

WORKING ABROAD

UNRAVELLING THE MAZE



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Working Abroad

Unravelling the Maze

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INTRODUCTION

Thousands of Canadians live and work abroad. The vast majority do so successfully and, for many, working overseas is an enriching experience. If you are planning to work abroad, there are many details that you will need to consider prior to departure. Preparation and careful planning will go a long way to ensure a safe and successful international work experience.

The goal of **Working Abroad: Unravelling the Maze** is to provide you with practical information to maximize the chances of a successful venture and to offer advice on what to do if things don't work out as planned. Read it before you go, and pack it in your luggage for future reference.

The Consular Affairs Bureau of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada is committed to providing effective and efficient services throughout the world to all Canadians. We understand how accidents, illness, legal problems, and linguistic and cultural differences are difficult to manage alone. If you encounter problems while working abroad, we are there

to assist you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through our network of more than 260 offices worldwide. You will find a list of these offices in the publication **Bon Voyage, But...** or on our website at www.voyage.gc.ca/alt/canoffices.asp.

BEFORE YOU GO

Finding Overseas Employment

A wide variety of international work opportunities exists around the world. If you are interested in finding overseas employment, where do you begin?

Whether you plan to find paid employment, pursue volunteer opportunities or explore new business ventures abroad, you first need to decide what you want to do and where you want to do it. You also need to seriously evaluate your job skills and decide whether you want to build on your previous work experience or do something altogether new. You will find Alan Cumyn's **What in the World Is Going On?** an excellent resource as you begin this process. The guide will help you assess your personal and professional goals, plan your job-hunting strategy and secure the overseas job you want.

Surprisingly, only about 20% of international managers perform effectively overseas, according to research conducted over the past 40 years. Although most of them are considered technically competent, they lack the intercultural skills needed for effective international performance. That is why the Centre for Intercultural Learning at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada and Daniel Kealey, PhD, developed an online test — the Intercultural Living and Working Inventory — to help people assess their intercultural effectiveness skills and their readiness for undertaking an international assignment. For more information, visit the Centre's website (www.intercultures.gc.ca) or call **1-800-852-9211** (in Canada) or **819-997-1197**.

The next step will be to look for opportunities on the Internet, in newspapers or magazines, or with placement agencies. Local newspapers not only contain job listings, but can also help you appreciate the cultural and political environment of your destination. Find them on the Web at www.ipl.org/div/news, or check a university or public library, newsagent, or the closest embassy or consulate of that country.

If you are unsure about the length of time you want to work abroad, you might consider looking for short-term projects, such as youth exchanges, internships, professional exchanges, work-and-learn programs or working holidays. A short-term placement may give you the experience and background you need to decide whether you want to work abroad for an extended period.

International Youth Programs

Each year, young Canadians can choose from more than 30,000 opportunities to travel and work abroad in about 40 different countries. These opportunities are made possible through reciprocal arrangements that Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) has negotiated with host countries.

Through these programs, Canadians 18 to 35 years of age can experience world travel and enjoy the many benefits of living and working abroad. As a participant, you can gain valuable global experience and skills.

For more information, call **1-877-go123go**, e-mail pcee@international.gc.ca, or visit www.canada123go.ca.

Evaluating Job Offers

If you are offered a job overseas, it is important to investigate it carefully before you accept. The more preparation and research you do in Canada, the more successful your employment abroad is likely to be.

Find out as much as you can about the organization or company that is offering you a job. Ask for references, visit its website and call your local Better Business Bureau (if the organization or company is Canadian). Contact others who have worked for the organization or company, or ask to speak to someone currently employed there.

Examine the terms of your contract carefully or have it reviewed by a lawyer. Keep in mind that it is never a good idea to accept a job overseas if the details are not going to be spelled out until your arrival.

Make sure that the financial and other conditions of the job offer are carefully detailed and that you fully understand them. For instance, you should know what currency your salary will be paid in and when you will be receiving your first paycheque. Having your salary paid in Canadian or U.S. dollars will prevent problems due to exchange rate fluctuations. If you will be paid in local currency, find out if the currency is

convertible and, if not, whether there are restrictions on taking funds out of the country.

You should also be aware of the cost of living where you are going, since a good salary in Canada may not be sufficient there. For information, check the "Canadian foreign post indexes" published by Statistics Canada (www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/62-013-XIE/free.htm).

Before accepting any offer, verify the conditions to break your contract if things simply don't work out. To be on the safe side, plan ahead: establish an "emergency fund" or make prior arrangements with family or friends to assist you financially.

Understand the arrangements for your work visa. Although your employer may take on the responsibility of obtaining your work visa for you, it is up to you to ensure that all measures are legitimate and consistent with the requirements of the country concerned. Refer to the section entitled "What Documents Do You Need?" for details.

Avoid risky ventures. Always remain sceptical of overseas placement firms that operate solely by telephone or mail, and avoid companies that charge advance fees for placement. Women should be particularly

way of employment opportunities that offer quick and easy money for entertainment or hostess jobs. Many are thinly veiled prostitution rings. For more information, visit www.voyage.gc.ca/alt/scams.asp

Some employers may say they will offer you a ticket home upon completion of the contract or will reimburse the costs of your trip. Be aware that sometimes this commitment is not honoured. It would be better to request an open-ended round-trip ticket in advance.

It is also wise to take with you extra copies of your résumé, degrees, diplomas and other certificates, and reference letters so that you have the option of pursuing other job opportunities while you are abroad. If you carry an electronic copy of your résumé, you will be able to update it as you go. Find out, however, what the requirements are if you decide to change jobs or companies, as doing so may render your visa or work permit invalid. For more details, see the subsection entitled “Visa and Work Permit.”

Learn About Your Destination

Take the time to learn about the political, cultural and economic environment of your destination. The working conditions and pace of life may be very different from what you are used to, affecting your personal life, work habits and job satisfaction. Read as much as you can and try to talk to people who have worked in the same country or for the same organization.

