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Relocation Guide to Edmonton, Canada

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EDMONTON OVERVIEW



Photo courtesy of [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)

Edmonton is the capital city of the Canadian province of Alberta. With a population of about 933,000, it is the second-largest city in Alberta and the fifth-largest municipality in Canada. Lying along the Saskatchewan River, it is at the center of Canada's sixth largest metropolitan area (CMA), which include Edmonton and thirty-four other municipalities in the surrounding area. Its historic growth has been facilitated through the absorption of five adjacent urban municipalities (Strathcona, North Edmonton, West Edmonton, Beverly, and Jasper Place). Known as the "Gateway to the North," the city is a staging point for large-scale oil sands projects occurring in northern Alberta and large-scale diamond mining operations in the Northwest Territories.

Historically, waves of immigrants have made Edmonton their home, creating a multicultural city. Some of the earliest groups came from eastern Europe (such as Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish) in the late 19th century. After them came the Chinese, who arrived to work on constructing the railways. Newcomers from many other countries (including Italy, Germany, Vietnam, and others) followed, attracted by the many employment and business opportunities that the booming northern metropolitan center had to offer. Today, a number of ethnic neighborhoods reflect this diverse heritage, including Chinatown, Little Italy, and the Vietnamese district. To the north of the downtown core is the "Avenue of Nations," an area with many stores and restaurants of different cuisines and cultures.

Edmonton has a humid continental climate, with milder winters than either Regina or Winnipeg. Its average daily temperatures range from a low of -10.4°C (13.3°F) in January to a summer peak of 17.7°C (63.9°F) in July. Average maximum temperature in July is 23.1°C (73.6°F), and average minimum temperature in January is -14.8°C (5.4°F). Typically, summer lasts from late June until early September, and the humidity is seldom uncomfortably high. Winter lasts from November to March and varies greatly in length and severity.

City of Edmonton Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Edmonton](#)
- Land Area: 630 km² (240 sq mi)
- Currency: Canadian Dollar
- [Edmonton History](#)
- [Bank of Canada Exchange Rate Information](#)

What to See, Sightseeing Tours, Value Packages and Passes, Tourist Information

- [Edmonton Tourist Center](#)
- [Information on attractions](#)

Government organizations

- [Alberta Ministry of Labor](#)
- [Alberta Ministry of Education](#)
- [Edmonton Public Schools](#)
- [Alberta Ministry of Health](#)
- [Edmonton Public Health](#)
- [Important Information on Immigration in Edmonton](#)
- [Process of obtaining a Canadian driver's license](#)

Useful Local Links

- [Canadian International Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Yellow Page Edmonton](#)

American/ International Community Organizations

- [US Embassy Edmonton](#)
- [American Women's Club of Edmonton](#)
- [American Chamber of Commerce in Canada](#)
- [Latino Canadian Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [British Consulate-General Alberta](#)

Libraries

The public library is free for anyone who lives, works, goes to school or owns land in the city of Edmonton. At the library you can borrow books, movies, CDs and much more for fun, study or self-interest. The library also has many free programs and services for everyone. There are 98 libraries in Edmonton with over 12 million books in various languages. Learn more [here](#).

Newspapers

The main Canadian newspapers are [The National Post](#) and [the Globe and Mail](#). The Globe and Mail holds a status similar to the New York Times in Canada and the National Post is the rival for the Globe and Mail. Other local newspapers are the [Edmonton Journal](#), [Edmonton Sun](#), and [Edmonton Examiner](#).

Post Office

Edmonton has post offices run by Canada Post throughout the city. Their office hours and services differ depending on the location. Find your office through the [post office finder](#). Through the website you can also find a rate, find a postal code and track your mail.

Time Zone

Edmonton is in the Mountain Time Zone. Daylight savings time is in effect from the second Sunday in March until the first Sunday in November. You can see Edmonton's time in relation to most cities on the globe by visiting www.TimeAndDate.com, which also can provide a Canadian calendar.

Metric System

The metric system is used in Canada.

Dates

Dates are written in the order of day/month/year.

