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SWITZERLAND GLOBAL ENTERPRISE

Canada

Business Travel Guide

Compiled by:

The Swiss Business Hub Canada

Montreal, September 2024

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

As a Swiss national, you will need a valid Swiss passport to enter Canada when visiting. In addition, in 2016 Canada implemented a new electronic security-screening plan. **You have to apply for the electronic travel authorization (eTA) to visit or transit Canada by air**. You can apply for the eTA here. The eTA application fee is CAD 7.00 and must be paid online. Please make sure not to apply on any other website. Once approved, the eTA is valid for five years or until your passport expires, whichever one comes first. Your passport has to be valid for the duration of your planned stay in Canada. If you are not a Swiss national or have other nationals travelling with you, please check with the Canadian Visa Office for the latest entry requirements.

As a visitor you are generally admitted to Canada for up to six months from the original date of entry. Extensions may be arranged with the federal authorities within Canada. As a visitor you are not allowed to work, set up a business or study in Canada without authorisation. You are also not eligible for provincial health coverage and are advised to obtain medical insurance for the period of your stay.

If you wish to apply for a study permit or a work permit, you must submit your application to the Canadian Visa office in Paris. There are visa application centres, which are private companies that have formal contracts with the Government of Canada, which securely send your applications and passport to the visa office. You can see the locations of these VACs here: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/contact-ircc/offices/find-visa-application-centre.html

Business people and investors wishing to establish themselves in Canada should consult the Canadian Visa Office of the Canadian Embassy in Paris for the latest entry requirements.

LANGUAGES

Canada has two official languages: English and French. The majority of the French-speaking population is located in Quebec with minority representations in New Brunswick and Ontario. The federal government has undertaken an active role in encouraging and facilitating bilingualism throughout Canada, particularly in public service and in public institutions.

Quebec is different from other Canadian provinces in several respects, most notably because 80 % of its population predominantly speaks French. The Charter of the French Language imposes certain obligations for using the French language at work and in commerce, education, legislation and professional orders. You may find more information on the website of l'Office québécois de la langue française.

If you are looking for a certified translator or interpreter, you may check the online directories of the provincial associations that are listed below:

- Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta (ATIA)
- Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia (STIBC)
- Association of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of Manitoba (ATIM)
- Corporation of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of New Brunswick (CTINB)
- Association of Translators and Interpreters of Nova Scotia (ATINS)
- Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO)
- Association of Translators and Interpreters of Saskatchewan (ATIS)
- Ordre des traducteurs, terminologies et interprètes agréés du Québec (OTTIAQ)

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

A visitor to Canada is not covered by Provincial health insurance plans. A current Swiss health insurance policy may or may not cover a visitor sufficiently. It might be advisable to buy additional medical insurance as the healthcare costs are very high in Canada.

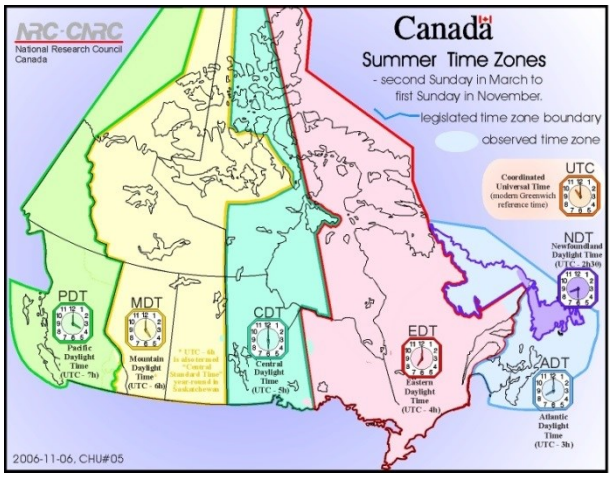
The Public Health Agency of Canada provides updated general information and public health notices, accessible here.