Your research will help you find out the do’s and don’ts of social life abroad. Making your first contact will be easier if you know how to greet people, how to dress and how to behave in your new work environment.

Some countries experience ongoing wars, insurgencies or sporadic unrest. Find out if your destination is known to be dangerous. Consult the Travel Report for that country and the Current Issues section of our website for up-to-date information on safety and security conditions, health issues, and entry and visa requirements for over 200 destinations.

When you are abroad, you will be able to tune in to Radio Canada International (RCI) for the latest news. RCI also broadcasts messages from the Canadian government during emergency situations.

Consult our Country Profiles (www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/ctry/profiles-en.asp) for useful information and links to:

- ✓ the Country Travel Report;
- ✓ a detailed map, fact sheet and “e-thology”;
- ✓ the Canadian government office(s) in the selected country;
- ✓ Cultural Insights, a snapshot of the social and cultural norms as well as the workplace environment that a Canadian might face working in a given country;
- ✓ other resources such as *Aboriginal Planet, Canada and the Circumpolar World, Canada and the Commonwealth, and Canada in La Francophonie*;
- ✓ trade and investment information from the Trade Commissioner Service.

What Documents Do You Need? Passport

You and all family members must have a valid passport before taking up residence abroad. Remember, the practice of adding a child’s name to a parent’s passport is no longer permitted. This security measure is also intended to help protect children and combat child slavery and prostitution. (More information

on children’s issues is available at www.voyage.gc.ca/alt/pubs.asp)

Application forms are available online at www.passportcanada.gc.ca (Passport Canada website), at Passport Canada offices and postal outlets in Canada, and at Canadian government offices abroad. There are separate forms for adults and children. The processing of an application accompanied by the required documentation usually takes up to two weeks if it is presented in person at a passport issuing office, or up to eight weeks if it is mailed in. Allow more time if you need a visa, since a valid passport is required before you can apply for a visa. So plan to apply well before your departure..

Your passport is valid for five years. If you are travelling with children, you should be aware that their passports are valid for five years if they are three to 15 years old, and for only three years if they are younger. Check with your host country’s embassy or consulate accredited to Canada for its rules and restrictions regarding passport validity and expiration.

Some countries will not let you enter if your passport is within six months of expiry. Once living overseas, you should continue to maintain a valid passport.

Before you leave Canada, be sure to complete the **In case of accident or death notify** section in your passport. This will help us quickly notify family or friends if an emergency arises.

You should also prepare a passport emergency kit in case your passport is lost or stolen. This should include:

- a photocopy of the identification page in your passport;
- the original of your birth or citizenship certificate;
- a copy of at least one current document to support your identity and the name to appear in the passport;
- the address and telephone number of the Canadian government office abroad in the country in which you plan to work;
- two recent photos meeting Passport Canada specifications.

Keeping this information in a safe place separate from your passport will save you time and money should you lose the originals. For added security, you may also want to leave a kit with a friend or relative at home.

If your passport is lost or stolen while you are outside Canada, report the loss or theft to the local police, obtain a copy of the police report and immediately contact the nearest

Canadian government office for a replacement. Before a new passport can be issued, you must complete an application form, produce written evidence of your Canadian citizenship (a birth or citizenship certificate and at least one current supplementary document to support your identity), present two recent photos, pay the required fee and complete a “Statutory Declaration Concerning a Lost, Stolen, Damaged, Destroyed or Inaccessible Canadian Passport or Travel Document” (Form PPT 203).

Consult www.passportcanada.gc.ca or call **1-800-567-6868** if you have questions about passports.

Visa and Work Permit

All countries require you to obtain special permission for entry when you plan to work. This permission is called a visa or work permit.

Only the country concerned can provide you with definitive and official information on entry requirements. Before you go, you should obtain the required visa or work permit from that country’s embassy or consulate accredited to Canada. Check our Country Travel Reports for contact information. Initiate the process well in advance of your departure date, as obtaining a visa or work permit can take several months.

Note that your work visa may have special provisions concerning departure and re-entry. If you plan to travel while working overseas, enquire about the process of obtaining a multiple-entry visa to avoid future difficulties.

To change your employment after your arrival, you may have to leave and re-enter the country under a different visa or work permit. Verify the requirements with the Canadian embassy or one of its consulates in the host country before moving to a new job.

Working without an appropriate visa or overstaying a visa is illegal; if caught, you may be subject to imprisonment, a fine and/or deportation. You may also be barred from re-entry to that country.

Medical Certificate or Proof of HIV Testing

Some countries include a medical certificate or proof of HIV testing as an entry requirement, particularly for long-term residents and students. Again, contact the embassy or consulate of the country concerned for the latest information. Have the test conducted and obtain the results **before** you leave.

Residency Permits

If you are planning to work for a long time abroad, you may need a residency permit. This permit gives a non-national the right to live in a foreign country. Consult the embassy or a consulate of the country concerned for further information.

Alien Registration Card

When you arrive in your host country, you may also need to obtain an alien registration card. You will be required to carry it at all times for identification purposes and as proof of your status, and you will have to turn it in before your departure.

International Driver’s Licence

Contact your local Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) office to find out the procedures for obtaining an international driver’s licence. Keep in mind, however, that some countries require foreigners to apply for a local licence after a certain period. Make enquiries before leaving Canada or at the time of your arrival. In addition, it is important that you educate yourself on the traffic rules and procedures of your host country before you get behind the wheel. Always carry your car insurance policy with you when driving in case of an accident.

Housing

If your contract provides for housing, request a detailed description or photos, a floor plan, and a furniture inventory in advance. “Western” and “furnished” have different meanings in different places. Ask about the neighbourhood and transportation services. Verify whether you will have to share accommodation with someone else. By doing your homework before you leave, you increase the chances of being satisfied upon arrival.

