PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

WORK IN CANADA 2026



SWAP
WORKING HOLIDAYS

Table of Contents

1-2 **INTRODUCTION**
Meet SWAP + About this Guide

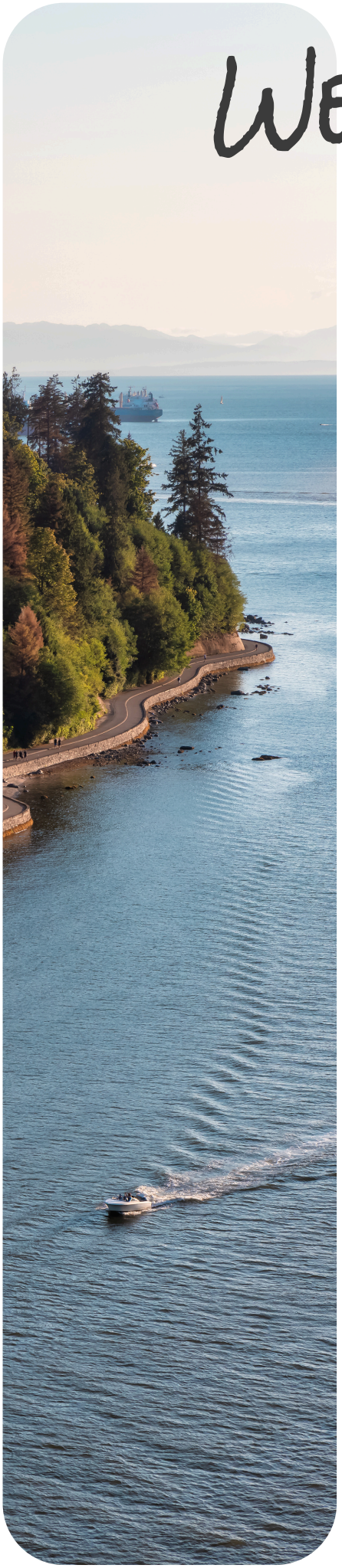
3-7 **SWAP SERVICES**
Hosting Centres, Orientations, Events, and more!

8-9 **ARRIVING IN CANADA**
Documents at the border + tips about accommodation

10-17 **SWAP TIPS**
Tips about banking, health, working in Canada, and more!



SWAP
WORKING HOLIDAYS



Welcome!

Meet SWAP

SWAP Working Holidays is Canada's largest international exchange program. We host countless participants each year while sending Canadians abroad. Our exchange programs are made possible through a vast network of travel organizations.

You can think of SWAP as your Canadian host! Come to us with any questions or problems you may have during your stay in Canada. We are your home-away-from home – we are here for you every step of the way 🍁

About this guide

We understand - moving to a new country is no small feat! It's normal to feel confused and disoriented for your first few days (jet-lag can also drag you down!) But do not fret - We promise that Canada will feel like home much sooner than you think.

This guide is jam-packed full of important information to help you plan your trip. Make sure you read through it so that you don't miss any important details.

SWAP SERVICES

What to expect out of your SWAP membership.



1 Hosting Centres + Staff (Vancouver and Toronto)

- Free printing + scanning
- Free luggage storage (subject to availability)
- Free mail holding + forwarding within Canada
- Wi-Fi + laptops
- 24/7 after-hours emergency line

2 Pre-Departure + Arrival Services

- Virtual Pre-Departure Orientation
- In-Person and Virtual Arrival Orientations
- Pre-Departure and Arrival Guides

3 Job Searching

- Job Database for SWAP members only
- Access to SWAP Connections - exclusive employer connections
- Personalized resume and cover letter review

4 SWAP Community

- SWAP Discord Channel
- SWAP Canada Instagram page (@swapcanada)
- Monthly SWAP social events
- Monthly Scoop Newsletter

5 SWAP Guides

- Arrival and Housing Guides for major cities in Canada
- Resume, Cover Letter, and Interview Prep Guides
- Other guides - taxes, provincial healthcare, driving - you name it!

