

Guide for Families Moving to Vancouver

Introduction

Welcome to Eaton Arrowsmith School (EAS)! Welcome to Canada!

This guide has been prepared by international families like yours who have undertaken the enormous task of relocating to Canada to enable a student to attend EAS. Our goal is to share our collective knowledge and experiences to make your transition as smooth as possible. This guide collects our practical tips about immigration, moving, setting up a household, and finding things to do. It is meant to save you time and give you confidence but not to offer legal advice, especially regarding immigration law! Here is our first tip: everything that you have heard about Vancouver being one of the world's most livable cities is absolutely true. As your family settles into a new routine you will soon appreciate the area's beauty, convenience, safety, and rich culture.

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IMMIGRATION AND VISAS

The best place to start your visa process is the Immigration Canada website, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.asp>. EAS students qualify for student study permits, and the school will provide a letter of acceptance. Temporary Resident visas for family members depend on your country of origin. Siblings attending other schools will also require a letter from their school. (If public, the Vancouver School Board will provide the letter.) The permit is issued at the point of arrival in Canada with the paperwork having first been processed at the Canadian Consulate in your home country. The Canadian Consulate will issue you a Port of Entry letter to present to the border officer so he/she can print the permit.

Our families have found the following to be very helpful:

Fill out all of the required Immigration Canada forms completely, in detail, exactly as the instructions describe. Fortunately the forms for a student visa application are straightforward and most of our families complete them without professional help. Keep these points in mind:

- Proof of income or means of support is very important. Bring strong documentation such as bank statements and proof of employment or other income showing that the family will be supported for the duration of the Arrowsmith Program.
- Bring a letter from your physician stating that EAS will benefit the student.
- One of the first questions that we often get from Immigration Canada officials is, “Why do you need to bring the child to Canada?” EAS will draft an acceptance letter as well as a letter of support, explaining that the Arrowsmith Program is not available in your home country or area. Clearly state that you plan to remain a resident of your home country and are in Canada only as students / visitors.

Only US citizens can apply for study permits at the border. Family members who are entering as visitors can receive their visitor status at the border. They do not need to apply ahead of time at a Consulate unless they are from a visa-required country, and thus must apply for a Temporary Resident Visa to come to Canada first.

Australian parents only need a visitors record. You do not need a temporary resident’s visa.

U.S. parents have had no trouble receiving long-term visitor permits at the point of entry when the student receives his/her student visa. For U.S. citizens, driving to the Blaine, WA border crossing on a mid-week morning has resulted in the shortest wait times for processing the student visa application.

The student will need to have a legal guardian in British Columbia until he/she turns 19 years of age. If a parent is not accompanying the student, be sure to arrange for a guardian as detailed in Immigration Canada’s instructions. A minor will need additional documents if he or she is less than **17 years of age** and comes to Canada to study without a parent or legal guardian. The minor must be cared for by a responsible adult in Canada and have a guardianship consent letter (See: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study-minors.asp>).

As noted above, the immigration forms are straightforward. If you do have questions about how to complete the forms we have regrettably found that Consulates in the U.S. are difficult to communicate with and offer little help, even when visited in person. Many immigration attorneys or consultants practice in Vancouver and some will book hourly telephone appointments to address your questions. Our families have found that when there are no unusual issues, such as needing a Canadian work permit, they have not required the support of an immigration attorney or consultant to complete the visa and immigration process. Getting a work visa is complicated without a prior existing job offer.

For more complex visa/immigration issues, we recommend Heather Bell, an immigration consultant with the Vancouver-based law firm, Bell Alliance. Heather would be happy to speak with you about any questions you might have. Bell Alliance is a full service law firm. If you need assistance in other legal matters, such as real estate, estate planning or business/corporate, their team can help.