If housing is not part of the agreement, it may be difficult to find suitable accommodation. For example, if your destination is a university city and you will be arriving in September, there may be few options left. Moreover, housing in some countries is very expensive. Start your research early. Look on the Internet, ask your future employer, call any contacts you have in the destination community, and use your network of friends and relatives for advice and suggestions.

Dual Citizenship

Holding dual citizenship does not necessarily mean you can work in the other country. Obtaining Canadian citizenship may have led to the loss of your other citizenship without your knowledge. Call the country’s embassy or consulate

accredited to Canada to ask for a definitive ruling on your status.

If your citizenship status is clear and you decide to work in your country of second nationality, you could be under certain obligations. For instance, you may be required to perform obligatory military service or you could lose your right to protection and assistance from Canadian consular officials. For more information, refer to our online publication **Dual Citizenship: What Travellers Should Know**.

If you do run into problems because of your dual nationality, contact the nearest Canadian government office abroad immediately.

Health-Related Issues

The Public Health Agency of Canada strongly recommends that you contact a travel medicine clinic or your physician six to eight weeks before departure. Based on an **individual risk assessment**, a health care provider can determine your need for immunizations and any special precautions that will help you avoid disease while abroad.

For more information or to obtain a list of travel clinics in your area, contact the Public Health Agency of Canada at **613-957-8739** or consult www.travelhealth.gc.ca.

A list of travel clinics may also be obtained from the Canadian Society for International Health at www.csih.org or **613-241-5785**.

Vaccinations

Before travelling to any destination, find out **well in advance of your departure** if you need any special vaccinations or preventive medications for such illnesses as yellow fever, typhoid, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis or malaria.

For instance, a meningococcal vaccination is required for pilgrims travelling to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for the annual hajj; and an International Certificate of Vaccination for yellow fever is a legal requirement to enter certain countries. You may need to start receiving your vaccination shots or taking medication **six to eight weeks before you leave**.

Also ensure that your immunizations — diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella — are up-to-date. Other immunization requirements will vary according to your age, existing medical conditions, and the nature and duration of your time abroad.

If you are travelling with infants or small children, you may need to arrange an alternative or accelerated childhood immunization schedule for

them. Talk to your pediatrician, family doctor or travel medicine clinic.

AIDS

When you are outside Canada, take the same precautions you do at home. Do not assume that condoms will be readily available. Even if they are, they may not meet the safety standards set by the World Health Organization.

In some countries you should avoid hospitals or dental facilities due to poor hygiene standards. For country-specific information, consult our Travel Reports.

Remember, using intravenous drugs is not only illegal but also extremely risky — especially if you share needles.

Medication

If you take medication, be sure to pack an extra supply or make arrangements for resupply in case you are away for longer than expected. Having a duplicate of your original prescription is highly recommended. Also, carry an extra prescription that lists both the generic and the trade names of any drug you are taking, in case your medication is lost or stolen. This is also a good idea if you wear glasses or contact lenses — having the prescription makes it easier to replace them.

Don't try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container. Keep all medications in the original, labelled container to avoid problems.

Find out whether your medication is sold in the country where you will be working. Also check to make sure it is legal. Some over-the-counter medications in Canada are illegal in other countries or require a prescription. Obtaining a note from your doctor that states the medical reasons for your prescription and the recommended dosage is also encouraged.

If you need syringes for a medical condition such as diabetes, it is very important that you take an appropriate supply. As well, you should have a medical certificate that shows they are needed for medical use.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition that could present a problem while abroad, it is wise to wear a MedicAlert® bracelet. Through the MedicAlert® Foundation, your vital medical facts become part of a database that can be accessed 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

Pregnancy

If you are pregnant and plan to work abroad, talk to your doctor. Some vaccinations may not be recommended. Also, check your health

insurance plan carefully to ensure it covers health complications arising from pregnancy.

Health Insurance

It is unlikely that your health insurance in Canada will provide adequate coverage while you are abroad. You must obtain appropriate health insurance before you leave. Make sure you understand the terms of your policy; it should cover all your needs and those of all accompanying dependants. There is nothing worse than being ill and on your own in a foreign country, and having to worry about large financial obligations. Health insurance is one of the best investments you can make.

Out-of-country health insurance is available through travel agents or directly from insurers and brokers listed in the Yellow Pages™.

There are many points to consider, depending on your destination and insurance needs, including:

- Does the insurer require that your government health insurance plan remain in effect?
- Does the insurer have an in-house worldwide emergency hotline you can call if you are in trouble? Does this hotline operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Is the operator multilingual? Does the insurer have nurses or physicians on staff?

- Are foreign hospital and related medical costs paid directly, or are you required to pay up front and seek reimbursement later?
- Will the insurer provide a cash deposit in advance if a hospital requires it?
- Does the insurance cover medical evacuation to the nearest place with proper medical care or to Canada, along with any required medical escorts?
- Does the plan offer fully insured evacuation and assistance services, or will you be required to absorb these costs?
- Are pre-existing medical conditions covered? If such conditions exist, notify the insurer and get an agreement in writing that you are covered for these conditions. Otherwise, you could find your claim "null and void." If pre-existing medical conditions are not covered, carefully consider the cost and availability of services related to your condition in the destination country.
- Are premature births and related neonatal care covered?
- Does the insurance cover costs associated with a death abroad, including the return of remains to Canada?
- Does the policy cover return visits to Canada or other travel during your work contract? Are there any

- limitations on vacation travel? Would supplemental coverage be required?
- When you move back to Canada, will the policy cover any necessary waiting period before your government plan is renewed, or will a separate plan be required?

Keep a supply of insurance claim forms handy. Always carry a copy of your insurance policy with you, along with the telephone numbers of the insurer's service centre. This information should also be left with a friend or relative at home and a co-worker or friend in the country where you will be working.

If you pay for medical attention out of your own pocket, obtain a **detailed invoice** from the doctor or hospital. Most insurance companies will not accept copies or faxes. Keep a copy of the submitted documents for your files.