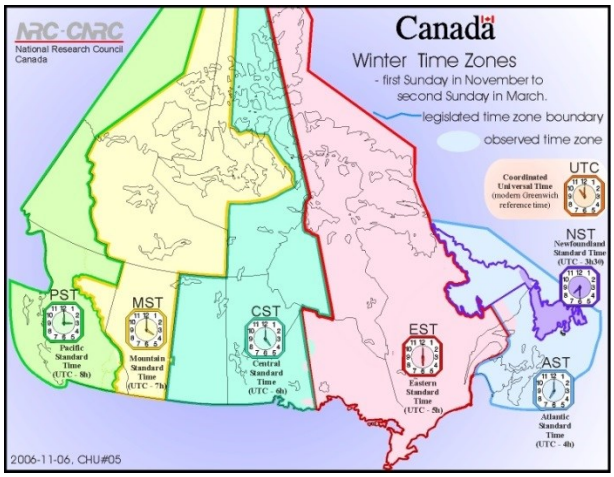
TIME ZONE

If you are planning on scheduling meetings with Canadian business partners, whether online or in-person, you should keep in mind that Canada is divided into six time zones, from UTC-3:30 in Newfoundland to UTC-8 on the West Coast. Clocks follow the North American standard for Daylight Saving Time and are turned forward by one hour on the second Sunday in March and turned back on the first Sunday of November. For an overview of the different time zones in Canada, click here.

Time difference between Switzerland and:

- Montreal / Ottawa / Toronto: - 6 hours
- Calgary: - 8 hours
- Vancouver: - 9 hours





PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

The following is a list of statutory holidays across Canada:

New Year's Day[1]	January 1
Good Friday[2]	Friday before Easter
Easter Monday[3]	Monday after Easter
Victoria Day (*Journée nationale des Patriotes* in Québec)	Monday on or preceding May 24
Canada Day[1]	July 1
Civic or Provincial Holiday[4]	First Monday of August
Labour Day	First Monday of September
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	September 30
Thanksgiving Day	Second Monday of October
Remembrance Day[5]	November 11
Christmas Day[1]	December 25
Boxing Day[1, 4]	December 26

[1] When these days fall on a Sunday or Saturday, the next working day is considered a holiday.

[2] Business remains open in Quebec.

[3] Business remains open in most provinces, e.g. Ontario (but stays closed in Quebec).

[4] Holidays in the provinces and territories www.statutoryholidays.com/.

[5] On Remembrance Day, members of the armed forces are commemorated. Many people wear artificial poppies on their clothes in the weeks before Remembrance Day. However, this is a federal statutory holiday. Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Nova Scotia — do not recognize Remembrance Day as an official paid statutory holiday.