Website: www.bellalliance.ca
Heather Bell – hbelle@bellalliance.ca
Jennifer Hunter – Jhunter@bellalliance.ca
Phone: 604 873 8723
Tollfree: 1 888 577 9904

Finally, if you would like to speak to a Notary Public, we would recommend Filip de Sagher, who specializes in international students and their visa needs:

http://www.notarydeprez.com/our_community.html

You can stay in Canada on a visitors permit or student visa for up to 12 months and while here, extend it indefinitely so long as it's more than 30 days before it lapses. We would suggest that you do so well before the end of your first year. It takes around four months to process the application.

Aussie Note: If traveling through the USA enroute to Vancouver, you need to apply for an electronic transit authority (ESTA)—go to the Foreign Affairs website.

Nexus pass:

For U.S. citizens and residents the Nexus pass is an excellent time saver when you cross the border in either direction. Nexus pass holders are able to use special lanes at airport and highway border crossings. Information and applications are available at:

<http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/prog/nexus/application-demande-eng.html>

SCHOOLS FOR SIBLINGS

For public schools in Vancouver, please see the Vancouver School Board Website (www.vsb.bc.ca/) to look at schools and catchment areas. If an adult in the family has either a work permit or study permit, the children in the family (other than the EAS student) can attend local public schools for the same costs as a Canadian resident, which are nominal. The Vancouver School Board International Office provides information about this arrangement. Otherwise, you will have to pay full fees for public school as an international student—a cost of up to \$13000 per year plus insurance. The VSB has instructed schools not to provide additional services to foreign students such as support for special needs.

If you are interested in private schools, the Our Kids (www.ourkids.net) website is a great resource, and offers a list of local private schools (<http://www.ourkids.net/vancouver-private-schools.php>). West Point Grey Academy and St. George's School are both recommended and are relatively close to EAS.

If you're looking at Catholic schools specifically, the closest elementary school to EAS is Our Lady of Perpetual Help (www.olphbc.ca). The principal is very familiar with EAS, as there are many families with children in both schools. Other nearby Catholic schools are Immaculate Conception (www.icschoolvancouver.com), and St. Augustine's (http://www.faithandfoundation.com/St._Augustine_School.html). For a map of Catholic Schools in Vancouver, please see: <http://www.cisvabc.ca/schools/maps/>

Another option could be Magnussen School (www.magnussenschool.com), also founded by Howard Eaton, which shares facilities with EAS. This option would certainly make pick-up and drop-off easier.

For daycare options for young children, this website comes highly recommended by EAS staff members: <http://www.wstcoast.org/parents/choosing.html>

COST OF LIVING

If you're interested in comparing the cost of living in Vancouver, Victoria and White Rock, here is a helpful website: <http://www.costofliving.welcomebc.ca/>

SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATIONS

EAS is located on the campus of the University of British Columbia. Most of the hotels in Vancouver are located either in the downtown core or near the airport. It would take approximately 20-30 minutes to drive to our school (in regular traffic) from either.

Your best option (in terms of shortest travel time to EAS and most reasonable price) would probably be the accommodations available on the university campus:

<http://www.ubconferences.com/accommodations/>. Here, you would be able to rent a room or suite and then walk to EAS. The closest place to stay on campus would be the West Coast Suites: <http://www.ubconferences.com/accommodations/west-coast-suites/>. West Coast Suites are in walking distance of the school (10 minutes or so).

There are also bed and breakfasts and guesthouses in the Kitsilano or Point Grey neighbourhoods.

HOUSING

Compared with many other major cities, family rental housing is relatively plentiful in Vancouver. For a large urban center, there are a surprising number of single-family homes and small apartment buildings, and furnished apartments are common. Basement suites are the bottom floor (usually half underground) of a large house. They have a separate entrance, may have low ceilings, and tend to be dark and not spacious. They are commonly offered for rent and are generally suited to a single person or student rather than a family. We would suggest seeking a property with as much natural light as possible due to the long winters.