When you arrive in the destination country, make a point of locating the nearest reputable clinic or hospital. Don't wait for an emergency; it may be too late! The local Canadian government office will be able to provide information on clinics and hospitals (for a list of Canadian government offices abroad, consult the publication **Bon Voyage, But...**).

WHY IS INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

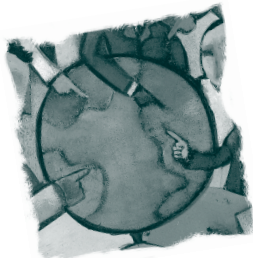
HERE ARE 10 REASONS TO PACK IT IN YOUR LUGGAGE:

1 Health insurance is one of the best investments you can make.

Accidents or illnesses can happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime. All it takes is an unguarded moment or exposure to a harmful virus, and you or your family could be indebted for many years.

2 Some hospitals will not admit you unless you have insurance or can pay up front, regardless of your medical condition.

3 You cannot take medicare for granted when you work outside Canada, even for short periods. Your government health insurance plan (GHIP) will foot only a portion of the bills.



4 Your GHIP may terminate after you have lived outside Canada for a certain period of time.

5 With certain exceptions, when you return to Canada

there will be a wait of up to three months before you can benefit again from your GHIP.

6 A comprehensive travel insurance plan can help you leave a country, at no extra cost, in the event of a major medical emergency for which local facilities are inadequate.

7 Travelling to a country where war or civil unrest is a concern may require specialized insurance to ensure full protection.

*Most trips abroad
go off without a hitch.
Unfortunately, accidents and
illnesses sometimes do occur.*



*They can turn your stay abroad into a nightmare.
So don't forget one key ingredient
to your success: your travel insurance.*

8 Should you decide to extend a business trip to take a holiday, you may need additional coverage besides your employer's policy.

9 Many people take advantage of being abroad to try new things. If you plan to participate in any hazardous activity — scuba diving, parachuting, rock climbing, hiking, alpine skiing, etc. — check the limitations of your insurance coverage first.

10 Do not assume that your Canadian automobile insurance or the coverage purchased with your rental vehicle will provide adequate protection in the event of an accident or theft. Much of the coverage we take for granted in Canada is not available abroad. Make sure you know what coverage is in place before you drive.

Insurers can take the worry out of working abroad. Their protection will go a long way in ensuring a safe and pleasant foreign work experience.



Other Insurance

Planning to drive while abroad? Keep in mind that most countries have laws that require drivers to have adequate insurance. Personal insurance is important, too. There are companies in Canada that will sell you insurance no matter where you are going to be. Where possible, purchase your insurance from one of these companies, as their procedures may be more familiar to you.

It is possible that the company employing you overseas will make arrangements for health and other types of insurance for you. However, rather than making this assumption, check with the company's human resources department to find out your status and coverage. If you are not totally covered, take the necessary steps to rectify this. Also, confirm that coverage applies to your accompanying spouse, partner and children, if applicable.

Regulations for Pets

If you are planning to take your pet overseas, call the host country's embassy or consulate accredited to Canada well in advance of your departure to obtain information on all the requirements. At a minimum, your pet will need a detailed health certificate and may need an import permit. Your pet may also be required to undergo a period of quarantine

before or upon entering the country. When returning home, you will have to follow similar procedures and present a certificate stating that your dog or cat is currently vaccinated for rabies. For additional information on dogs and cats, or for information on other pets (which often require an import permit before they can return to Canada), contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Practical and Financial Issues Money Matters

Before you leave Canada, make sure you will have enough money with you to get properly settled. Although some companies provide a settlement allowance, keep in mind that it may be several weeks before you receive your first paycheque. Consult a bank or a foreign currency agent to find out the most appropriate currency to take with you. Canadian currency and traveller's cheques in Canadian dollars are not always accepted. Traveller's cheques in U.S. dollars are often the safest and most convenient option.

Be aware that your debit card or credit card will not necessarily be usable in another country. Check with your bank for information on ATM services in other countries. You can also consult the websites of VISA (<http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global>) and MasterCard

(www.mastercard.com/atmlocator/index.jsp) for the addresses of ATMs around the world. Your bank can advise if you need a new personal identification number (PIN) for overseas access to your account.

If credit cards are accepted, it is always a good idea to take at least one card with you. Although you may choose not to use it, it will provide you with some peace of mind. Keep it in a safe place for unexpected expenses or emergencies.

Before leaving Canada, make sure you have settled all your financial obligations or make arrangements to do so while you are abroad. This may involve setting up automatic payments from your Canadian bank account to cover outstanding or ongoing commitments.

Online Banking

Most banks can provide a variety of services to assist you in managing your finances from outside Canada. Some allow you to access your account 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from anywhere in the world with online and telephone banking. You can check balances, pay bills and transfer funds as you wish. If you are not familiar with e-banking, ask someone at your financial institution to show you how it works before you go. If you will not have

access to a computer while abroad, many websites — such as www.cybercaptive.com — can help you locate cybercafés around the world. Once you have completed your transactions at a cybercafé, don't forget to erase all traces of your messages.

Taxes

If you are living abroad but maintain residential ties in Canada, you are considered a factual resident of Canada for taxation purposes. However, there may be other factors involved, so you should review your situation with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) before you leave in order to avoid surprises. The CRA publication T4131, **Canadian Residents Abroad**, provides excellent information for individuals.

The CRA's International Tax Services Office processes income tax returns for non-residents and deemed residents of Canada, including Canadians working overseas. It also provides general assistance by telephone, correspondence and counter service, and looks after all non-resident tax withholding accounts.

You may also wish to consult a private financial planner, who can provide advice and guidance on such matters as contributing to a

Registered Retirement Savings Plan and the Canada Pension Plan while you are abroad.

Making a Will

You should make a will before you leave. If the worst happens, it will prevent some of the complications associated with a death abroad. If you are planning a long stay, you might consider having two wills — one for Canada and one for the foreign country — since different legislation will apply.