Currency

Canadian one dollar coin ("loonie") (\$) = 100 cents. Canadian two dollar coin ("toonie") (\$) = 200 cents. Notes, or bills, come in denominations of \$5 (blue), \$10 (purple), \$20 (green), \$50 (pink) and \$100 (brown). Coins are in denominations of \$2, \$1, \$0.25, \$0.10, \$0.05 (frequently used) and \$0.50, \$0.01 (rarely used).

Electricity

Just like the United States, Canada uses 110-volt electric power with two- or three-pin plugs. Visitors from the UK and Europe will need adaptors, available at most hotels and department stores, to use their appliances from home.

Smoking

Smoking regulations are strict in Alberta. Smoking is banned in public spaces and workplaces, and it is illegal to smoke in a vehicle with children under the age of 16.

AREA MAP

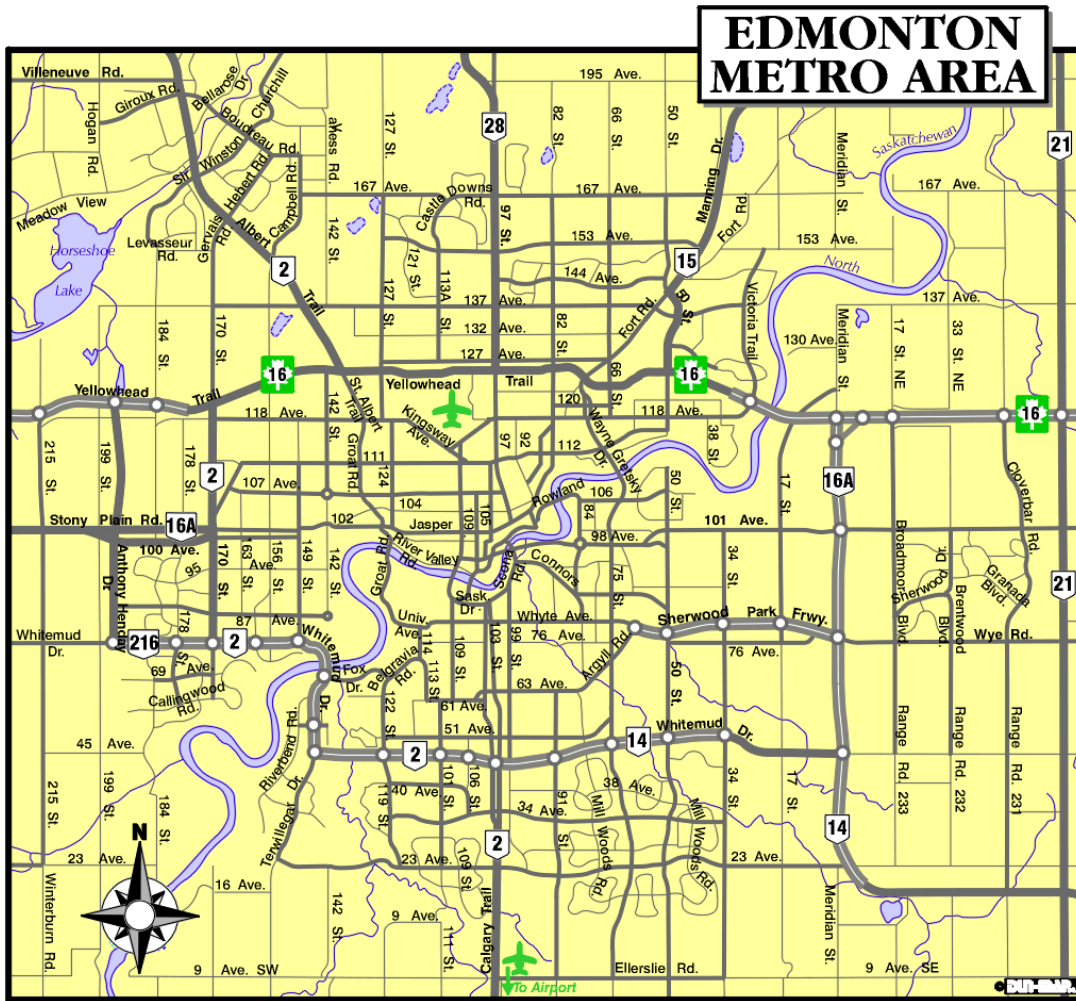


Photo Courtesy of [Map Canada](#)