Locations:

Most of the international families at EAS rent in the neighborhoods west of Arbutus Street in order to be close to the school. The following links will provide information about neighbourhoods on the west side of Vancouver, or that are of great interest to newly relocated families. Many of our families live in the neighbourhoods of UBC, Point Grey, Kitsilano, Dunbar or Kerrisdale, due to their proximity to EAS. These areas are somewhat more expensive, however, as are any areas west of Main St.

<http://www.johomaps.com/na/canada/bc/vancouver/neighbourhoods.html>
<http://www.vancouver.worldweb.com/SightsAttractions/DistrictsNeighbourhoods/>

Timing:

Allow two weeks “on the ground” in Vancouver to find a suitable house or apartment. Many families will start with a weekly or monthly rental as they get settled while others will send a member ahead to secure long term housing before the rest of the family arrives.

Contracts:

Rental contracts are typically for one year for the first year with monthly termination possible thereafter. Heat and water are often included in apartment rents while electricity (called “Hydro” because of the utility, BC Hydro), cable, etc., are not. It is common practice to provide landlords with post-dated cheques for rent—up to an entire year. These are deposited and drawn down thus paying the rent as you go.

Resources for Finding Housing:

If you are looking for a real estate agent, Lisa McIntosh comes highly recommended from a couple EAS staff members: <http://www.lisamacintosh.com/>

Some of our international families have also found housing through Kyla Trethewey, at Vancouver Luxury Rentals. Kyla wrote: “*I specialize in high end rentals; both furnished and unfurnished for rental periods over 3 months to 3 years. I can also source rentals for my clients and my services are free of charge for the renters.*” Phone 1-604-832-4114, email: kyla@vancouverluxuryrentals.com and her website is www.vancouverluxuryrentals.com.

For weekly/monthly rentals:

Vancouver Rental Suites: www.vancouverrentalsuites.com

Skytofly: www.skytofly.com

Make Yourself At Home: <http://www.makeyourselfathome.com/>

For long-term rentals:

Unique Accommodations: www.uniqueaccommodations.com

The Rental Guide: www.therentalguide.ca (budget-oriented)

Craigslist (Our families have had mixed experiences with Craigslist for rentals in Vancouver)
<http://vancouver.en.craigslist.ca/>

Sabbatical Homes www.sabbaticalhomes.com. Professors at the University of British Columbia offer their homes for the school year through this site.

Academic homes: www.academichomes.com

Company	Phone	Address	Website	Notes
Bruce Ward Realty	(604) 684-8957	Suite 400-1525 Robson Street	www.bruceward.com/ www.bruceward.com/property-management.php	Offers property management for single apartment rentals
Colyvan Pacific Prop. Mgmt	Office (604) 683-8399 Rentals – Ken Blake (604) 506-3557	300 – 2150 W Broadway, Vancouver	www.colyvanpacific.com	Offers property management for single apartment rentals
Crosby Prop. Mgmt	Office (604) 683-8900 Rentals – Heddy (604) 648-6990	777 Hornby, Vancouver	www.crosbyprop.com/services_rentals.html	Offers property management for single apartment rentals
Rancho Prop. Mgmt	(604) 684-4508	701-1190 Hornby Street, Vancouver	www.ranchovan.com	Offers property management for single apartment rentals

Utilities / Internet / TV / phone

Household Utilities:

Setup of household utilities and communication services is pretty easy. Water is typically included in monthly rent and will have been activated by your landlord. Natural gas for heating, gas stove tops and hot water heaters is provided by Fortis BC. You can either arrange to make equal payments spread out over 12 months, or pay as you use (but expect bills in winter months to be much higher than summer months).

Electricity (often referred to as “Hydro”) is billed bi-monthly by BC Hydro. If your electricity has not already been activated just call BC Hydro: 1-800-224-9376, or visit: www.bchydro.com

Aussie Note: Canada operates 110V not 240V. Computers will work but you need a plug adapter from Australian to Canada/USA as the power sockets here are a different shape.