Mail

It is important to make sure your mail is moving abroad with you. Before you go, fill out a change of address notice for Canada Post and inform all your contacts, including financial institutions, relatives and friends, of your new address. If you plan to use an e-mail service, make sure you have all the addresses you need before you go. You can e-mail a message to yourself containing valuable information like postal and electronic addresses, phone numbers, hotel confirmation numbers, traveller's cheque identification numbers, and so on. You can then retrieve the information anywhere that has Internet access.

Shipping Your Belongings

Shipping your goods and household effects to another country can be

costly. Find out what you need to take, and ship only what you will not be able to find locally. Keep in mind that you may need adapters for your electrical appliances. Ask if your employer will partially or fully cover the costs of moving your belongings or provide you with essential items when you arrive. Make an inventory of the household effects stored and shipped.

As well, find out ahead of time what you are allowed to take with you. Most countries have stringent import controls.

Avoiding Customs Difficulties

Before going abroad with valuable items, you can take advantage of a free identification procedure at any Canadian customs office. This service is available for items that have serial numbers or other unique markings. Alternatively, in certain circumstances, customs officers may apply a sticker to an item to give it an accounting number.

Jewellery often has significant value and can be difficult to identify. To make it easier to re-enter Canada with jewellery, contact your nearest customs office to find out the steps you should take to identify items of jewellery prior to your departure.

Personal Issues and Concerns

People with a Disability

Many countries do not provide access for people in wheelchairs or make allowances for those with special hearing, sight or other physical requirements. For more information, refer to the Frequently Asked Questions section of our website, check the Canadian Transportation Agency website or talk to others who have lived in your host country in the past.

Canadians with disabilities who hold a valid parking permit in Canada may take their permit with them for use in any of the 48 member and associate member countries of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT). Be sure to check with local authorities there to determine entitlement. For more information, consult the ECMT or Transport Canada website.

Women Working Abroad

If you are a woman planning to work overseas, find out everything you can about the culture and customs, and the role of women, in the country concerned. Knowing what to expect will help you prepare yourself.

Unfortunately, the possibility of a sexual assault is a reality in all countries. If this happens to you while you

are abroad, you should immediately seek the assistance of the nearest medical and police authorities.

Canadian consular officials can:

- assist in reporting the crime to the police;
- provide support and assistance in relation to the emotional, social, medical and legal consequences of the assault;
- assist in contacting relatives or friends;
- contact counselling services locally, if available, or in Canada;
- provide emergency financial assistance;
- assist in finding accommodations, arranging flights home and meeting basic safety needs;
- ensure that a proper investigation is carried out and charges are laid if the person responsible has been identified.

For practical advice specifically of interest to women, obtain a copy of our booklet *Her Own Way: A Woman's Guide to Safe and Successful Travel*.

Moving Overseas with Children

Immigration authorities in most countries, including Canada, are vigilant about documentation for children crossing international borders. Unless a child has a valid Canadian passport or is accompa-

nied by both natural parents, he or she needs special documentation in addition to proof of citizenship.

If only one parent is escorting the child, certified consent from the other parent must be presented, in addition to a copy of any separation or divorce decree. This consent is required even if the separation or divorce documents award custody of the child to the accompanying parent.

If you have school-age children, education is probably the most significant issue you will need to consider. It is important that you secure appropriate schooling for your children before leaving Canada. Carry copies of your children's school records in case you need them. To help your family prepare for the move, have an open discussion where everybody has a chance to express his or her feelings and concerns. A helpful book on this topic is **Culture Shock! A Parent's Guide** (see the For More Information section). It offers practical advice, explaining the do's and don'ts of living abroad with children.

Working abroad can put an added strain on family relationships. If you are moving to another country with your child and there is a possibility of a custody dispute developing

while you are there, you should talk to a lawyer before you leave. A special publication, **International Child Abductions: A Manual for Parents**, is available from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

Language Training

If you are proficient in English, French or both, you have a good language base for working in many areas of the world and communicating effectively. But if you are planning to work in a country that is neither Anglophone nor Francophone, you will have communication problems. If you intend to learn the language of your host country, you might consider beginning your studies before your departure by obtaining audiotapes or registering in a language course.

Culture Shock

Many people who work overseas experience what is commonly referred to as culture shock. Although its intensity varies from one individual to another, most people experience a period of cultural adjustment.

During the first stage, often described as the honeymoon, all encounters in the new place are perceived as exciting and positive. In the second stage, sometimes called the "emptiness phase," foreigners feel a sense of dislocation and a general unease.

Symptoms include:

- feelings of anger, frustration or irritability, and loss of their sense of humour;
- withdrawal, spending excessive amounts of time alone, or spending time only with Canadians or other foreigners and avoiding contact with locals;
- negative feelings about the people and culture of the host country;
- compulsive eating and drinking, or a need for excessive amounts of sleep;
- boredom, tiredness and an inability to concentrate or work effectively.

During the third and final stage, foreigners start to accept their new surroundings and make a compromise between the honeymoon and the emptiness phases. To better deal with culture shock, learn to recognize the symptoms. You will then be able to react quickly and efficiently to overcome its effects.

You should also be aware that you might experience a reverse form of culture shock after living abroad. Be prepared to face a period of readjustment when you return to Canada. For more information about the symptoms of culture shock and coping strategies, see the Coping

with Culture Shock page and the recommendations for further reading in the For More Information section.

Preparing for Your Return Before You Leave

Before you leave Canada, it is a good idea to assess how working abroad fits into the context of your career and life goals. Bear in mind that, after living overseas, returning to Canada can be difficult and stressful. Coming home can make some people feel very unsettled and can even lead to depression.

If possible, make some preparations for your return before you leave. For example, if you already have a job in Canada, you might want to ask about taking a leave of absence. If you are planning to return to college or university, make sure that you have all the necessary forms with you or arrange to have them sent overseas, so that you do not miss application deadlines. Keep in mind that maintaining a strong support network in Canada while you are abroad is likely to make coming back much easier. Trying to envisage your return before you have even left may seem unnecessary, but a little advance planning could go a long way toward easing your return.