There are various housing options for those living in Edmonton. The major three categories are freehold homes, condominiums and custom homes. A freehold home is a fully detached, semi-detached or townhouse dwelling that is entirely owned by the purchaser. All maintenance (indoors and out) is the sole responsibility of the owner and no monthly maintenance fees are required. If a home is a condominium unit, the owner is required to pay a monthly fee for the upkeep of the common elements. Common elements are the areas shared by residents, such as lobbies, parking garages, and recreational facilities such as pools and gyms. Finally, a “contract home” is a home that is built on land (a vacant lot, for example) that is already owned by the prospective homeowner. Thinking about the neighborhood and its demographic is also an important aspect when choosing a property.

Following sites list some of the popular options

- [Apartment Rentals](#)
- [Zoo Casa](#)
- [Canada Housing Connections](#)
- [Padmapper](#)

Renting a Property

There is no shortage of real estate companies in the city. Some apartments can be rented by the month, but to rent a house you usually need to sign a rental agreement (or lease) for a year. This is a legally binding contract between you and the landlord. Make sure you understand exactly what you have to pay for and what is included in your rent before you sign a lease. If you are unsure about anything, ask questions and make sure you understand and are satisfied with the answers you get before you sign any lease.

The cost of renting a home depends on:

- **Location.**
- **Size and condition** of the place.
- **Amenities.** Condominiums with full facilities may command a higher price. Rent also depends on whether the place is furnished, partially furnished or unfurnished.

These are the steps in renting a place:

- Sign a lease with the owner, the terms of which are agreed between the two parties. Most landlords and housing agents ask to see a copy of your passport, a copy of your visa, passport sized photographs and an employment letter confirming your position. Sign an inventory listing of all the items provided by the owner, including their condition.
- Usually, a deposit or “security bond” equivalent to one month’s rent is required for leases that are over a year.
- Rental usually excludes utility bills but includes maintenance fees.

Lease Tips

- When you go to see Edmonton apartments and meet landlords, make sure you are well-dressed and smart. Treat it like a job interview. If the apartment is good many people may be after it and the landlord will have their pick of several potential tenants.
- Take note of general appearance and upkeep. Are the carpets or flooring worn? Are the walls cracked or in need of painting? Is there staining on the roof or walls (an indication of a water leak)?
- Is an ensuite bathroom important? Is on-site laundry important or do you mind going to a Laundromat? Does the building feature security features such as security patrols or video cameras? Do you want the convenience of a dishwasher, an on-site gym or pool, a balcony etc.? Think about these when deciding on the home you want to rent.

[More information on renting a home in Canada.](#)

Utilities

Connecting utility supplies to a new home in Canada is straightforward. Listings for all utility suppliers can be found in the yellow pages, listed under Gas, Heating Companies, Oils/Fuel and Hydro Electric Utilities. There are no main national utility providers, as the majority operates provincially. It is advised by government immigration services for newcomers to ask the landlord, letting agent, previous owners or estate agent who the previous utility providers were and contact them to reconnect the property. As the climate in Canada is extreme, with cold winters and hot summers, Canadian homes are generally well insulated and have temperature control devices to accommodate this. Houses use electric heaters, natural gas or oil-fueled furnaces to heat them. Heat is usually circulated through vents.

It is common to have meters in the house to record the use of gas, water and electricity. These meters also record what time of day consumption takes place, as tariffs for utilities often vary depending on the time of day, with peak times being more expensive and night-time being the cheapest. It is possible to arrange for utility services to be connected to a property before moving into it and this can be done from abroad. Connecting services should not take longer than 24 hours. However, it is necessary to have an opened Canadian bank account (which can only be finalized in person) before a new account with a service provider can be set up. It is typical that the only information required to set up a new account with utility suppliers is a bank account and the address of the property requiring the service is.