Hosting Centres

SWAP Toronto

44 Victoria St, Suite 1515
Toronto, ON
M5C 1Y2

Office Hours:
Mon-Fri, 12pm-5pm

647-525-6853
toronto@swap.ca

SWAP Vancouver

602 W Hastings St, Suite 612
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1P2

Office Hours:
Mon-Fri, 12pm-5pm

236-334-9625
vancouver@swap.ca

After Hours Emergency Line:
+1 (647) 973-7927 (SWAP)



Hosting Centre Resources

- In-person Arrival Orientations
- Free computers and Wi-Fi
- Free printing, photocopying, and scanning
- Free coffee and tea
- Free luggage storage
- Mail holding
- Access to SWAP Staff - advice about job searching, housing, resume/cover letters, and more!

Come visit us and say hi!

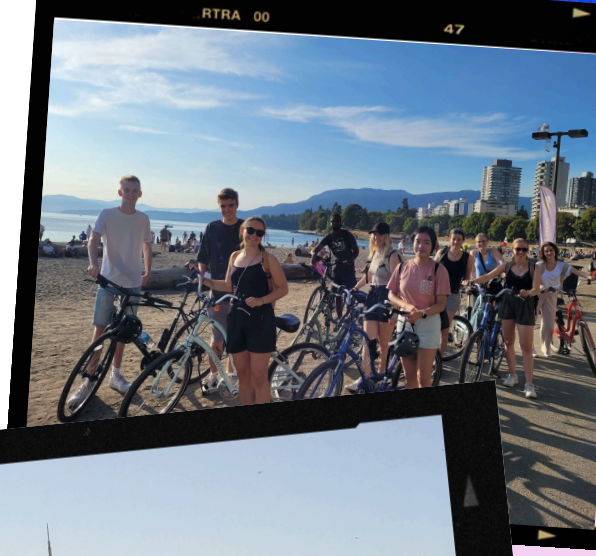
SWAP Events

SWAP events are a great way to meet other SWAP members and dive into new experiences!

Our Toronto and Vancouver offices host social events each month. Events include pub nights, sporting events, cycling and canoeing trips (so Canadian, eh?), hikes, comedy shows, movie nights, and much more!

Check out our upcoming events on our socials!











Orientations

SWAP Orientations are designed to cover everything you need to live and work in Canada - start your Working Holiday off right!

Which orientations can I join?

Pre-Departure Orientation (1 option)

- Current entry requirements
- What to expect going through immigration
- Important reminders before leaving home
- FAQ + time for questions

Virtual (Zoom) - Tuesdays at 11AM PT/2PM ET

Arrival Orientation (3 options)

- Applying for your Social Insurance Number, bank account, and phone plan
- Canadian resume format and job info
- Taxes in Canada
- Local and regional transportation

Toronto (in-person) - Wednesdays at 10AM

Vancouver (in-person) - Wednesdays at 10AM

Virtual (Zoom) - Thursdays at 11AM PT/2PM ET

1-1 (in-person) - by appointment (please email to book)

How to book?

Register through the Microsoft Forms linked below!

- **Pre-Departure Orientation**
- **Arrival Orientation**

2026 SWAP Calendar

JANUARY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

FEBRUARY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

MARCH

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JULY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

AUGUST

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

SEPTEMBER

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

OCTOBER

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

NOVEMBER

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

DECEMBER

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Legend

- VIRTUAL PRE-DEPARTURE
- IN-PERSON ARRIVAL
- VIRTUAL ARRIVAL
- OFFICE CLOSURE

Arrival in Canada

When you land at your **first** port of entry into Canada, you will be directed to speak to a Border Services Officer. This is where they'll review your documents and issue your work permit (full details here).

1. **POE Letter of Introduction** (found in your GC Key account)
2. **Passport** (valid for the duration of your trip)
3. **Proof of insurance coverage** (valid for the duration of your trip)
4. **Proof of funds** (at least $2500 CAD or equivalent)
5. **Copies of documents provided in your visa application**

A few Reminders:

Check your passport expiry date before you leave home! Your work permit cannot be issued for longer than your passport is valid. If you don't have enough time on your passport, we suggest applying for a new one before you come to Canada.