COPING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

Probably the best overall strategy for coping with the various manifestations of culture shock is to make a conscious effort to adjust to the new culture. Here are some suggestions on how to make yourself feel more at home in your new surroundings:

✓ **Get involved in some aspect of the new culture.**

Whether you study art or music, or learn a new sport or martial art, being an interested student will make a world of difference.



✓ **Make friends and develop relationships.**

Make an effort to meet people. This will help you overcome cultural differences and understand the country and its people.

Interacting with locals

will also show you how to be more sensitive to cultural norms and expectations.

✓ **Take time to learn the language.**

It always helps to understand as much as possible of what people are saying. They will appreciate your effort to communicate with them in their own language, even if it is just a few simple phrases, and it will make your daily life much easier, too. Carry a small notebook with you and jot down a couple of new phrases each day.

✓ **Take care of yourself.** Eat well, exercise and take the time to sleep. Be careful with alcohol.

✓ **Travel.** Take the time to be a tourist and explore the country's sights.

✓ **Maintain contact with friends and family back home.** Writing home about your experiences and problems can help you sort through them. It is also a good idea to keep a journal of your feelings and thoughts.

✓ **Do something that reminds you of home.** This can really boost your spirits when you are feeling homesick. So make sure you have packed your favourite music or hobbies.

✓ **Avoid idealizing life back home.** Try to make the most of your stay and consciously adopt an open mind.

WORKING ABROAD

Registering at a Canadian Government Office Abroad

You are advised to register at the nearest Canadian government office abroad, so that you can be contacted in an emergency. Registration is voluntary, and information provided is protected and used in accordance with the Privacy Act. You can register online at www.voyage.gc.ca/main/sos/rocapage-en.asp.

In countries where Canada has no direct representation, there may be arrangements in place for you to register with another country's embassy or consulate. For instance, Canada has a formal reciprocal agreement with Australia.

Consular Assistance

Canadian government offices abroad are ready to help you in case of an emergency. In some instances, there may be a fee for services.

Consular staff can:

- contact your relatives or friends and ask them to send you emergency funds, at your request;
- help you during emergencies such as natural disasters and civil or military uprisings;
- direct you to sources of information about local laws, regulations, cultural customs and visas;

- assist with medical emergencies;
- replace passports (fees apply). However, not all offices are authorized to issue regular passports;
- try to ensure equitable treatment under local laws if you are arrested. At your request, they can inform relatives and friends about your arrest and try to ensure that legal rights and processes are extended to you consistent with the standards of the host country. However, they cannot set aside local laws if you are charged with an offence, or intervene in the judicial process of a foreign country. They cannot post bail, pay for a lawyer or pay your fines;
- notify your next of kin, with your authorization, regarding an accident or death and let them know whether, and how, they can help.

Emergency Consular Services

Canadian government offices abroad offer 24-hour assistance. Outside of office hours, your telephone call will automatically be transferred to a consular officer in Ottawa or you will be asked to leave a message for a return call. In either case, there will be a prompt response. If you leave a recorded message, make sure that it is clear and that you leave a complete telephone number or contact address. In addition, you can call us collect in Ottawa at **613-996-8885**.

Voting

Canadian citizens can, under certain conditions, vote in federal elections when they are temporarily living or travelling outside Canada. To vote by special mail-in ballot, you must first register by sending an Application for Registration and Special Ballot form to Elections Canada. Information on how to register and vote by special mail-in ballot is available on the Elections Canada website. During an election, all registered electors will receive a voting kit with instructions. For more information, contact Elections Canada.

Opening a Bank Account

You may wish to set up a bank account in your host country that is fed by funds from your Canadian account. To do this, you will need to go to a local foreign exchange bank with your passport, your alien registration card and Canadian banking information (your branch and account number). Usually, someone who can speak English or French will be available to assist you. The process can be complicated and time-consuming, and you should make sure that you have a source of funds during this period. Retain all documentation on financial transfers, as you may need it for local income tax purposes.

It is also important to establish how much money you are allowed to send home. The amount of money you are permitted to leave with or to transfer may be strictly regulated by your host country. Keep all receipts and transaction records.

Exchange money only with authorized agents to avoid violating local laws.

Budgeting

Once you are abroad, it may be difficult to assess how much money you can spend due to changes in your needs or unfamiliarity with the local currency and prices. If you overspend and run out of money, it may take a while before your friends and relatives in Canada can lend you a hand. Plan accordingly.

Buying a Car

Before buying a car, verify with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) if you will be allowed to import the car upon your return. For detailed information, consult the CBSA brochure **Importing a Vehicle into Canada**, visit their website (www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca) or contact the CBSA.

Marriage and Divorce

In other countries, the procedures surrounding relationships can be more difficult than at home. If you decide to marry while you are abroad, make sure you understand the local

requirements and laws. Although same-sex marriages are legal in Canada, they are not recognized in many countries. Homosexual activity is illegal in some countries. For more information, consult our Country Travel Reports and the Frequently Asked Questions section of our website (www.voyage.gc.ca/main/before/faq/marriage-en.asp). Further information is also available on the Amnesty International website.

If your future spouse is not a Canadian citizen, find out whether he or she will be eligible to travel back to Canada with you on either a temporary or a permanent basis. This information can be obtained from the nearest Canadian government office abroad.

Divorce or separation can be more complicated abroad than in Canada. Property settlement and child custody issues will be different, too. If your spouse is a citizen of the country in which you are living, he or she may have more rights than you do as a foreigner. Always make sure you understand the local laws and procedures. Establish whether what you plan to do locally will be legally recognized on your return to Canada. Do nothing without the advice and guidance of a lawyer.

Childbirth

If you or your spouse gives birth to a child during your stay abroad, contact the Canadian embassy or one of its consulates in your host country to find out how to get a Canadian citizenship card and a passport for the baby. Start the process early since it may be time-consuming.

