

# *Student Manual*



## *Reference Guide*



## Table of Contents

Facts on Canada .....	3
About Calgary .....	3
Weather .....	3
What to Bring .....	4
Jet Lag .....	4
Culture Shock .....	5
Medical Services .....	7
Getting Around	
Public Transit .....	7
Taxis .....	7
Security and Safety .....	8
Money, Shopping and Postal Services .....	8
Homestay .....	8
Host Family Expectations .....	8
Your Rights and Responsibilities .....	9
Heating and Electricity .....	9
Meals .....	9
Canadian Cuisine .....	10
Showers and Toilets .....	10
Laundry .....	10
Guest Bedrooms .....	10
Internet/Computer Use .....	11
Telephones .....	11
Pets .....	11
Canadian Culture and Customs .....	
Formality .....	12
Women's Role .....	12
Tipping .....	12
Hospitality .....	12
Multiculturalism .....	13
Photos .....	13
Copyright .....	13
Smoking .....	13
Improving your English .....	13
Emergency Phone numbers	
Important Phone Numbers at the Calgary Board of Education .....	14
The Ten Commandments of Travel .....	14

# WELCOME TO CALGARY!

The Calgary Board of Education would like to welcome you to Calgary. We hope this will be a memorable experience for you! This handbook is designed to give you some tips regarding Canadian customs and homestay situations.

## FACTS ON CANADA



Canada is the second largest country in area in the world and has a population of 30.7 million. Canada consists of ten provinces and three territories. As a result of this, climate can vary from province to province. For example, in Alberta, winter brings cold weather and snow, but on the coast of British Columbia they rarely get snow in winter and receive much more rain than the rest of the country.

Canada has two official languages: English and French. You may notice that some items are printed in both languages (examples are food packaging or government signs).

Canadian geography is very diverse, so if you are looking for the rainforests of British Columbia, the vast plains of Saskatchewan or the beautiful scenery on the East Coast, it is all possible. If you would like to arrange a trip within Canada or even a weekend trip, please ask staff at the Calgary Board of Education - we can help to make your arrangements.

## ABOUT CALGARY



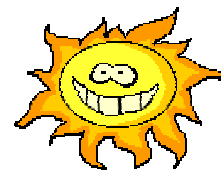
Calgary is a clean and safe city that is located close to the famous Rocky Mountains. Calgary is a fast growing city with a current population of approximately one million people. We are a multicultural city with many people from different ethnic backgrounds. As a result Calgary offers a vast array of festivals, restaurants, and activities related to different cultures. You can choose from hundreds of restaurants that cater to every taste and budget. Whether you are craving food from your home country or want to sample our famous Alberta beef, you are guaranteed to find a restaurant that will meet your culinary needs.

Calgary offers many different attractions, which include shopping, theatre, art galleries, ballet, concerts, and a lively nightlife. Please ask Calgary Board of Education staff or your host family for help or advice if you have questions regarding customs or places you would like to visit.

## WEATHER

Calgary's weather is always changing. Our winter can get very cold, so you may have to purchase warmer clothes. However, the most noticeable feature of our weather is that it can change very rapidly in just a few hours. The best way to keep warm is

- to layer your clothing with warm layers underneath a windproof jacket
- to wear a warm hat - 40% of body warmth is lost from your head
- to wear warm boots and gloves
- to move along briskly whenever you can



But take heart. Just when our winter seems to be unbearably cold, a Chinook wind will blow in and there will be a few days of warmer weather!!

If you are lucky enough to come in summer, you will enjoy many mild, sunny days. Calgary has more sunny days than any other large city in Canada.

### Calgary Climate Data - Environment Canada 1971-2000

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<u>Temperature</u>												
<b>Daily Maximum (°C)</b>	-2.8	-0.1	4.0	11.3	16.4	20.2	22.9	22.5	17.6	12.1	2.8	-1.3
<b>Daily Minimum (°C)</b>	-15.1	-12.0	-7.8	-2.1	3.1	7.3	9.4	8.6	4.0	-1.4	-8.9	-13.4
<u>Precipitation</u>												
<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>	0.2	0.1	1.7	11.5	51.4	79.8	67.9	58.7	41.7	6.2	1.2	0.3
<b>Snowfall (cm)</b>	17.7	13.4	21.9	15.4	9.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.8	9.9	16.4	17.6

## WHAT TO BRING

Try to bring as little as possible! Your travels will be easier if you travel light, and you will want to save room for souvenirs. Basic clothing items are easy to buy here. Calgary is very informal so plan for casual, comfortable clothes that are easy to wash.