Shortened permits due to insufficient insurance are irreversible.
If you do not purchase adequate insurance coverage, you could be issued a work permit valid for less time. It is not possible to extend your work permit at a later date, even if you've extended your insurance coverage.

Attend a Pre-Departure Orientation!
If this is the first time you're travelling to Canada, we highly recommend that you attend a session so you are prepared. If you can't attend, ask our team for an orientation summary.

Work Permit

Border officers do make errors sometimes, so **carefully inspect your work permit <u>before you leave immigration</u> at your port of entry.**

- **Name & personal details.**
- **Expiry date:** 1 to 2 years, <u>dependent on your nationality</u>. Remember, your work permit will not be valid beyond: the expiry date of your passport; the expiry date of your health insurance.
- **Employer, employment location, and occupation.** It should be "OPEN" and not a specific occupation.

Is something wrong with your work permit?

If you see any mistakes, it's easiest to ask the Officer to correct your work permit on the spot.

If they do not agree to fix the error, **email SWAP right away** explaining what happened and include a copy of your work permit, POE lette, passport, and travel insurance.

We'll do what we can to help!



CANADA

EB044 248 923 [redacted]

[redacted]

Application/Demande: [redacted]

UCI/IUC: [redacted]

WORK PERMIT/PERMIS DE TRAVAIL

CLIENT INFORMATION/INFORMATION DU CLIENT

Family Name/Nom de Famille: [redacted]
Given Name(s)/Prénom(s):
Date of Birth/Date de naissance:
Sex/Sexe:
Country of Birth/Pays de naissance: GERMANY, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
Country of Citizenship/Citoyen de: GERMANY, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
Travel Doc No./N° du document de voyage: [redacted] PASSPORT

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/INFORMATION SUPPLÉMENTAIRE

Date Issued/Délivré le:	2023/01/17	(yyyy/mm/dd - aaaa/mm/jj)
Expiry Date/Date d'expiration:	2024/01/16	(yyyy/mm/dd - aaaa/mm/jj)
Case Type/Genre de cas:	58	
LMIA or Exempt No./N° de l'EIMT ou Dispense:		
Employer/Employeur:	OPEN	
Employment Location/Emplacement de l'emploi:	UNKNOWN	
Occupation/Profession:	OPEN	
In Force From/En vigueur le:	2023/01/17	(yyyy/mm/dd - aaaa/mm/jj)

Conditions:

1. NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT IN BUSINESSES RELATED TO THE SEX TRADE SUCH AS STRIP CLUBS, MASSAGE PARLOURS OR ESCORT SERVICES.
2. NOT AUTHORIZED TO WORK IN CHILDCARE, PRIMARY/SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHING, HEALTH SERVICE FIELD OCCUPATIONS.
3. MUST LEAVE CANADA BY 2024/01/16
4. UNLESS AUTHORIZED, PROHIBITED FROM ATTENDING ANY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION, OR TAKING ANY ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL OR VOCATIONAL TRAINING COURSE.

Remarks/Observations:

THIS DOES NOT AUTHORIZE RE-ENTRY/CECI N'AUTORISE PAS LA RÉ-ENTRÉE

THIS FORM HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THE MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA - THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
FORMULAIRE ÉTABLI PAR LE MINISTRE DE L'IMMIGRATION, RÉFUGIÉS ET CITOYENNETÉ CANADA - LE PRÉSENT DOCUMENT EST LA PROPRIÉTÉ DU GOUVERNEMENT DU CANADA

IMM 14428 (1-2019)

Canada

41

TRA 400



Short-term Accommodation

We recommend that you book at least **1 week** of short-term accommodation before you arrive in Canada. This can be a hostel, hotel, or Airbnb. If you are planning to live and work in a major city center, you may want to look into arranging accommodation for 2-3 weeks.