Utilities/Repair Services

Utilities can be repaired by calling a local repair company in your area. You can find your local plumber, electrician, maintenance company, etc. through [yellow pages](#).

Recycling

Edmonton provides [recycling](#) for paper, newspaper, boxes, tin cans, glass jars and bottles, plastic containers and bags.



Telecommunications

Edmonton is well served by a competitive telecom industry which provides comprehensive television, telephone, wireless and broadband services. Some of the major service providers operating in the city can be contacted on their websites.

- [Bell Canada](#) is one of the leading telecommunications companies in the city, offering mobile, internet, satellite, television, high speed data and home phone services.
- [Rogers Cable](#) is one of the largest cable television service providers, along with Video-On-Demand, digital television, high-speed Internet access, interactive and enhanced television services.
- [Primus Telecommunications](#) is another popular telecom provider in Edmonton and has acquired Win-Tel, to offer broadband, home phone and wireless
- [Telus](#): Largest telecommunications provider in Western Canada; home phone, internet, wireless, TV

EMERGENCY & IMPORTANT CONTACTS

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

DIAL 911

DO NOT HANG UP UNTIL THE CALL TAKER TELLS YOU TO DO SO

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

Remain calm and speak clearly. Identify which emergency service you require (police, fire, or ambulance).

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

Other Important Numbers:

CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

WORK PHONE NUMBER

Area Health Care Centers:

- [Hospitals in Edmonton](#)
- [Veterinary Clinics in Edmonton](#)
- [Pharmacies in Edmonton](#)

Dial 311 for non-emergency municipal services (such as replacing a broken street lamp or removing an abandoned vehicle).

HEALTH FACILITIES

Canada has a good standard of general healthcare with a wide range of facilities. It is a system that has been in place for many years and is one that is publicly funded. The standards for healthcare are established by the national government, but it is overseen by each provincial government in the form of the Medicare system. In order to access the free Medicare system operated by the government, you must be in possession of a healthcare card, which is issued by the health department in your province. The Medicare system is not completely free, though, and it should be noted that some treatments and medications will incur costs.

For many expats, this Medicare does not apply as expats do not have the permanent residency status. Those who don't have permanent residency status will need to obtain private healthcare insurance while you are in the country. There are many companies which provide this type of insurance at a reasonable price. Some operate on a nationwide basis and others solely in one or two provinces. It is possible with some companies to arrange healthcare insurance before you arrive in the country. In some provinces, private healthcare is essential for at least the first three months as they do not allow new arrivals to claim on Medicare for that time.

Healthcare for foreign visitors is provided regardless of status and there is a special scheme known as the [Interim Federal Health Program](#) which is designed for those who have come to the country as refugees or with another special status. It will give temporary cover until residency status can be established.

In recent years both federal and provincial governments have taken steps to tackle smoking and the health issues that it raises. Smoking is banned in many public places and it is becoming increasingly unacceptable to smoke in the presence of a non-smoker.

Counseling services are sometimes available through the Medicare system although this depends upon the province that you are in. In addition to this there are large numbers of organizations that offer counseling for specific problems such as alcoholism or bereavement and many of these work on a charitable basis, so treatment is free. You can also choose to see a private therapist and lists of registered therapists are available from the health department of your local provincial government.

As with the UK and the US, it is the usual practice to register with a local doctor. However, in some urban areas of Canada some practices have no room for more patients. Those who have difficulty in finding a doctor who is accepting new patients can contact the local colleges of physicians and surgeons. You can also simply contact all the practices that are listed in the yellow pages, but this can be time consuming if you are living in a well populated area, as you may find that more than half of all practices are not taking on new patients. The same applies for dentists. You may come across several practices which are not taking on new patients and will need to do a little searching. It is also worth contacting the health department of your provincial government as some provinces have a program that can match up patients to available practices.