Recycling and garbage pick-up by the city may not happen on the same day each week. Each neighborhood will have a schedule, depending on the location and holidays. Recycling is broken down into (a) newspapers; (b) cardboard/other paper and (c) everything else (cans, plastic, bottles).

Internet providers:

There are several internet providers offering an array of prices and bundles. Deals change frequently and there is enough competition to keep pricing at reasonable levels. Bundles often include TV and landline telephone. Allow at least one week to set up Cable TV and internet. You need to have access to the main electrical board if in an apartment building (get it from the building manager).

Telus: www.telus.com

Shaw: www.shaw.ca

Lightspeed: www.lightspeed.ca

Urban Networks: www.ubn.ca

Bell: www.bell.ca

Television:

Canada uses the same ATSC digital broadcast standard as the U.S. (and South Korea).

If you are like many of us and watch a lot of television programming over the internet, Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) content is available online, as are quite a few BBC programs. Netflix is now available here. **Aussie Note:** Canada and Australia are in different zones for television, gaming devices and DVDs. The Australian devices will not work here.

Mobile phones and land lines:

You will get a major price shock in Canada if you try to use your international mobile phone for more than a few days. International charges for incoming and outgoing calls, text messages, and data are extremely high!

Check if your mobile phone is locked to your local network. If your phone is locked to another provider, services are available to unlock your phone. Cost is around C\$70, depending on type of phone and provider. The service is done online, and takes a couple of days to be completed. (<http://www.ryansunlockshop.com/>) If your mobile phone is unrestricted, then purchase a Canadian SIM card to use here.

If you need a new phone, and you do not have an address yet, get a pre-paid phone. If you have an address, it is possible to set up a monthly payment plan with no contract.

Local mobile service providers are:

Fido: www.fido.ca

Telus: www.telus.com

Rogers: www.rogers.ca

Bell: www.bell.ca

As an alternative to a phone from Telus, Rogers, etc, you can use a VOIP provider, such as anveo.com: <http://anveo.com/consumer/default.asp>, to provide you with a Vancouver telephone number (604, 778 prefix). Monthly subscription is very competitive. You can add local numbers from all over the world, so other people can call you on local numbers. You need a VOIP phone to match the service, which can be on a “softphone” on computer or a real phone. One family recommends using X-Lite from CounterPath : <http://www.counterpath.com/x-lite.html> which is for free.

When dialing local phone numbers, you need the 10-digit number, so include either the 604 or 778 prefix or it won't connect. To call outside of Vancouver, you need to add the country code (1) for the rest of Canada or the USA to connect.

MONEY AND BANKING

Money:

The currency in Canada is the Canadian dollar. Exchange houses are available and banks will exchange some of the most common currencies. U.S. dollars are not typically accepted in stores. Dollar coins are called “Loonies,” while two-dollar coins are called “Toonies.”

Allow enough cash or travelers cheques to get through purchases in the first two weeks (for safe margin), or open an account before leaving home (HSBC provides this service—this is not a recommendation for that institution, but may offer convenience). **Aussie Note:** <http://www.ozforex.com.au/> provides an easy way to transfer money, as atm and credit card withdrawals sometimes have high fees or less desirable exchange rates.

Banking:

Services, costs, and access are similar for the major Canadian retail banks. The best option is to pick a bank with branches that are located conveniently for you. Several banks have international branches including HSBC and Royal Bank (RBC) and offer the benefit of avoiding wire transfer fees. If such a bank has a branch near you in your home country it is worth looking into their total fee structure. Pay special attention to foreign exchange fees and currency conversion rates as you make your banking decision. Some of the banks with many branches in Vancouver are:

- Bank of Montreal (BMO)
- Vancity Credit Union
- Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)
- Toronto-Dominion Bank (TD)
- Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotia Bank)
- Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC)
- HSBC

We strongly recommend getting credit cards, Visa or Mastercard, from your Canadian bank ASAP to avoid the typical 3% foreign exchange fee on transactions with international credit cards. Do not be surprised if the bank requires you to open a savings account (a certificate of deposit called a “GIC”) equal to your credit limit to fully collateralize the credit card: Canadian banks are conservative with credit. For example, if you want a \$2000 limit card you must outlay security of \$2000 in an associated secure account and this money is not available for use.