Bring spare prescription glasses/contact lenses and personal medications. Bring some photos and pictures from home to share with us.



## JET LAG



### Prevention

- During your flight, switch your watch to Calgary time to start becoming accustomed to the new time zone.
- Avoid alcohol on the flight and drink lots and lots of water.
- Consider a nasal spray to help with the dry conditions on the airplane.
- Get up and move around every hour on the plane to avoid leg cramps.

### Once You Arrive

Here are some tips which research has shown to significantly reduce the effects of jet lag:

- Be sure your watch is set to local time.
- Spend as much time outside in the fresh air as possible especially on the first day or two.

- Avoid alcohol for the first day and drink lots and lots of other liquids especially water. **YOU CAN DRINK OUR WATER STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP. BOTTLED WATER IS NOT NECESSARY.**
- Avoid having a nap. If you must nap, set your alarm to limit the nap to 30 minutes so you can start sleeping through the night as soon as possible.
- Be patient. In two or three days you will feel much better.

## **Culture Shock**

### **I. What is Culture Shock?**

Culture shock is the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment. It is feeling lost and alone and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate.

Culture shock is a very normal reaction to a new and different place. It is expected when a person moves from a familiar environment to a new setting where language, food, clothing, manners and social relations are very different. You have been removed from familiar patterns of communication and the ways you normally express feelings. You are missing friends and family and struggling with some of the activities that were so easy before, such as grocery shopping or taking the bus.

If you can identify signs of culture shock, you will be prepared for what you will be feeling and be sure that those feelings will pass quickly.

### **II. Stages of Culture Shock**

Culture shock has many stages. Each stage can be ongoing or appear only at certain times. The first stage is the “honeymoon” stage, when everything is new and exciting.

During the second stage, you may have some different times and crises in daily life. You may have trouble communicating. In this stage, you may feel impatient, angry, sad and useless. This happens when you try to adapt to a new culture that is very different from your own culture.

During the third stage, you will gain some understanding of the new culture. You may experience pleasure and have a sense of humor. You may not feel lost anymore and start to have a sense of direction. You will be more familiar with the environment and want to belong.

In the fourth stage, you will realize that the new culture has good and bad things to offer. You may feel like you belong here. You may develop goals for living in the new culture.

The fifth stage is called “*re-entry shock*.” This happens when you return to your country. People and customs seem to be different. You will think a lot about your experiences and miss the friends you made. You may even wish that you did not return to your home.

These stages happen at different times for everyone and each person reacts differently. Some stages will be longer and more difficult than others. Many factors contribute to the effects of culture shock.

### III. Dealing With Culture Shock

Here are some thoughts to help you through this difficult period:

- Evaluate your expectations: How realistic are they? If you expected all the women and men to look and act like those whom you have seen on television, you are going to be disappointed. Television and movies are not a very accurate illustration of life in North America.
- Take initiative: Establish simple goals and evaluate your progress. Have confidence in yourself. Follow your ambitions and continue your plans for the future.
- Do your research: Know as much as you can about your new city. Part of the experience is discovery.
- Be aware of stereotypes: Do you have any stereotypes of Canadians? Canada is a vast country with much diversity, and one cannot say, "All Canadians are..." You may also find that people already have stereotypes about your country before they know you.
- Educate others: Canadian citizens may not know about your culture. You have a chance to introduce them to it.
- Keep an open mind: Don't judge what you see as right or wrong, but challenge yourself to try and understand the variety of behaviors that you will see. You certainly do not have to participate in something you disagree with, but you can try to understand it.
- Be patient: Adapting to new situations takes time. Find ways to live with the things that don't satisfy you.
- Be positive: If you have an unpleasant experience, don't put yourself in that position again.
- Get involved: Find a hobby. Participating in activities is a good way to learn about Canadian culture!
- Keep active: Learn to include regular physical activity in your routine. This will help with sadness and loneliness in a positive manner. Exercise, swim, take an aerobics class, etc.
- Relax: Relaxation and meditation are helpful for people who have stress.
- Keep contact with your ethnic group: This will give you a feeling of belonging and you will reduce your feelings of loneliness and alienation.
- Keep contact with the new culture: Learn the language. Volunteer in community activities that allow you to practice the language you are learning.
- Don't be hard on yourself: Allow yourself to feel sad about the things that you have left behind: your family, your friends, etc. Recognize the sadness of leaving your old country *but* accept the new country. Focus your energy on making the transition.
- Keep in touch: Your family and friends will be a support for you in difficult times.
- Ask for help: If you feel stressed, talk to someone. There is always someone or some service available to help you.