Vancouver Hostels

Samesun Vancouver
1018 Granville St
(604) 682-8226
samesun.com

HI Vancouver Downtown
1114 Burnaby St
(778) 328-2220
hihostels.ca

Toronto Hostels

Samesun Toronto
278 Augusta Ave
(416) 929-4777
samesun.com

Planet Traveller
357 College St
(647) 352-8747
planettraveler.com

Calgary Hostels

HI Calgary
520 7th Avenue SE
(403) 670-7580
hihostels.ca

Wicked Hostels
811 7th Street SW
(403) 265-8777
wickedhostel.com

Banking & Money

A few things to do before you leave home....

Speak with your bank. Make sure you let them know that you will be travelling abroad for an extended period of time and the specific countries you plan to visit.

Double-check that your cards will work while you are in Canada. Most will, but some smaller banks may have limitations.

Get a credit card for emergencies (optional, but recommended). North America uses credit a lot for things like accommodation bookings and transportation (buses, car rentals), so we suggest you get a proper credit card if you can.

Withdraw Canadian cash to have on hand for when you arrive in the country, just in case. We suggest $100-$300 CAD.

How to transfer money between countries?

If you are planning to transfer a large sum of money to Canada, you have a few options:

1. **Bank wire transfer**. This is typically the most expensive option.
2. **Withdraw money** with a debit card or credit card,
3. **Use a trusted third-party** for money transfer. We recommend Wise!

Be sure to do your research to find the most affordable option for you!

SWAP recommends Option #3 as it tends to be consistently affordable.

How much should I $ save for my trip?

We recommend that you have <u>at least</u> **$5000 CAD** saved for when you arrive in Canada, especially if you're planning to arrive during the summer season when costs are higher. For anyone planning to settle in one of our major cities, we suggest bringing even more to account for your rental deposit.

Other expenses

1. **Short-term accommodation** for the first 1-4 weeks
2. **Your first month's rent and deposit**
3. **Furniture, bedding, and kitchenware** for your new home
4. **Cellphone, food, transportation, leisure, and entertainment**

What does that cost?

- **Room in a shared house or apartment:** $900-$1500/month
- **Public transit pass:** $100-$160/month
- **Groceries:** $60-$85/week
- **Pint of beer:** $8-$10 + tax
- **Cup of drip coffee:** $2-$3 + tax
- **Burger and fries (at a pub):** $20 + tax



What to Pack?

Check our list below for tips on what to pack, including must-haves for the Canadian weather!

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

- [ ] Passport
- [ ] Plane ticket
- [ ] Travel insurance policy
- [ ] Proof of funds ($2500 CAD or equivalent)
- [ ] Letter of Introduction (Port of Entry Letter)
- [ ] Driver's license and driving record
- [ ] Bank cards and emergency cash ($100-$300)
- [ ] Hostel directions and booking details

TECH STUFF

- [ ] Smart phone + charger
- [ ] Camera and memory cards + charger
- [ ] USB/Memory stick
- [ ] Power adapters (read here for more details)
- [ ] Laptop or tablet + charger
- [ ] Headphones for virtual job interviews
- [ ] Power bar (handy for long travel days!)
- [ ] Handheld fan (we like this one!)

CLOTHING

- [ ] Warm layers (sweaters and base layers)
- [ ] Interview/work clothes (black pants & shoes, button-up shirt)
- [ ] Shower shoes or sandals
- [ ] Winter wear (hat, mitts, scarf, jacket)
- [ ] Summer wear (shorts, hiking/exercise clothes)
- [ ] Waterproof raincoat
- [ ] Comfortable walking shoes

TOILETRIES

- [ ] Shampoo bar or mini shampoo/conditioner
- [ ] Towel (lightweight, quick-drying)
- [ ] Sunscreen
- [ ] First-aid kit, including bandages and common medications like ibuprofen
- [ ] Toothbrush, toothpaste & floss
- [ ] Deodorant
- [ ] Hand sanitizer

Packing Tips:

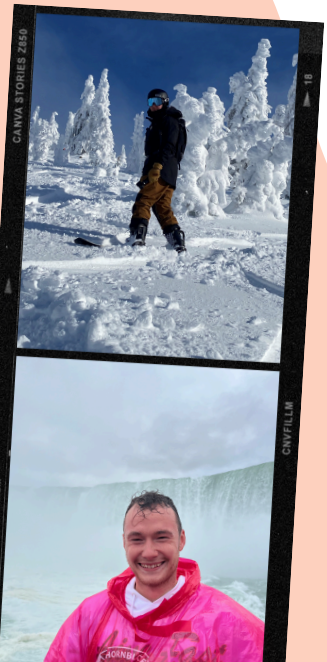
1. Pack light + leave some extra space - we promise, you'll want the space when you go back home!
2. Check with your airline about bringing skis or snowboards.
3. Don't forget to double-check the most up-to-date airline regulations.
4. Roll your clothes - it's an amazing space saver!
5. Pack an extra set of clothing – and your toiletries – in your carry-on luggage.
6. Pack all valuables in your carry-on, including all the documents you need to activate your work permit

Health & Wellbeing



Before you leave home:

- ☑ **Check in with your family doctor**. Let them know you're travelling to Canada - they should be able to help with any conditions or prescriptions.
- ☑ **Request a 90-day supply of prescription drugs.** You are allowed these in your carry-on bagge - more information here.
- ☑ **Take care of any routine dental visits or eye examinations before leaving home.**
- ☑ **Purchase insurance for the entire duration of your time in Canada.** Find the full IEC requirements here. Your insurance should cover emergency medical services, doctor visits, and repatriation. Please review your policy carefully so you understand what's covered.



Once you're in Canada:

Go to a walk-in clinic to see a doctor. You will have to pay an up-front fee ($100–$300 CAD) for this and then be reimbursed later through your insurance.

Call 811 or ask SWAP for recommendations if you're looking to go to a regular doctor or nurse.

Call 911 for any emergencies or serious accidents.

Working in Canada FAQ



1 What is the best time to arrive in Canada? Are there any times to avoid?

April to June is best! This is the start of our summer season, which is when we experience the best weather, most plentiful job opportunities across the country, and more housing availability in cities. This is also the start of the ski season hiring period (we know, it's earlier than you think!)

We don't recommend arriving in **January, February, or March.** Work is hard to find, plus the winter weather can be harsh and difficult to adjust to.

2 Can I apply for jobs before I leave home?

Yes, but there are some limitations. We strongly encourage that you **apply for ski season from home**, as most of these jobs are filled by August!

Local city jobs, especially career-level work, are the hardest to obtain from outside Canada. Most city employers will want to meet you in person and will expect you to be ready to start working immediately.

3 What types of jobs are available? Is there anything I can't do?

Nearly all job fields are open to those on a working holiday visa, but **we recommend applying for seasonal hospitality and resort work**. You may be able to find career-level work, but this is typically more competitive and takes more time to get.

Childcare and healthcare fields are prohibited to those on working holidays, unless you obtain a medical exam as part of your visa application to have this restriction lifted. The only exception to this rule is ski/snowboard instruction and camp jobs.

4 How do I find jobs with staff accommodation?

Staff housing is **usually limited to resort areas and remote locations**. In most cases, there is not enough housing for all staff members, so it's important to apply for these jobs early to ensure your best chance of securing a bed. **Ask SWAP Staff for our recommendations!**

5 Can I find a job for 1-2 months?

You can, but **working for only 1-2 months is not a common practice** in Canada. Most employers will want employees to commit for at least 4-5 months, if not longer. Sometimes you can find employers looking to fill an end-of-season contract (this happens a lot in September/October when students go back to school), but it's not a guarantee.

Useful Contacts in Canada

Service Canada
Find an office to apply for your Social Insurance Numbers (SIN).

Transport Canada
Learn more about bringing your vehicle to Canada.

Newcomer Services
Various local services available to newcomers to the country.

Canadian Border Services
Guidance for travelling into Canada and going through our borders, including travelling with goods and pets.

Contact SWAP

SWAP Toronto

SWAP Vancouver

See you in Canada soon!