NATIONAL TRADE FAIR CALENDAR

Event	Industry	Location	Dates
Aeromart Montreal	Aerospace	Montreal	March 25-27, 2025
Canadian Aerospace Summit	Aerospace	Ottawa	November
Age-Well Annual Conference	Agetech	Toronto	October
AGRI Tech Venture Forum	Agritech	Toronto	May
Pacific Agriculture Show	Agritech	Abbotsford	January 23-25, 2025
Agri-Trade Equipment Expo	Agritech	Red Deer	November 13-15, 2024
ALL IN 2023	AI	Montreal	September 11-12, 2024
World Summit AI Americas	AI	Montreal	April
Apparel Textile Sourcing Canada	Apparel, textile	Toronto	August 26-28, 2024
APMA Annual Conference	Automotive	Toronto	September 26, 2023
MaRS Climate Impact	Cleantech	Toronto	December 3-4, 2024
The Building Show	Construction	Toronto	December 4-6, 2024
C2 Montreal	Creative Business	Montreal	May
InCyber Forum	Cybersecurity	Montreal	October 25-26, 2023
Cansec	Defence, Security	Ottawa	May 29-30, 2024
SAAS North	E-commerce	Ottawa	November 13-14, 2024
Forum FinTech Canada	Fintech	Montreal	September 25-27, 2023
SIAL	Food	Montreal or Toronto	May
CADTH Symposium	Health	Ottawa	September 4-6
Bloom Burton & Co. Healthcare Investor Conference	Healthcare	Toronto	April
Tunnelling Association of Canada Conference	Infrastructure (Tunnel)	Montreal	October 6-8, 2024
Effervescence	Life Sciences	Montreal	May
Mars Impact Health	Life Sciences	Toronto	May
Regulatory Affairs Professional Society (RAPS) Convergence	Regulatory Affairs	Montreal	October
Québec Mines + Énergie	Mining	Quebec City	November
PDAC Convention	Mining	Toronto	March 2-5, 2025
Canadian Mining Expo	Mining	Timmins	June
AME Roundup	Mining	Vancouver	January
Annual Conference & Transit Show (CUTA)	Public Transit	Edmonton	November
TRACCS Rail Day	Rail Transport	Toronto	June
eTail Canada	Retail	Toronto	September
MTL Connecte	Tech	Montreal	October 10-13, 2024
Web Summit Vancouver	Tech	Vancouver	May 27-30, 2025
Start-up fest	Tech	Montreal	July
TAC Conference & Exhibition	Transport	Vancouver	Sept 22-24, 2024
Waste & Recycling Expo Canada	Waste Management	Toronto	Sept

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

110 volts, 60 hertz.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Acceptable payment methods are cash and credit cards. In fact, many Canadians even use a credit card to pay for smaller amounts. If there is a minimum amount for credit cards, for example in smaller independent grocery stores, it is usually indicated (typically 5 or 10 dollars). If you are planning a trip

to Canada, it is also recommended that you bring your ATM card (EC-Card) in order to access your bank account to make cash withdrawals.

AIR TRANSPORT

Due to Canada's large size, people often travel by plane to cover the long distances in a shorter amount of time. Canada has a highly developed air transportation system that includes 10 major international airports and over 300 smaller airports. With some 443'000 flights a year and over 45 million passengers annually, Toronto Pearson is Canada's largest and busiest airport. Canada's two main airline carriers are Air Canada and WestJet as well as a few regional airlines such as Porter.

In the summer, Swiss International Airlines operates daily flights between Montreal and Zurich. In the winter SWISS flies five times weekly. Since May 2024, there are also five non-stop flights a week from Zurich to Toronto Pearson Airport. www.swiss.com/ch/en

Air Canada offers nonstop flights between Zurich and Toronto, as well as between Montreal and Geneva, with same-plane service continuing on to/from Toronto. The carrier's Star Alliance partner, Swiss International Air Lines, offers seats on a codeshare basis on this route. www.aircanada.com/en/

Porter, a regional passenger carrier based at Toronto City Centre Airport, is serving Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal and many other destinations. www.flyporter.com/en-ca/

Average travel times by plane – domestic flights:

- Montreal – Ottawa: 2h 40min (40min in air + 2h travel time to/from airport, security, lineups)
- Montreal – Toronto: 3h 15 min (1h 15min in air + 2h travel time to/from airport, security, lineups)
- Montreal – Quebec City: 2h 50min (50 min in air + 2 hours travel time to/from airport, security, lineups)
- Toronto – Vancouver: 7h (5h in air + 2 hours travel time to/from airport, security, lineups)

MARINE TRANSPORT

Canada is a maritime nation with access to three oceans: the Pacific, the Atlantic and the Arctic. It also has the world's longest inland waterway open to ocean shipping: the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System. In addition, 300 commercial ports and harbours handle many goods shipped in and through Canada.

In the east, shipments are divided among several ports, including Montreal, Halifax, Port-Cartier, Sept-Îles, Saint John and Quebec. Canada's largest port is in Vancouver. It is also the main terminal for goods being shipped to the Asia-Pacific region. The Port of Prince Rupert is located just below the Alaskan Panhandle and boasts the shortest sailing distance from North America to Pacific Rim countries.