Childcare

- [Link to Lists of Childcare options](#)

Kindergartens

Kindergarten classes are widely available across the country. In some areas the only option for kindergarten is a private scheme and you will need to pay for this. State run kindergartens are often oversubscribed. There are both full-day and half-day kindergartens. The location and process of enrolling your child to a public kindergarten in Edmonton can be found through [Edmonton Public Schools](#).

Education

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that has a high public education standard making it possible to enroll your child into a public school. Primary education covers grades 1 – 6 and children will attend from the age of 4 to the age of 11. In secondary school the education covers grades 7 – 12 in the majority of provinces. Children are obliged to attend school until the age of 16. Those who graduate with a high school diploma in Canada will find that many countries worldwide will accept this as a qualification.

The school year begins in September and runs until June, with breaks for Christmas and Easter. The school usually starts between 8 am and 8.30 am and finishes between 2.30 pm and 3 pm. The schools have a wide variety of extra-curricular activities such as sports and crafts. Most schools offer programs to educate children in native studies, combat racism and involve aboriginal members of the community in educating the children about their history and culture. Some schools may offer courses in Aboriginal languages.

The vast majority of schools have programs which offer support to international students, teaching French or English as a foreign language as required. The country has a program of offering education in both English and French and some schools will have lessons taught in both languages. There are several public schools in Canada which offer day programs and home stay programs. The fees for these are usually a minimum of \$10,000 per year. Private schools are also common in Edmonton and these can be single sex or co-educational. These are usually funded independently. The advantage to private school education is the smaller class sizes. Pupils can be boarders or day students, and fees normally start at around \$25,000 per year.

In order to register with a school in Edmonton you will need to provide documentation and the type will depend upon your status. Children who have permanent residency status will need confirmation of this status and their record of landing. If the child has visitor status the parent will need to produce a passport and the child will need to have a study permit. The child of a temporary resident will need to have their own passport or be listed on their parent's passport and the parent should have either a

study or work permit. You will also be expected to provide translated report cards and immunization records.

There are openings for all children at state-run schools, although you may prefer a private school. Some of these private institutions are over-subscribed and there are waiting lists. This will depend upon the area that you are in. You will need to produce the same documentation as for enrollment at a state school and some may require you to be interviewed or the child to take an entrance exam.

For more information on Public Schools in Edmonton visit [Edmonton Public Schools](#).

International Schools of Edmonton

Foreign System Schools, or International Schools, offer you the opportunity to pursue an education similar to the one in your country of origin. Registered with the Ministry of Education, they follow guidelines and curriculum identical to those in their home country.



Edmonton has a number of International Schools offering French education or IB education. Some International Schools impose minimum requirements for admission, such as language proficiency or nationality. The criteria vary with each school.

School fees per year vary for lower and upper grades from schools to schools. Academic calendars for each school also differ.

Information on some of the international schools in Edmonton can be found [here](#).

BANKING & MONEY MATTERS

Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit and debit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Both Canadian and International Banks can be found throughout the city of Edmonton. The most common banks are the following:

- [CIBC](#)
- [Bank of Montreal](#)
- [Royal Bank](#)
- [Scotia Bank](#)
- [TD Canada Trust](#)
- [Banks in Edmonton](#)

Credit cards are accepted in most of the larger shops, hotels, and restaurants. ATMs (also called ABMs in Canada) can be found all over the city.

Opening an Account

To open an account, you must present various pieces of identification, for example a Canadian driver's license, passport, certificate of citizenship, permanent resident card, birth certificate, social insurance number, old age security card, health insurance card, document issued by provincial governments, employee identity card, a credit card, a foreign passport, etc. For more information go to [the Canadians Bankers Association](#). Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will also be able to provide you with more detailed information.

