

## 9 things you need to know about Canada

There are certain differences between Australia and Canada that you need to know before you go so you can blend in with the locals and start enjoying your Canadian experience from the get go.

### 1: The legal drinking age is 19 depending on the province you are in.

In British Columbia and most other province in Canada the legal drinking age is 19 years old but across the border in Alberta, and in Manitoba and Quebec it is 18. So if you are under 19 and what to go to Whistler you had better wait a year. The other thing you will notice in BC is the government run liquor stores. There are no such things as drive through bottle shops and it is only in recent times that you have been able to purchase cold beer. Normally you have to buy it warm and take it home to and cool it down. There are more and more Liquor Stores moving to put in refrigeration so it is improving and they are starting to open later and on Sundays. Whilst we are on the subject of drinking, there are some excellent craft beers being made in Canada now and the choice is immense. If you are a bit of a beer connoisseur you will love tasting all the different varieties and labels on offer.

In most bars you don't go to the bar to order your drinks, rather you take a seat and a server will come and take your order.

A Jug is called a Pitcher

Beer comes in Sleeves (Scooner) or Pints



### 2: You can get Vegemite but man, it's expensive!

If you are as big of a fan of the black breakfast spread as I am then make sure you bring enough with you to last your trip or you will be paying through the nose to stock up again. I always make sure I have plenty on hand as one of my favourite party tricks is to get Canadians to try Vegemite on toast and see their expressions as they try to swallow their first mouthful. It never gets boring.

### 3: Don't call me a Loonie!

If someone asks you for a Loonie, don't get offended, it's what they call the one dollar coin. Any guesses what they call the two dollar coin? Yep, you got it...

A Toonie! At the writing of this article there is only a .02 cent difference in the currency so your Aussie Dollars (Dollarydoos) are just about at par. If you need to transfer money from Australia to Canada then I suggest using OFX <https://www.ofx.com/en-au/> as you will get a much better deal than with the Aussie banks and it only takes about three working days.

#### 4: What you see is not what you pay.

Canada has GST like Australia however the taxes are not included in the prices but added on at the cash register. Some items have GST (Government Sales Tax) and some also have PST (Provincial Sales Tax) which can become very confusing. In BC the GST is 5% and the PST is generally 7% depending on what you are buying. This is a reminder of how much you hate the government each time you make a purchase, unlike in Australia where the GST is included in the price and we have to find alternative ways to remind ourselves of how much we hate the government.

Tipping is a big part of the Canadian culture and is applicable on most services especially in bars and restaurants. The going rate is 15% of the total bill before taxes. (you don't need to tip on the taxes) The basic wage in Canada is \$9.80 per hour so gratuities are necessary for these people to survive. Don't stiff your server... they need the money.

#### 5: You can drive on your Australian license

You can drive in Canada using your Australian license however you drive on the right hand side of the road in North America. It doesn't take too long to get used to but I suggest not driving whilst jet lagged until you get the hang of it.

Driving in winter conditions requires snow tyres. We don't know much about snow tyres in Australia but they are made of a different rubber compound that gets sticky in cold weather conditions so they grip to the icy roads. You can't drive on the highways and to ski resorts without snow tyres being on your vehicle otherwise you will be turned back by the Mounties.

Canada has one of the best driving laws I have ever seen. You can make right hand turns against a red light if it is safe to do so. This really keeps the traffic flowing and just makes good sense. They really should adopt this in Australia (but with left hand turns of course).



#### 6: Don't be a 'Dropkick' on Australia Day

Let's face it, running around the streets pissed out of your tree at a ski resort in your underwear in the middle of winter in Canada draped in an Australian flag is at least humiliating, and at most down right degrading. Being proud of your heritage is one thing but acting like a dick only makes the rest of us Australians cringe with embarrassment. Have some dignity, party hard and celebrate, but keep a lid on it. If not for your sake, for the sake of your country.

Canadians don't take too kindly to public drunkenness. It is illegal to drink alcohol in public places however if you want to sneak a cheeky beer or wine, then I suggest pouring it into a red SOLO cup first. It's the Canadian way.

## 7: Things are different here.

Cheese is Orange... It's hard to get used to

Canadian Bacon is not as common as you might think

Starters are your Entree and your Entree is your main course. (Go figure)

TimBits from Tim Hortons, you won't regret them

Poutine - French fries, cheese curds and gravy... surprisingly good

Perogies - Despite being Polish, they are very popular in Canada and make great comfort food.

Coriander = Cilantro

Cos Lettuce = Romaine

Rocket = Arugula

Sweet Potato = Yams

Prawns = Shrimps

Beanies - The traditional winter head coverings we call Beanies in Australia are referred to as Touques in Canada.

## 8: Travel insurance is a must

Traveling or skiing in Canada without travel insurance is a very risky thing to do as if you were to need medical attention it could cost you a fortune. Most credit card companies now offer free travel insurance if you book your flights on their credit cards *however*, make sure you check that they cover sporting injuries because most won't.

Some Canadian hospitals will charge \$4000.00 CAD per day plus expenses which can mount up quickly and if you end up in intensive care then it would be more like \$8,500 per day. A visit to the doctor could set you back between \$100 and \$500 per visit. Then there is ambulance fees or

being helicoptered off the mountain that could bankrupt you.

[Travel Insurance](#) is not expensive so don't risk it and please check that you are adequately covered.



## 9: Timmy Ho's Vs Starbucks - Canadian coffee culture

Coffee is big in Canada but don't expect your favourite Lygon Street brew, as it is quite different. The two main players in the coffee game are Starbucks and Tim Hortons. Starbucks originated out of Seattle and Tim Horton was a hockey player for the Toronto Maple Leafs and later started a coffee franchise that has spread the country over. There is a Starbucks or Timmy Ho's on just about every corner and they are open from very early to way late to get your caffeine fix. Some of the Starbucks are now licensed to server alcohol if your over coffee for the day.