Despite the cold climate in winter, many of Canada's deep-water ports are open year-round. Modern container facilities at major ports, such as Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver, connect with inland container trains to ensure rapid movement of goods throughout North America. On the East coast, the Port of Montreal is Canada's leading container port because of its inland location, as well as its rail and road connection to major markets in central Canada and the northeast and mid-west US.

The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System is vital to Canada's international competitiveness, as it provides a direct route to the industrial heart of North America. You will find more information about the Seaway on the website of the Chamber of Marine Commerce:
http://www.marinedelivers.com/about-us

In British Columbia and the Atlantic region, ferries are very common means of transportation for both vehicles and passengers. You may obtain more information about routes, schedules and fares from ferry companies that operate routes in these regions, for example on the website of BC Ferries:
http://www.bcferries.com/

ROAD TRANSPORT

Canada has nearly 900'000 kilometres of public roads. The 8'030-kilometre Trans-Canada Highway is the country's major east-west route, linking all 10 provinces. The road network includes a large number of crossing points with the US, 18 of which are major trade gateways. If you plan to drive in Canada you must have a valid driver's license. It is advised to get an International Driving Permit (IDP) in Switzerland before coming to Canada. An IDP will give you a translation of your license into French and English. For more information about driving in Canada, visit http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/after-transportation-driving.asp

In recent years, the increase in truck traffic generated by the growth in Canada-US trade and just-in-time manufacturing have placed added demands on the road system and have focused greater attention on road safety, including the quality of infrastructure. As a result, Canada invests a large amount of money on road maintenance and upgrades.

Infrastructure upgrades are increasingly the result of public-private partnerships that make the most of private-sector technological and operational expertise. A case in point is the Confederation Bridge between the provinces of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, the world's longest continuous marine-span bridge over ice-covered water.

Average travel times by car:

- Montreal – Ottawa: 2h 30min (2 h + 30 min for traffic)
- Montreal – Toronto: 5h 30min (5h + 30min for traffic)
- Montreal – Quebec City: 2h 55 min (2h 25min + 30min for traffic)

RAIL TRANSPORT

Canadian railways are the backbone of Canada's freight transportation system, providing the most economical method of moving containers and bulk commodities over great distances. Canada's freight railway industry is dominated by two major players: Canadian National Railways (CN) and Canadian Pacific Kansas City Limited (CPKC). National passenger services are provided by state-owned Via Rail Tickets can be booked directly on the Via Rail website or at the train station. It is often cheaper to buy tickets in advance. If you are planning to travel by train you should be aware that Canada does not have high-speed rail. In fact, Canada's Via Rail is operating on the freight line tracks of CN and CPKC, which means that passenger trains often have second priority. However, if time is not an issue, traveling by train is very comfortable and economical. Also, passenger trains are usually equipped with Wi-Fi so that you can work while travelling.

Average travel times by train:

- Montreal – Ottawa: 1h 55min
- Montreal – Toronto: 5h 25min
- Montreal – Quebec City: 3h 20min

COMMUNICATION

Country Code for calls from **Switzerland to Canada:** 001 (+ area code and phone number)
Country Code for calls from **Canada to Switzerland**: 00 41 (+ area code and phone number)

CELL PHONES AND WIFI

Providers maintain cell phone service coast-to-coast across Canada. However, actual coverage may vary outside urban areas. It can be patchy, particularly in rural areas. Canada's cell-phone rates are amongst the highest in the world. Many hotels and airports offer free Wi-Fi.

BUSINESS HOURS

General office business hours are from 9:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday, while government offices are usually open from 8:30 to 16:30. In terms of retail business, stores are usually open on Sunday. While operating hours may vary, as a general rule, shopping malls open from 10:00-18:00, Monday to Saturday (or in some cases until 21:00), and from noon to 18:00 on Sunday. Most banks are open for business from 9:00 to 16:00, with some branches even open on Saturdays and Sundays.

CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS IN SWITZERLAND

Canadian Embassy
Kirchenfeldstrasse 88
CH-3005 Berne
Tel.: 031 357 3200
Fax: 031 357 3210
E-mail: bern@international.gc.ca
https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates/switzerland

General office hours: Monday to Thursday: 08:00 - 12:00 and 13:00 - 17:00/Friday: 08:00 - 13:30
Consular opening hours (passports, citizenship): 08:30 - 11:30 Mondays to Fridays.
Consular e-mail**:** bern-cs@international.gc.ca

Permanent Mission of Canada to the Office of the United Nations
5, avenue de l'Ariana
CH-1202 Geneva
Tel.: 022 919-92-00
Fax: 022 919-92-33
E-mail (Administration): genev-ag@international.gc.ca
https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/un-onu/index.aspx?lang=eng

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https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/canada/en/home/representations/embassy-in-ottawa.html

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https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/canada/en/home/representations/embassy-in-ottawa/consulate-general-in-montreal.html

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BUSINESS PRACTICES - TIPS FOR INITIATING BUSINESS CONTACTS AND FIRST MEETINGS

It is recommended to respond immediately to requests and invitations: in North America, business is conducted at a very fast pace. Decisions should always be made
“yesterday”, so “strike while the iron is hot”. Service is a very important issue. It is actually as important as the quality or technology of the product. It is not always the “best” product that wins - the best company does. Also, it is often relatively easy to get a first meeting. However, this does not necessarily mean that the counterpart will follow up later on. It is therefore recommended to discuss concrete follow-up action items during the first meeting. In addition, Canadians are generally less interested in a long presentation about the company and its history. It is recommended to focus on the benefits for the Canadian partner as they want to know “what’s in it for them”. Finding common ground is very important. Promotional material (including websites) should be designed for the Canadian market. Once a new company has been established in Canada, it is also recommended to hire local personnel who have a good understanding of the market and know the business culture. Unless otherwise requested, pricing should be in Canadian dollars. It is highly recommended, when doing business with French-speaking customers, to provide all business-related services in French.

BUSINESS CARDS AND COMPANY WEBSITES

As a rule, business cards are exchanged at a first meeting. Not being able to present a business card at a meeting could be viewed as unprofessional by your Canadian contact and may hurt your credibility as a legitimate and serious business partner. When you receive business cards at a conference table, place the business cards in front of you to refer to the correct names of your contacts during the meetings. In Quebec, business cards should be both in English and French.

Potential business partners will most probably visit your website before you meet. An English/French language menu on the website will be helpful and signals that you are serious about conducting business in Canada.

Forms of address, formality and informality, business attire: address your counterpart as Dr, Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms. However, very soon after meeting you, your contact will usually suggest switching to a first-name basis. Nevertheless, this should not be mistaken as a sign that you have achieved an advanced level of intimacy. Do not hesitate to ask your contact how his/her name is pronounced correctly.

CONVERSATION

In general, Canadians enjoy laughing and appreciate people with a sense of humour. Usually, a compliment is a good choice as a conversation starter since it is common to compliment one another in Canada. This could include a nice remark concerning an achievement or about something they are wearing. Sports (especially "ice hockey" which Canadians simply refer to as hockey) or comments about the weather are usually very good conversation starters. Canadians will likely ask you about your first impressions of the country/city, which constitutes a welcome opportunity to exchange compliments. Try to avoid any discussions or jokes about race, religion, politics, sexual orientation or gender.

SMOKING

Smoking in indoor workplaces and public places is banned in all provinces and territories and at federally regulated buildings. In some jurisdictions, the law prohibits smoking in motor vehicles with passengers under 16. Shops are banned from displaying tobacco. In general, the tolerance towards smokers has become very low. Since 2018 cannabis is legal for both recreational and medicinal purposes. Under federal legislation, adults can possess up to 30 grams of legally-produced cannabis and can grow up to four cannabis plants per household.