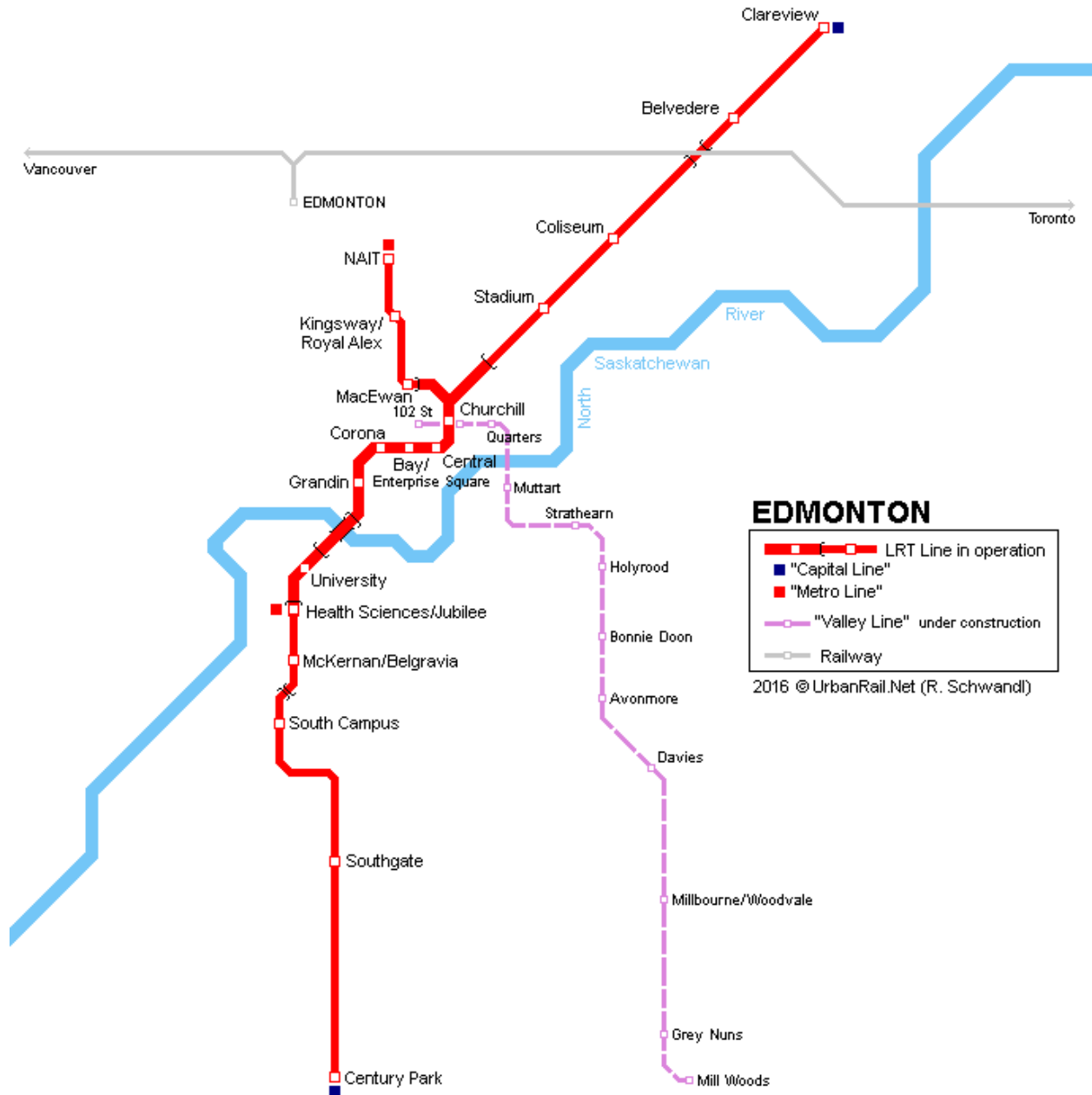
Money Subjects

Sales Tax: The sales tax in Alberta is called the federal goods and services tax (GST). There is no provincial sales tax in Alberta, and total sales tax is 5%, the Canadian rate.