Savings and chequing accounts are available to non-residents but brokerage accounts are not therefore as a non-resident you are unable to invest in securities traded only on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

When you deposit a cheque from a foreign bank, the funds are not regarded as immediately available, especially for large amounts. Cheques will be held for 14-21 days due to international money-laundering precautions.

Payment by cheque is common and it is essential to have a cheque book. Canadian banks do not offer a direct payment service (Direct Debit with an account number and branch identifier) and as a result cheques or cash are the only "easy" option to do routine banking. Electronic payment by Interact is available for utilities.

Managing the fluctuating exchange rates:

Living in Vancouver is not cheap. Everyone has a different situation therefore our advice is to discuss the issue with your investment advisor bearing in mind that exchange rate changes are virtually impossible to predict. **American Note:** You can open a US Dollar account in most Canadian banks, which can give you more flexibility in when you exchange USD for CAD. Once an established customer, most banks can offer you a better exchange rate for transferring larger sums between accounts—just ask.

Value added tax:

Tax in Canada is added at the point of sale. Add approximately 12% to every price you see. The tax is a combination of GST (from the federal government) and PST (from the province). The following goods are exempt: food for human consumption (basic groceries and food in restaurants), books, newspapers, and magazines, children's clothing, bicycles, and medication.

HEALTH CARE

Medical care is readily available in Vancouver. There are numerous doctors' offices and walk-in medical clinics for primary care, although it is difficult to find a family doctor who is taking new patients. The BC College of Physicians has a "Find a Family Physician" page: <https://www.cpsbc.ca/node/216>

Additionally, there are a number of hospitals for serious and emergency care, including BC Women's and Children's Hospital, Vancouver General Hospital, and the University of British Columbia Hospital two blocks from EAS.

Health Insurance:

Students residing in Canada for 6 months or more must sign up for Medical Services Plan (MSP). There is a three month waiting period which is calculated from the date of your arrival, however, it is recommended that you submit the forms as soon as possible rather than waiting until the end of the waiting period, so as to allow adequate time to process your application. Once you have attained MSP coverage you will be issued a Care Card. You must present this whenever you seek medical care.

MSP covers medically required services provided by physicians and supplementary health care practitioners, laboratory services and diagnostic procedures. It does not cover for ambulance trips, eyeglasses, plastic surgery, hearing aids, acupuncture, physiotherapists and other services not deemed medically required. Please call 1-800-663-7100 for more information about specific services that are and are not covered.

The BC Nurse's line is accessed free of charge for anyone with a Care Card by calling 811, and is an excellent resource. Also, www.health.gov.bc.ca is well worth viewing to determine if a trip to the doctor is necessary.

New residents from other parts of Canada should maintain coverage with their former medical plan during the waiting period. New or returning residents arriving from outside Canada should contact a private insurance company for coverage during this period. To enroll for basic medical coverage, please visit <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infoben/eligible.html#enroll>

Of course it is very important to consult the terms and conditions of your current private medical insurance to determine how your cost and coverage is impacted by your move to Vancouver. **Aussie Note:** Nominal health insurance is offered through companies such as IA Pacific and AXA. Coverage is for minor costs associated with injuries.

Dental:

Dentists are prevalent and easy to get into. There is no fluoride in the water. You can purchase chewable tablets or drops for children or seek a fluoride treatment from a dentist.

Vitamin D:

Vitamin D deficiency is particularly problematic in Canada due to the latitude and climate. You can purchase drops or chewable tablets for adults and for children. Lack of vitamin D can cause depression. Take around 1000 IU per day as an adult.