Respecting Local Customs and Laws

Difficult situations or frustrating confrontations can sometimes occur if you are unaware of the local customs and laws of your host country. Be wise and learn ahead of time what behaviour is appropriate and what is likely to offend the local citizens. For example, consumption of alcohol is illegal in certain countries.

Thousands of Canadians are currently imprisoned abroad for various offences. Keep in mind that while you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and regulations. Ignorance is no defence, and your Canadian citizenship offers you no immunity.

If you are arrested or detained, you can request that the arresting officer inform the nearest Canadian government office abroad. You will need a lawyer, and the consular official can refer you to one who speaks English.

In the meantime, be aware that what you say can be used against you. Avoid making any statements unless your lawyer is present. Do not sign anything in a language you do not understand without the permission of your lawyer.

Drugs

Most countries impose severe penalties for the possession of even a minuscule amount of illegal drugs. Even prescription drugs and syringes used for legitimate medical purposes come under intense scrutiny and should therefore have proper accompanying documentation. As previously mentioned, keep all drugs in their original containers and carry the prescriptions with you.

Choose your travelling companions wisely. Do not pick up hitchhikers. Never agree to take any parcel that is not yours across a border.

For more information, consult the Drugs and Travel section of our website (www.voyage.gc.ca/main/drugs_menu-en.asp) and our publication **Drugs and Travel: Why They Don't Mix**.

RETURNING TO CANADA

Departure Tax

Some countries impose a departure tax or service fee at the airport or point of departure. Prior to leaving, make sure you set aside enough money, in local funds, to pay this tax.

Settling Your Obligations

It is important that you settle all your obligations before leaving your host country. For example, make sure you pay all your local bills or make acceptable arrangements to do so. It may also be a good idea to obtain a letter of release from domestic or other employees, if applicable, stating that you are free of any obligation to them. In addition, you will need to meet all local tax requirements and obtain clearance from the local tax authorities before you will be allowed to leave.

Bringing Home Your Belongings

When you return to Canada, you will need to present proper identification. Depending on how long you have resided outside Canada, you may be subject to special import provisions for household items and personal belongings on your return. You will require either receipts for goods acquired outside the country or a list of all goods you are importing. Customs enforces regulations on

behalf of many different government departments. There are complex restrictions on the importation of, among other things, food, and animal and plant products.

For specific details, obtain a copy of the brochure **Moving Back to Canada**, or contact the Canada Border Services Agency.

Currency and Monetary Instruments Reporting

The Government of Canada has introduced the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act. Under this new legislation, there are no restrictions on the amount of money that you can bring into or take out of Canada, nor is it illegal to do so. However, you now have to report to a customs officer amounts equal to or greater than C\$10,000. For more information, refer to the CBSA brochure entitled **Crossing the Border With \$10,000 or More?**

Illegal Souvenirs

Before you purchase an animal or plant, or a product made from animals or plants, be sure you know what rules and regulations apply. Many attractive items sold in foreign countries are made from endangered plants or animals. Live cactus and orchid plants, ivory bracelets and carvings, as well as marine turtle

shells, are some of the more common items illegally brought back to Canada. These items are included in the more than 30,000 species of wild animals and plants regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). A violation of CITES could lead to seizure of your purchase, as well as a fine and/or prison term. Contact Environment Canada for details.

Also, be aware that it is forbidden to bring home cultural property whose sale or export is banned or controlled by its country of origin. Strict penalties may be imposed, and the cultural property can be confiscated and returned to the country of origin. For more information, contact Canadian Heritage or the embassy of the country concerned.

Social Insurance Number and Government Health Insurance Plan

If you have worked abroad for a long time, your social insurance number (SIN) may be flagged as dormant. The number still belongs to you. To have your SIN reactivated when you return, you will be required to accurately identify yourself. For more information, visit Service Canada's site at www.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/sc/sin/index.shtml or call **1-800-206-7218**.

Remember that, when you return, there may be a waiting period before your government health insurance becomes effective. To renew your coverage, you will have to contact the health department of your province or territory to register and fulfill the waiting period. Apply for reinstatement immediately upon arrival. The page http://canada.gc.ca/othergov/prov_e.html will help you find links to the official sites of Canada's provinces and territories.

Health Concerns

If you become sick or feel unwell on your return to Canada, see a doctor promptly. Inform the doctor that you have been living outside Canada, and where. Likewise, if you were ill while you were abroad, see your doctor on your return and explain your medical history and any treatment you received.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada Consular Affairs Bureau

www.voyage.gc.ca

General

Tel.: 1-800-267-6788 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-944-6788
E-mail: voyage@international.gc.ca
TTY: 1-800-394-3472 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-944-1310

Emergencies

Tel.: 613-996-8885
(call collect from abroad)
E-mail: sos@international.gc.ca

More Brochures (free)

Access our safe-travel brochures at www.voyage.gc.ca or call 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada) or 613-944-4000.

Country Travel Reports (free)

These reports (www.voyage.gc.ca) provide information on safety and security conditions, health issues and entry requirements for over 200 travel destinations. This information is also available by phone.
Tel.: 1-800-267-6788 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-944-6788

List of Canadian government offices abroad: www.voyage.gc.ca/alt/canoffices.asp

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)

www.cbsa.gc.ca

Automated Customs Information Service

Tel.: 1-800-461-9999 (in Canada) or 204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064

Publications (free)

- Crossing the Border With \$10,000 or More?
- I Declare
- Importing a Firearm or Weapon into Canada
- Importing a Vehicle into Canada
- Moving Back to Canada

To order:

Call 1-800-959-2221 (in Canada and the U.S.), or consult www.cbsa.gc.ca.

Canada Revenue Agency

www.cra.gc.ca

International Tax Services Office

Tel.: 1-800-267-5177 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-952-3741
Problem Resolution Program:
1-800-661-4985 (in Canada and the U.S.)
Fax: 613-941-2505

Publication (free)

- T4131, Canadian Residents Abroad

To order:

Consult www.cra.gc.ca or call 1-800-959-2221 (in Canada and the U.S.) or 613-952-3741.