**A last word on culture shock.** Don't fight it, but be aware of what you are experiencing and why.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

If you do not feel well, do not hesitate to ask your host family for help and advice.

**Pharmacies** are easy to find, and you will be able to receive free advice on which non-prescription medicines may help.



**Walk-in Clinics** are also easy to find. You can go to these and see a doctor without an appointment. Use these clinics if you feel you need a doctor's advice, but your condition is not an emergency. Please note that when you visit a clinic you may be asked to pay for your visit while you are there. If that happens, keep the receipt and your insurance company should reimburse you.

**Emergency Rooms at hospitals** are open 24 hours a day and you will receive excellent care. However, waiting times can be very long especially if you do not have a real emergency. Use walk-in clinics whenever possible, but in a real emergency do not hesitate to go to a hospital or call 9-1-1 for an ambulance.

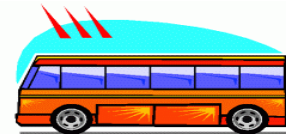
It is mandatory that all students studying at Calgary Board of Education have medical insurance.

## GETTING AROUND

### Public Transit

Calgary has a great transit system that is reliable and safe. If you are unsure of how to get to a location in the city by bus or train, you can reach

**Calgary Transit at 262-1000.** Tell the operator where you are, and where you would like to go and they will tell you exactly how to get there. The operators are friendly and helpful, so don't hesitate to phone if you have transit questions.



**How to pay?** When you get on a bus, pay your fare or show your monthly transit pass. If you need to connect to another bus or train, ask for a transfer. The trains run on an honour system. Purchase and validate your ticket in the machines available at each stop and be prepared to show your ticket or transit pass.

Although our buses and trains are very reliable, they do not run late into the evenings and service is always slower on the weekends. Be sure to **check the schedule** ahead of time so that you do not have a long wait during these times.

Calgary has a very low population density, so be prepared to have some longer trips by bus and train. A typical commute from home to work in Calgary is 45 minutes. Trips of an hour or more by public transit are not unusual. Plan ahead and enjoy the scenery.

### Taxis

If you plan to be out late, or would like to go somewhere on the weekends, the other alternative is to call a taxi. Again, taxis are clean and safe. Sharing a taxi (each person pays a portion of the bill) with friends is cheaper than taking one by your self. Fares are set and not open to negotiation. You may usually pay by credit card.

Some phone numbers to phone a Taxi:

Associated Cab	299-1111	CO-OP	531-8294
Checker Cabs	299-9999	Mayfair	255-6555

## SECURITY AND SAFETY

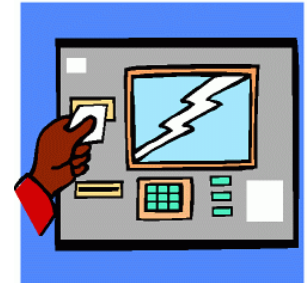
Calgary is a very safe city, but you still need to use the same precautions that you would in any large city. Do not leave valuables lying around. Be sensible about where you travel alone late at night. If in doubt, ask Calgary Board staff or your host family for advice.

The drinking age is 18 years and photo identification may be requested.

Hitchhiking is not allowed within the city limits and is not recommended outside the city. Besides you could wait a very long time for a ride!

## MONEY, SHOPPING AND POSTAL SERVICES

Calgary has many **banks** downtown and in shopping centres. You can change money, or cash traveler's cheques at any bank. Banks are usually open from 10:00 a.m. -3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Automatic Teller Machines (ATM's) are also easy to find for taking cash out with a credit card or debit card. ATM's are open 24 hours.