TRANSPORTATION

Air travel:

Flights in and out of YVR are typically expensive. Two alternatives are Bellingham International (BLI) and Seattle-Tacoma International (“SeaTac,” SEA) one half hour and three hours across the U.S. border respectively. Bellingham flights are limited while SeaTac has an abundance of flights but is too distant to be used for day trips. **Aussie Note:** Air Canada is the only airline with direct flights from Sydney. Westjet is a Canadian airline with many domestic and international flights—mostly to the USA. It flies daily to Hawaii and can connect with flights to Honolulu from Australia. (Although there is a 12-month expiry on return tickets.) British Airways has a jetlag calculator to help with recovery. The trip to Canada has more impact with jetlag than the other direction to Australia.

Public Transit:

Vancouver has an excellent system of busses, trains, and ferries. Details of routes and rates are available at www.translink.ca. Many students take public transportation to and from EAS. The EAS student ID card enables you to buy discounted monthly transit passes at local convenience stores, and other outlets.

Vancouver is bicycle-friendly. Bicycles can be carried on all busses, ferries, and trains. There are a variety of designated bike routes around town.

<http://www.trek.ubc.ca/maps/imgs/bikeRouteMap.pdf>

Many international families find that they drive much less in Vancouver than they do at home, and therefore it is not necessary to purchase a car. If a car is needed, there are a variety of rental agencies around town, such as Budget, National, Hertz. Another option is joining one of the cooperative car systems that are flourishing in Vancouver:

www.modo.coop/

www.cooperativeauto.net

www.zipcar.com

www.car2go.com/en/vancouver/

Driving:

Traffic is relatively light in Vancouver when compared with other major cities, in part due to the extensive use of public transit, walking, and bicycles. On-street parking is usually available even in the heart of the city. (Parking garages are called “Parkades”). Canada drives on the right side of the

road. Traffic signs and signals and rules of the road are highly similar to those in the U.S. One difference that we all notice is the “flashing green light,” commonly found at the intersection of a major road and a small cross street. Details for the flashing green light, formally called a “pedestrian controlled signal,” and all other rules of the road in Canada, can be found in the booklet at this site:

<http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/pass-veh/roadsense-drivers#Variables. frag>

After three months driving in Canada, you are required to obtain a BC Driver’s License. It is a straight swap for an Australian or US license with no need to sit any tests. Your original license is taken and replaced with a BC license (around \$30 CAD) until you leave when you reclaim the former. **Aussie Note:** You must have a certificate from Australian license provider (eg. RTA). Get this before leaving Australia.

Non-driving students and adults (aged 12 and older) can get a B.C. Identification (BCID) card, which can be very useful as a piece of photo ID. Getting a BCID is not mandatory, but is helpful when a photo ID is required. Here is the link with more information about the card:

http://www.icbc.com/licensing/lic_utility_id_cardPU.asp

Car Insurance:

An overview of the basics of auto insurance in BC can be found on this website:

<http://www.bcaa.com/insurance/auto/overview/basics-auto-insurance>

The mandatory basic autoplan is provided by ICBC (the Insurance Corporation of BC), and the BCAA (British Columbia Automotive Association) or other private insurers offer additional coverage. The most economical insurance is the recreational class for occasional driving, not daily commuting, which would suit most families. To ensure the maximum insurance discount (up to 40%), obtain a letter from your current insurer (on letterhead) stating your driving record for the past seven years. Submit it when buying the car to obtain the discount. **American Note:** Most U.S. car insurance companies have provisions for extending your coverage to your situation in Canada and your agent should be able to easily provide you with details.

Insurance is billed monthly, three monthly, six monthly, or annually via direct debit or cheque. Annual renewals require a personal visit to a brokerage with the papers. It cannot be done via phone or online. Some brokers will come to your house.

Buying a new or used car:

There are two main auto malls—one in North Vancouver and one in Richmond. Dealers of all vehicle makes are represented at these locations.

Do budget for either all weather tires or winter (snow) tires (Nov-April). The tires are put onto the existing rims and storage of regular tires is offered for a small fee at the tire dealership. Snow does occur in Vancouver from Nov to March in varying degrees. Such tires help with rain and slush, too. Chains are legally required when driving in mountains in winter.