Canadian Automobile Association

www.caa.ca

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

www.inspection.gc.ca
Tel.: 1-800-442-2342

Import Service Centres (ISC)

Eastern ISC 1-877-493-0468
Central ISC 1-800-835-4486
Western ISC 1-888-732-6222

Canadian Heritage

www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/travel

Movable Cultural Property Program

Tel.: 1-866-999-2494 or 819-997-7761

Canadian Transportation Agency

www.cta.gc.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

www.cic.gc.ca

CIC Call Centres

Tel.: 1-888-242-2100 (in Canada) or
Montreal 514-496-1010
Toronto 416-973-4444
Vancouver 604-666-2171

Elections Canada

www.elections.ca
Tel.: 1-800-463-6868
(in Canada and the United States)
or 613-993-2975

Endangered Species

To determine what you can and cannot legally bring back to Canada and whether a permit is required, contact Environment Canada:
www.cites.ec.gc.ca
Tel.: 1-800-668-6767 or
819-997-1840
Fax: 819-953-6283

European Conference of Ministers of Transport

Parking permits:
www.cemt.org

Passport Canada

www.passportcanada.gc.ca

Passports, certificates of identity and travel documents

Tel.: 1-800-567-6868 (in Canada and the U.S.)
TTY: 1-866-255-7655

Radio Canada International (RCI)

www.rcinet.ca
Tel.: 514-597-7500 (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation)

Tourisme Jeunesse

www.tourismejeunesse.org
Tel.: 514-252-3117
Tourisme Jeunesse, a non-profit organization, helps young people who want to work abroad. As part of its services, it holds a free conference called "Working Abroad," offers internships in youth hostels and distributes handbooks (in English and French) through stores.

Transport Canada

www.tc.gc.ca

Access to Travel

www.accesstotravel.gc.ca

HEALTH ISSUES

Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre

www.aidsida.cpha.ca
E-mail: aidsida@cpha.ca
Tel.: 1-877-999-7740

Canadian Public Health Association

www.cpha.ca

Publications (S)

- Don't Drink the Water: The Complete Traveller's Guide to Staying Healthy in Warm Climates
- International Travel and Health: Vaccination Requirements and Health Advice
- Travel Immunization Record Book

To order:

Tel.: 613-725-3769

Canadian Society for International Health

List of travel clinics: www.csih.org
E-mail: csih@csih.org
Tel.: 613-241-5785

Drugs and Travel Information Program

Consular Affairs Bureau:
www.voyage.gc.ca/main/drugs_menu-en.asp

MediAlert®

www.medicalert.ca
E-mail: medinfo@medicalert.ca
Tel.: 1-800-668-6381

Public Health Agency of Canada

Travel Medicine Program:
www.travelhealth.gc.ca
Tel.: 613-957-8739

OTHER RECOMMENDED READING

Axtell, Roger E. 1997. *Do's and Taboos Around the World for Women in Business*. 1st ed. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Cumyn, Alan. 2001. *What in the World Is Going On? A Guide for Canadians Wishing to Work, Volunteer or Study in Other Countries*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Bureau for International Education. www.destineducation.ca/pdfs/witwigo_e.pdf

Golden, Godfrey & Kogan, Helen. 2002. *The Daily Telegraph Guide to Working Abroad*. 22nd ed. London, UK: Kogan Page.

Griffith, Susan. 2001. *Work Your Way Around the World*. 11th ed. Oxford, UK: Vacation Work.

Hachey, Jean-Marc. 2004. *The BIG Guide to Living and Working Overseas*. 4th ed. Canada: Intercultural Systems/Systèmes interculturels (ISSI). www.workingoverseas.com

Pascoe, Robin. 2000. *Culture Shock! A Parent's Guide*. Times Books International. www.expatspexpert.com

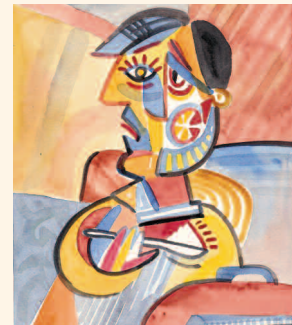
Pascoe, Robin. 2003. *A Moveable Marriage: Relocate Your Relationship Without Breaking It*. Expatriate Press. www.expatriatepress.com

Bad Trips Abroad

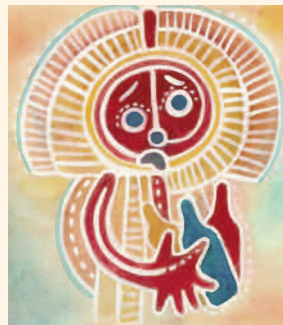
Get the facts about drugs and travel at www.voyage.gc.ca



Sylvia, actress, arrested upon arrival in Singapore with 300 grams of crystal meth hidden in her shoes, now facing execution.



Nicolas, engineer, charged with cocaine possession in Spain, now serving five years behind bars.



Marie, librarian, duped into bringing wine home from Australia as a "gift" for a friend of a friend, serving 18 years in prison for smuggling liquid heroin.



Daniel, college student, caught with ecstasy during a police raid in Daytona Beach, sentenced to three years in a Florida jail.

Sign Up for Our *Registration of Canadians Abroad Service*

Who should register?

All Canadians travelling or living abroad.

Why register?

So that we can contact and assist you in an emergency abroad, such as a natural disaster or civil unrest, or to inform you about a family emergency at home.

How do I register?

To register on-line, visit our website at:

www.voyage.gc.ca

You can also register by contacting a Canadian government office abroad.

Will my information be shared with other parties?

Personal information obtained through registration is confidential and is used in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act.

Where can I find out more?

Call **1-800-267-6788** or **613-944-6788** (in Canada), or contact the nearest Canadian government office abroad.