Very little **bargaining** is done in stores except for large items such as stereos or furniture. You may see "garage sales" or "flea markets" in your neighbourhood where people are selling used goods. People always bargain at these sales for a good price.

Almost all stores will accept traveler's cheques, debit or credit cards. Your host family will be able to give you advice on where to find good **shopping** areas close to your homestay. Calgary has many large malls if you want to stay indoors and visit many shops. Shopping malls are usually open from 9:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. Smaller stores may not open until 10:00 am and may not be open every evening.

You will find **post offices** in most shopping centres. Look for the "Canada Post" sign. Your host family can tell you where the closest post office is located.

## HOMESTAY

Your host family will be looking forward to meeting you and making your stay as enjoyable as possible. If you are uncertain about anything, do not be shy - ask them for advice! If you are living in a host family situation we encourage you to contact Calgary Board of Education staff if you are experiencing any problems in the home.



## HOST FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

- Your host family will help you with many things, but Canadian people are usually very independent and your host family will expect you to be the same.
- Your host family will advise you on the rules of the house. Please try to respect your host family's rules, and ask questions if you do not understand. Telling your host family if you will not be home for dinner, or coming home at reasonable times will help you to avoid problems.
- Spend some time with your host family; after all what better way to practice your English!

## Your Rights and Responsibilities

### Rights

- You have the right to live in a clean, safe, and comfortable home. You will likely be sharing a bathroom with other family members.
- You have the right to use facilities in the house to wash and dry your clothes.
- You have the right not to be sexually harassed or be subjected to racism. Please tell staff at Calgary Board of Education immediately if you experience either of these problems.
- Your host family will provide you with meals during your stay.
- You have the right to use the phone for local calls. Local calls are free and phone cards can be purchased at most stores for long distance calls.
- Your family should include you in family outings and situations.



### Responsibilities

- Try to keep your room clean, and do not expect anyone in the family to clean up after you in the kitchen or bathroom.
- Ask permission to have a friend visit the house before you invite them.
- Advise your host family if you will be home late or will not be home for dinner.
- Changing host families will be used as a last resort and should be discussed with the homestay coordinator.
- Respect the family's privacy and ensure that your own privacy is not being invaded.



### Heating and Electricity

- All Canadian homes have central heating.
- Thermostats may be set lower than what you are used to with daytime temperatures typically set at 20-22 C and night time temperatures 15 -17 C. We generally keep our houses cooler out of preference and to conserve energy.
- If you feel too cold at night, please ask for extra blankets.

Most Canadians also like to conserve electricity. Try to turn out the lights when you leave a room and make sure appliances, TV's and stereos are turned off when you are finished using them.

### Meals

Canadians have three main meals during the day. As Calgary is a fast paced city, **breakfast** is usually eaten on the run and consists of cereal, toast, muffins/bagels coffee, and juice. Many Canadians will tell you to "help yourself" to breakfast. In this case, please feel free to make



your own breakfast. Canadians will sometimes make a big breakfast on the weekends that can include eggs, bacon, pancakes, toast and hash brown potatoes.

**Lunch** is typically eaten from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. Most Canadians bring a sandwich or soup with them to eat at lunchtime. Your host family will most likely pack a lunch for you to take with you. If it needs to be heated, microwaves can be found at most schools.

**Dinner** is the main meal of the day and is eaten anywhere between 5:30-7:00 p.m. If you are in homestay please let your host family know if you are not going to be home for dinner. If you miss dinner you will be responsible for getting your own dinner either when you get home or when you are out. Some host families may save some of the dinner they prepared that evening and put it in the refrigerator for you.

Meals are usually served "home style", which means that you help yourself from serving dishes on the table. Unlike many cultures, where each person takes small amounts several times during a meal, Canadians usually take the total amount they want the first time. If there is food left, you can of course ask for "seconds". Your hostess will be pleased to offer you more.

**Please note that the water in Calgary is clean and you can drink it straight from the tap.**

Inform your host family of foods that you are allergic to or dislike. There are many ethnic food markets around town where you may be able to buy food from your home country. Although the food will be very different to what you are used to, try to have an open mind and taste new food. It is all part of the experience of living in a different country!!!

