

Canada: True North Strong and Free

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The words, "true north strong and free" in Canada's national anthem are often attributed to the late poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson. We have spacious lands and lakes and rugged beauty. When looking towards the northern aurora borealis lighting the evening skies, we can observe beautiful displays of undulating colours. These are often visible from every district and province in Canada.

The Northwest Territory and Nunavut as well as Yukon possess mineral wealth and strategic positions for Canada's national defense. These territories also contain vast ice fields and permafrost providing important evidence of global climate change. For winter sports enthusiasts, Canada's snow and ice fields provide beautiful ski trails and scenic icy slopes stretching into the distance as far as the eye can see.

Canada has more lakes than all other countries combined. In some cases there are large islands within large lakes which in turn contain smaller lakes that contain yet smaller islands. In total land mass, Canada is the second largest country next to Russia.

Traveling westward we experience our prairie provinces, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In mid-summer and late autumn, travelers can see the beauty of blue flax fields and immense acres of golden canola grain with rich colours that take one's breath away.

Traveling further westward, the Rocky Mountains emerge larger and steeper as each turn in the winding roads presents yet another exciting vision. As we drive through mountain passes and beside swift waterfalls we descend towards our western shores where immense forest trees stretch skyward. As we travel to Vancouver Island we will come to a well-known scenic spot called Cathedral Grove, where giant Douglas firs are nearly 30 feet in circumference and are up to 295 feet tall. Here, whether one is religious or secular, these giant fir trees will fill

our minds and emotions with spiritual enrichment. The overwhelming gigantic trees in this spot bring us to a quiet respectful reverence for the grandeur of Canadian nature.

Returning eastward to our largest province of Ontario we will see dairy farming and fruit orchards in southern Ontario. In contrast, within northern Ontario, the land changes to rugged outcrops of rock and forests which cover rich mineral resources. With a little luck we are likely to see wildlife such as deer, moose, or bears.

Further eastward the province of Quebec is similarly beautiful with many waterfalls, abundant wildlife and mineral wealth. Quebec also has large farming operations which produce and export dairy products. In addition, Quebec is famous for its delicious maple syrup. It also produces and exports electric power produced from natural water falls.

The Atlantic Provinces include New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland & Labrador. These eastern provinces depend on fishing and some farming and forestry. Newfoundland has rugged coastlines and friendly people who readily invite travelers to their homes to share their hospitality or to watch Atlantic icebergs float slowly southward in summer months. Nova Scotia has opportunities for whale watching and beautiful scenery as travelers follow the Cabot Trail. Nova Scotia's Peggy's Cove is famous for its serenity and outstanding beauty. In New Brunswick there is farming, mining, forestry, and fishing. There are also spectacular natural features such as the Reversing Falls, Magnetic Hill, and the Bay of Fundy's Hopewell Rocks along the coastline with picturesque parks for summer camping.

Traveling by automobile and camping makes vacationing more affordable than going to faraway places beyond our Canadian borders. If every Canadian citizen could travel at least once outside their own province or territory, this would help us see how fortunate we are to live in Canada. It would also help us appreciate our fellow Canadians who have immigrated to Canada either recently or perhaps long ago from many other parts of the world.

More people would like to live in Canada than we are able to accommodate each year. Those of us who have been born in Canada are fortunate to live here and to share in its beauty from sea to sea. But in Canada we share more than nature's beauty. We are fortunate to live in a country with democratic principles, good health care, and peaceful surroundings. I hope that as Canadian citizens we can keep Canada as beautiful as it presently is.