɪpz] - dudy
fiddle ['fɪd(ə)l] - housle

in his honour ['ɒnə] - na jeho počest
to reference ['ref(ə)r(ə)ns] - odkazovat
horseshoe - podkova
wheat and other grains [wi:t greɪnz] - pšenice a jiné obilniny
rich soil [rɪʃ] - úrodná půda
oil deposits [dɪ'pɒzɪts] - zásoby ropy
psychological alienation [saɪkə'lɒdʒɪk(ə)l eɪlɪ'neɪʃ(ə)n] - psychologické odcizení
dogsledding races [slɛdɪŋ] - závody psích spřežení

GLOSSARY

dominion - a self-governing territory which accepts the British Monarch as Head of State
Governor General - the representative of the British Crown
permafrost - permanently frozen ground in Arctic regions

LANGUAGE POINT

Spelled with a capital letter, "**Arctic**" refers to the regions around the North Pole. Spelled with a lower case ("**arctic**"), it means extremely cold.