## Canadian Cuisine

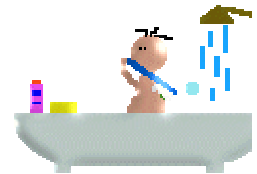
The main characteristic of Canadian food is its variety. You can find food from almost every country in Calgary. In a typical Canadian home, a weekly menu could include Italian pasta, Chinese stir-fry, a vegetarian meal and a North American barbecue. There is very little typically Canadian cuisine and what there is varies considerably by region.

In Western Canada, beef is a specialty, and you may have an opportunity to try buffalo. Other local dishes include wild rice and desserts made with Saskatoon berries. Specialties from other regions include salmon and maple syrup.



## Showers and Toilets

- Most Canadians shower in the morning, but if you like to shower at night, please do so before 9:00 p.m. Please remember to put the shower curtain inside the bathtub to prevent water from spilling onto the floor. Ask your host family about the most convenient times to take a shower.
- The plumbing in Canada is durable and strong. Toilet paper should be placed in the toilet instead of the garbage can.



## Laundry

You will be able to use the washer and dryer in your homestay. Ask your hosts for directions and a convenient time to use these.

## Guest Bedrooms

Many Canadian homes have basements. It is very common for families to have the guest bedroom in the basement. This will provide you with privacy and is not meant to cut you off from your host family. It may be a bit cooler in the basement, so be sure you have enough blankets for your bed.

## Internet/Computer Use

Almost all Canadian homes have computers with Internet access. However, several family members often share one computer. In addition, the computer may use the telephone line so that when the Internet is in use, the telephone cannot be used. Ask your hosts if and when there is a convenient time for you to use their computer to check your email. If you need to download and install software to communicate by email in your first language, please ask your host family for permission and assistance. Many of us are very concerned about computer viruses.



If you are at a school, you will be able to use computers there, but Hotmail is not accessible on Calgary Board of Education computers. You can also use the Internet at public libraries and at Internet cafes for a small fee.

## Telephones

Long distance telephone cards can be purchased at most convenience stores. Ask your hosts or Calgary Board staff for advice. Be sure to use these for making long distance calls from your homestay. If you plan to be on the telephone a long time, ask when would be a convenient time. Local calls are free if calling from a home or office.

## Pets

Most Canadian families have pets such as cats and dogs. Calgary Board of Education will only place students in homes without pets if those students have allergies. If you are very nervous of animals, let your host family know, so that they can help you become comfortable around them.



## CANADIAN CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

Whenever we travel to another country, we are often surprised at what is considered rude and what is considered polite. We may be shocked at some behavior and, at other times, unknowingly act in a manner that our hosts find impolite. Keeping an open mind and using common sense will cover most situations, but here are few special tips about Canadians and the crazy things we think are polite or rude!



It is usually considered rude to:

- ask someone their age, unless they are a child;
- ask how much money someone makes;
- walk into a home without removing our shoes;
- burp or pass gas (flatulence) in public. However, Canadians think it is perfectly acceptable to blow their noses in public!
- slurp while eating soup or talk with our mouths full of food;
- begin eating before the host and hostess are seated;

- smoke without asking permission (in Canada there are very few indoor places where smoking is still allowed);
- bump into people without saying "excuse me!";
- arrive late. Canadians are usually very punctual. For school and business, if you are told to be somewhere at a specific time, the expectation is that you arrive on time, or five to ten minutes early.
- fall asleep in class.



Canadians are used to having a fair amount of physical space around them. After all, Canada is a very large country, so we have lots of room! We usually do not stand too close to others when talking. We generally avoid bumping into one another and certainly say, "excuse me" if we do. Canadians usually hold doors for one another, and many men still hold doors open for women.

Being polite goes a long way in Canadian society. Use etiquette such as "please" when making a request and "thank you" when someone helps you. Try to avoid saying "I want..." and use the phrase "I would like..." when asking for something. This includes not only your host family and teachers, but also people who serve you in stores and restaurants. For example, to get the attention of a waiter, say, "excuse me..."

Most people will shake your hand when they first meet you. It is also common for people to hug you when they are saying final good-byes.