SALES TAX, TIPS, AND GRATUITIES

Retail sale prices indicated on merchandise tags and restaurant menus never include sales taxes. In most cases, the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 5% and a Provincial Sales Tax (PST; rates vary from 0% in Alberta to 9.975 % in Quebec) or Harmonised Sales Tax (HST) which combines GST and PST (in New Brunswick: 15%, Newfoundland: 15%, Nova Scotia:15% and Ontario: 13%), will be added to any bill. Tips and gratuities for services are generally not included anywhere in Canada. A tip of 15% to 20 % is expected on restaurant bills. Not tipping would be considered extremely rude. Services by taxi, hairdresser or other service providers are usually rewarded by a tip at the discretion of the person paying the bill. Always check whether a service charge was included in a restaurant bill, especially if paying for a group of people. Often the restaurant automatically includes a service charge for larger groups. https://www.retailcouncil.org/resources/quick-facts/sales-tax-rates-by-province/

TRADE AGREEMENT AND IMPORTING GOODS

In 2008, Canada and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have concluded a Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). Under the agreement, qualifying goods which originate in Switzerland enter Canada duty-free, although applicable taxes will be collected (usually 5%, i.e., Goods and Services Tax). These goods must be accounted for at time of release on a Form B3, Canada Customs Coding Form. If freight and insurance costs are paid by the Swiss exporter and included in the sales price, it is recommended to indicate freight and insurance costs separately on the invoice. The declared value considered by Canadian customs is the transaction value (or sales price), which excludes freight and insurance costs. If the goods comply with the Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement's rules of origin, the following origin declaration must be inserted on the commercial invoice in order to benefit from the duty-free treatment:

"The exporter of the products covered by this document [customs authorization No. …] declares that, except where otherwise clearly indicated, these products are of Canada/EFTA preferential origin.

…… Place and date
…… Signature and printed name of the exporter"

https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/de/home/Publikationen_Dienstleistungen/Publikationen_und_Formulare/Aussenwirtschafts/Bilaterale_Wirtschaftsbeziehungen/fta-efta-canada.html

Goods entering Canada temporarily (e.g. for a tradeshow) are usually documented on a Temporary Admission Permit (Form E29B) or an ATA Carnet. Under certain circumstances, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will require a security deposit on goods temporarily imported to Canada. These goods are normally documented on the Temporary Admission Permit (Form E29B).

www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/e29b.pdf

Should you require additional assistance it is recommend that you contact the Border Information Service (BIS). You can access the BIS line free of charge throughout Canada by calling 1-800-461-9999. From Switzerland, you can access the BIS line by calling either 001-204-983-3500 or 001-506-636-5064 (long-distance charges will apply).

www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/contact/menu-eng.html
E-Mail: contact@cbsa.gc.ca

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE CANADIAN MARKET

The Canadian marketplace is unique and demands a solid and thorough preparation from the Swiss exporter. With a population of 40 million inhabitants, Canada is, in relation to its size, sparsely populated, and there are striking regional differences. For this reason, marketing to Canadians can become more expensive per capita than it is in many other markets. Distribution costs are higher per capita due to the large, thinly populated countryside with a wide variety of climates and terrains.

Canada's international trade is dominated by its strong bilateral relationship with the United States. Indeed approximately 75% Canadian merchandise exports are shipped to the U.S. Canada is making big efforts to promote its trade relations with other nations.

Environmental issues and the need to reduce, reuse and recycle are important for many Canadians. They are also very concerned about social issues such as gender rights, pay equity, minority and animal rights. Therefore, environmental and social issues must be taken into consideration when dealing with the Canadian marketplace. Canadians are very conscious of what they are buying and are very much interested in reliable technical support and after-sales service.

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