When purchasing a car, the dealer will arrange for an insurance broker to meet you at the time of sale, usually in the dealership to arrange the paperwork and the license plates. You will need two

forms of Government issued ID such as a passport and driver's license or birth certificate plus the letter from your current insurer as above.

Cyclists, skateboarders, pedestrians and other hazards:

- On main roads, pedestrian crossings can be difficult to see, consisting of a white sign hung high on either side of the road that features a person walking, and two thin white lines indicating the crossing location on the road.
- Pedestrians in Vancouver are inclined to step out onto the road with an expectation that you will stop. Many cars stop for pedestrians regardless of whether or not they are on a crossing. It is not the law to do so but it seems almost to be a custom (albeit a dangerous one)!
- Cyclists often don't wear helmets. Cycle lanes run parallel to car lanes and some streets, such as 8th Ave in West Point Grey are designated cycle-ways, thus keeping them off the main road.
- Long skateboards (longboards) are a popular form of youth transport especially around UBC. Students ride them on the road in the cycle lanes, often without helmets.
- Trolley buses share the roads with reticulated double buses going to UBC. You are required to give way to buses, and they pull out into traffic with that expectation.

SHOPPING

As in most major cities shopping in Vancouver can be cheap or expensive: it all depends on where you go. Major discounters and superstores such as Walmart, Costco, Home Depot, Lowes, and Ikea have locations in Vancouver. Here are some of the stores that we like for quality, cost, and convenience.

Groceries:

Save On Foods, Marketplace IGA, Safeway, Price Mart, NoFrills, Real Canadian Superstore, Costco, Whole Foods. Fresh produce stores are very popular in Vancouver and can be found in virtually every shopping district. They often have the best prices and most fresh selection. Home delivery of organic produce, milk and other groceries are available at Green Earth Organics (<http://vancouver.greenearthorganics.com/>) or SPUD (<http://www.spud.ca/>).

Furniture:

There are a number of discount furniture stores in Richmond along Bridgeport Road leading up to Ikea. Thrift or second-hand shops are popular in Vancouver. Run by non-profit organizations such as animal shelters and the Salvation Army, they are an excellent source of very low-cost furniture, appliances, DVDs, books, and even clothing. Thrift shops can be found in most shopping districts. Craig's List is often worth a look, although quality varies.

Malls:

In Vancouver there are Oakridge Mall, Metrotown (technically in Burnaby, but it is a very big and popular mall) and Pacific Centre. On the North Shore (North and West Vancouver) Park Royal and Capilano Malls are popular. In Bellingham, WA, one hour south on highway 99 / US-5, is the Bellis Fair Mall.

Rain and Winter Gear:

We survive the cold rainy winter by having fun in the snow in the mountains. Budget for a wardrobe that includes rain gear, warm clothes and boots suited to minus-zero degree temperatures. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC), The North Face, and Sports Check give some idea of the clothes and costs. Most people have warm outerwear in the form of long coats and jackets.

Miscellaneous:

- Canadian Tire. The name is misleading. Beyond tires, it is a major chain that sells hardware, appliances, sporting goods, camping gear.
- Shoppers Drug Mart. A major pharmacy/health/beauty chain with many locations including on the UBC campus near the bus depot.
- London Drugs. Similar to Shopper's Drug Mart and found throughout Vancouver, also sells electronics and household goods.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