## Formality

Canadians may seem very informal to you. Almost everyone calls one another by their first name and will expect you to do the same (one exception is for secondary students when addressing their teacher in school). You may wish to use a nickname that is easy for Canadians to pronounce, but you need not do this - we are happy to learn how to say your name correctly!

Canadian informality does not mean lack of respect. It would be considered rude to ignore a teacher or trainer when he/she is presenting material or to interrupt him/her when speaking.

## Women's Role

Most women work outside the home and their role within the home is equal to that of a man. Since most women work outside the home, members of the family share housework and prepare meals. Many host families are single parent families with the mother raising her children. This is very common in our society.



## Tipping

The usual tip in a full service restaurant is 15%. In fast food restaurants and coffee shops a smaller tip is acceptable. A 10-15% tip is normal in a taxi.

## Hospitality

In Canada it is normal to assume that costs are shared when you go out for a meal. Assume that you will pay for your share unless your host or friend indicates that they want to "treat" you or have you as their guest. You may wish to take your homestay family out for a meal as your "treat" or to cook a meal for them in their home to share your own cuisine.

## Multiculturalism

Canada prides itself on being a multicultural country where people from any religion, or ethnic group may feel welcome. You may be surprised to find that Canadians do not notice you as being different from anyone else because of our large immigrant population. Many of our visible minorities are third and fourth generation Canadians and speak English as their first language.

In your classroom or training program, you will be expected to work with people from many countries. You should not encounter any discrimination, nor should you discriminate against people from races or ethnic groups different from your own.



## Photos

Please ask people for permission before taking their photo. Within the schools, you may be able to take photos of teachers if you ask permission. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE PHOTOS OF STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOLS.** This is prohibited by our Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, which we take very seriously. There may be some exceptions to this rule when students have provided written permission for photos to be taken. When in doubt, please ask Calgary Board of Education staff when it is appropriate to take photos.



While it is wonderful to bring home photos as souvenirs, it is also good to relax and enjoy the experience instead of becoming too preoccupied with getting the perfect photo.

## Copyright

Canada has very strict copyright laws restricting the photocopying of books and copying videos and CDs. If you want a copy of something, please ask for advice on how to purchase it.

## Smoking

It is becoming more difficult to be a smoker in Canada. Not only do we require most smoking to be done outside, but we also have rules about which outdoor locations are acceptable. For example, we do not like people to smoke in front of our Education Centre. Also, it is important to put cigarette butts in appropriate receptacles rather than on the ground. Be sure to ask when and where you can smoke. You will be sure to find some Canadian smokers who can help you out!

## IMPROVING YOUR ENGLISH

One of your goals in coming to Canada is to improve your English. Here are a few tips to help you:

- Take every opportunity to talk with Canadians. It is very common here for people to chat at bus stops and in stores. Don't be shy! Calgarians are very helpful and friendly. Do not hesitate to ask bus drivers or people on the street for directions. Even if you think you know the way, it is great practice! Take opportunities to have conversations with your host family
- Try not to worry about your accent or about making grammar mistakes. Calgary is a very multicultural city and we are used to hearing many accents. You may need to repeat or ask others to speak more slowly, but be patient and don't quit trying! If you are here with a group from your country, try to minimize the amount of time you spend in your first language. Consider agreeing to speak only English during your stay - you have only this short opportunity, so make the most of it.

## EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

**IMPORTANT**

In an emergency situation you can reach the police department, ambulance or fire department by dialing 9-1-1.

### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AT CALGARY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Sheila McLeod	294-8524
Pam Baji	294-8523
Kim Horricks	294-8153
Yvonne Pryor	294-8525

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF TRAVEL

Do not expect to find things the same as at home, because you have left home to experience something different.

Do not take anything too seriously for a carefree mind is the start of a good holiday.

Do not let the other travelers get on your nerves, for you have paid good money to enjoy yourself.

Remember to take half as many clothes as you think you'll need and twice the money.

Know at all times where your passport is, for a person without a passport is a person without a country.

Remember that if we had been expected to stay in one place we would have been created with roots.

Do not worry for worriers have less pleasure and few things are that fatal.

When in Rome, be prepared to do somewhat as the Romans do.

Do not judge all the people of the country by the person who gives you trouble.

Remember you are a guest in other lands and he that treats his host with respect shall be honored.-