Tipping: Tipping is expected in Edmonton. Bar and restaurant staff have a lower minimum wage than most Canadians. Generally, tip 15 percent on pre-tax meal bills, and a dollar or two at the bar. Hotel cleaning staff and bellhops also deserve a dollar or two. Hairdressers expect tips of between ten and twenty percent.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

Edmonton has public transport network run by the [Edmonton Transit Service](#). It operates bus and light rail systems throughout the city.



Courtesy of [UrbanRail](#)

Airport

[Edmonton International Airport](#) is the primary air passenger and air cargo facility in the Edmonton region. It offers scheduled non-stop flights to major cities in Canada, the United States, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and Europe and is Canada's largest airport in terms of land area and fifth-largest in terms of passenger traffic and aircraft movements.

Trains

[VIA Rail Canada](#) operates a train station in Edmonton, offering service to Vancouver and other major cities in Canada. The Light Rail Transit (see above) is operated by the city.

Driving

The City of Edmonton hosts a [Current Traffic Disruption](#) map that allows drivers to view traffic conditions around the city.

Taxis

Taxis in Edmonton are readily available. While taxis aren't the cheapest way of getting around Edmonton, they are a reliable mode of transport, especially for those travelling through the city late at night. The cost of a taxi becomes more reasonable if it is split amongst a larger group, travelling to the same destination. [#Taxi](#) is a well-known service for connecting you with the first readily available taxi provider in your area. This is a very useful service if you are in a hurry.

Transportation “App” Options

Several web based phone applications to secure a driver are available throughout the area.

- [Uber](#)
- [Lyft](#)

Bicycles

To learn about new and upcoming bike routes and see maps and bike lanes, visit [Bike Edmonton](#).

DRIVER'S LICENSE

As a foreign national you are able to use the license that was issued in your own country but for a limited period of time. Alberta allows you to drive on your own license for up to **90** days, but then you will need to make arrangements to exchange it for a Canadian license. If there is an agreement between Canada and your home country the exchange can be fairly straightforward, although there are some issuing countries which are not accepted by Canada so you will need to take a driving test there.

When you exchange your driving license you will need to do so at the provincial offices. You will need to show that you are a current resident of the area and should show visa documentation to support this. Alberta regulations will expect you to have an eye test, show that your current license is valid (and if this is not already in French or English then it will need to be translated), show proof of ID, proof of address, pay the relevant fee and if you have been driving for less than a couple of years then you may need to take a knowledge test. Each province deals with their own documentation so enquiries should be made to the ministry of transportation.

If you need to take a Canadian driving test then you should make yourself aware of the regulations in your particular province, as these vary across the country. You will need to apply for a novice license and this can be done from the age of 16. Drivers will find that most states have a graduated licensing program which encourages drivers to slowly build on their driving skills. You will be asked to take an eye test and a theory test on road signs, driving regulations and safe driving. Some provinces will expect a driver to take more than one practical test before a full license is issued.

Detailed information for Alberta can be found [here](#).

SHOPPING

Edmonton has a few large shopping malls, such as [West Edmonton Mall](#) and the [Southgate Centre](#). It is helpful to know about some of the smaller shopping districts with personality, such as [Whyte Avenue](#) with its funky clothing, shoes, and home décor and [124th Street](#) with its women's clothing and art galleries. Keep an eye out for unique and quirky stores throughout Edmonton and its suburban areas.

See [this website](#) for a shopping directory for Edmonton.

Groceries

- [Loblaws](#) is a supermarket chain that, in addition to food, offers home décor items, a pharmacy, bulk foods, and often a wine store.
- [Save-On-Foods](#) is a large grocery store chain, and it is recommended to use a rewards card.
- [Sobeys](#) is a large chain with many locations.
- [Safeway](#) is a large grocery store chain, and it also offers a pharmacy and coffee store.
- [No Frills](#) is a basic grocery store for those looking to get the best value for their dollar.
- [More Grocery Stores in Edmonton](#)
- [Edmonton Farmers Markets](#)