- Ice hockey is the national sport, and many Canadians are born with skates on their feet, so newcomers often have difficulty being placed on a team. Ice skating lessons, hockey, and family skate times are available at the UBC Thunderbird Ice Arena.
- Rugby Union and Soccer are the main winter ball sports. Girls play both.
- Floor hockey is the same as ice hockey but without the ice—and is popular and accessible for children.
- Skiing is quite accessible—Cypress, Mount Seymour and Grouse Mountain offer various ski terrains and are short drives from downtown Vancouver. Night skiing is popular on those mountains. Whistler Blackcomb is 1.5 hours drive from Vancouver and is a world-class resort.
- Scouts and Girl Guides are popular. Enrollment begins around May or June for September.
- Canada is bi-lingual. French tutoring is common and there are many French-immersion schools. The AIM method is an accelerated way to learn for non-speakers who are children.
- Mountain biking, hiking, and ball sports such as baseball are popular summer activities.
- Dojang Martial Arts is popular with many EAS families: <http://dojang.ca/>
- 4Cats Art Studios, Arts Umbrella, and local community centres have great art and dance classes available for children year round.

FAMILY FUN IN VANCOUVER

After the first frenzied weeks of setting up our homes comes the time when we face that big question, “What do we do this weekend?” Fortunately Vancouver is loaded with sites and family activities. Here are some of our families’ favourites:

- The Vancouver Aquarium
- Science World
- Museum of Anthropology at UBC
- UBC Beaty Biodiversity Museum
- Reifel Bird Sanctuary (near Ladner), where you can see thousands of snow geese in winter, baby goslings and ducklings in late spring, and add a stop at the berry farms in June or the pumpkin patch on Westham Island in October.
- Bike riding and walks/hikes, especially in Pacific Spirit Park (50K of trails for hiking and mountain biking) and along the sea wall in Stanley Park. The west side of Vancouver, where many of EAS’ international families live, has very nice beaches such as Jericho, Kits, Spanish, and Locarno.
- Skiing or snowboarding at Cypress (site of many 2010 Olympic events), Grouse Mountain, and Mount Seymour--all within an easy hour of the city.
- Snowshoeing or tubing at Cypress or Mount Seymour
- The Vancouver Symphony, Kids Konzerts

- Carousel Theatre for Young People on Granville Island
- www.tourismvancouver.com

If you want to take a longer day or weekend trip outside of Vancouver there are many excellent possibilities. Whistler, site of many 2010 Olympic skiing and sliding events, and Blackcomb Mountains are only a two hour drive away and offers world-class skiing in the winter and mountain biking in spring, summer and fall. The city of Victoria with its renowned Butchart Gardens and high tea at the Empress Hotel is a short “float plane” or ferry ride away.

CANADIAN STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

<http://www.statutoryholidays.com/>

ANNUAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

- The UNA Barn Raising--first or second weekend in September. It's a fun University Neighborhood Association event with free food, face painting, live music, games, and horse drawn carriage rides next to the Old Barn Community Centre--just two blocks away from EAS.
- Apple Festival at the UBC Botanical Garden--around the second weekend in October. There are easily 50-100 varieties available for tasting and for purchase that are not available in stores. Pies, cider, food, and a Children's Corner with face painting and activities.
- Holiday ‘Festival of Lights’ at the Van Dusen Gardens. Lovely to walk through on a December evening.
- Chinese New Year Parade in Chinatown.
- The St. Patrick’s Day parade is held downtown on a Saturday close to March 17 wraps up a week of Celtic Music around town.
- The Dragon Boat Festival in False Creek is around the first or second weekend in June.
- The Strawberry Festival at Emma Lea on Westham Island is held in mid-June.
- West Point Grey Fiesta—a parade down W. 10th Ave. and a carnival at Trimble Park with rides and games, usually second or third weekend in June.
- Greek Festival in Kits on Broadway, usually on a weekend in mid- to late June.
- International Fireworks Festival-- usually the last week of July and first week of August, three or four countries compete with each having a 30-minute show done to music (broadcast on a local radio station) on Wednesdays and Saturday nights, launched from a barge in English Bay.
- The University Neighborhood Association (UNA) has lots of family fun through the year, including Canada Day, Concerts in the Park on summer evenings, a Halloween party, Chinese New Year, and more. <http://www.myuna.ca/>
- UBC Farm-- located on South Campus, has a farmer's market open Saturday mornings (June through late October).