Home Furnishings and Collectibles

- [Ikea](#) is a great option for those on a budget. It sells everything necessary in a home: from beds to ice cube makers.
- [Sears](#) offers similar goods to Ikea. Beds, tables, sofas... You name it.
- [United Furniture Warehouse](#) offers similar goods to Ikea and Sears.
- [Pier 1 Imports](#) is a furniture and soft furnishings store providing a wide range of exotic, colorful and eye-catching designs that are sourced offshore.
- [Sleep Country Canada](#) is a Canadian company specializing in mattresses, pillows and bed linen. Is best known for its radio jingle, "Why buy a mattress anywhere else?"
- [The Brick](#) is a retailer of furniture, mattresses, appliances, electronics, soft furnishings and home accents.
- [Crate and Barrel](#) offers housewares, furniture, and home accessories.

RECREATION

[Edmonton Tours](#)

[Edmonton Events Calendar](#)

Outdoor Attractions

Edmonton is one of the best places in Canada to view the [Northern Lights](#) and has some of the best [dark sky viewing](#) (stargazing) in the world. The [Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village](#) allows visitors to discover Ukrainian ways of life in its open-air museum, and the [Snow Valley Aerial Park](#) offers a bird's eye view of the city. Nature attractions include [Elk Island National Park](#), [North Saskatchewan River Valley](#), [Prairie Gardens and Adventure Farm](#), [Muttart Conservatory](#) and [John Janzen Nature Centre](#).

Various outdoor hobbies are easy to practice in Edmonton, including [biking](#), [canoeing](#), and [golfing](#). For more information about outdoor attractions, visit [Explore Edmonton](#).



Muttart Conservatory

Family

Families can enjoy many activities in Edmonton. Some attractions geared toward children include the [Edmonton Valley Zoo](#), [Galaxyland Amusement Park](#), [Jurassic Forest](#), and the [Edmonton Corn Maze](#). In the winter, families may enjoy being outdoors tubing, tobogganing or skating on one of Edmonton's [outdoor rinks](#). For more information about family attractions, visit [Explore Edmonton](#).

Music

Edmonton is home to the [Edmonton Symphony Orchestra](#) and the [Edmonton Opera](#). You may wish to enjoy musical magic in the acoustically superb [Winspear Centre](#), star-studded performances in the [Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium](#), or multi-stage entertainment in the [Citadel Theatre](#). For a taste of local and international jazz, try [The Yardbird Suite](#). For more information about musical attractions, visit [Explore Edmonton](#).

The Arts

Any of the music attractions are great places to start to see what Edmonton has to offer. For those interested in [theatre and improv](#), Edmonton has various live local performances available. The [Alberta Ballet](#) is Canada's second-largest ballet company and has its roots in Edmonton. There are local [cinemas and movies](#) as well as a plenty of [museums](#) and [art galleries](#) to catch your attention. [The Comic Strip](#) hosts the area's best comedy clubs for those interested in Edmonton nightlife. For more information about arts attractions, visit [Explore Edmonton](#).

Sports

[Rogers Place](#) is Edmonton's stunning new sports and entertainment gem in the heart of downtown. Sports teams include the [Edmonton Prospects](#) (baseball), [Edmonton Eskimos](#) (football), [Edmonton Oilers](#) (hockey), [FC Edmonton](#) (soccer), and [Edmonton Oil Kings](#) (hockey). Some unique sports traditions are [axe throwing](#) and the [November Project](#), which brings in elite athletes to lead a free outdoor fitness program. For more information about sports attractions, visit [Explore Edmonton](#).



Restaurants

Edmonton boasts multiple [food tours](#) and [farmers markets](#), as well as wine tasting at [the Barr Estate Winery](#) and various neighborhoods with interesting restaurants. Click [here](#) for a yearly ranking of the best restaurants in the city.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Public holidays include the following in the Alberta Region:

- New Year's Day
- Family Day (Third Monday in February)
- Good Friday (Friday before Easter Sunday)
- Victoria Day (Monday before May 25)
- Canada Day (July 1)
- Civic Holiday (First Monday in August)
- Labour Day (First Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (Second Monday in October)
- Remembrance Day (November 11)
- Christmas Day (December 25)

More information can be found [here](#).

