

Conquering Canadian Winter Without Turning into a Popsicle!

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It's the most wonderful time of the year...but is it really?

As someone who grew up in a country where the sun shines 365 days a year, winter hit me like a snowball to the face. I remember looking outside one day and realizing everything had lost its colour. The leaves were gone, the trees stood like skeletons, and the snow turned the whole world into a blinding sheet of white. Oh, and speaking of blinding, no one warned me that when sunlight hits fresh snow, it's basically nature's way of attacking your eyeballs. During the day, the snow blinds you; at night, it haunts you. Because it *never* gets completely dark in winter!

The Reality of Canadian Winter

Before moving, I heard countless warnings about Canadian winters. People told me the cold would be unbearable, the sun would disappear for months, and I might even lose my nose to frostbite! Okay, no one said that last part, but honestly, it felt like a real possibility.

At first, I brushed it off. I was actually excited to see the snow! But reality hit me harder than the wind on a -30°C day.

During my first month here, I was constantly sick. And I don't mean just a runny nose, I mean full-on, bed-ridden, tea-guzzling, medicine-dependent sick. I used to work on campus, and my daily routine became a never-ending cycle of going to work, coming home, taking meds, and sleeping. Winter and I were not off to a great start. And that was just the beginning.

A list of problems

#1 Where Did the Sun Go?

You know that feeling when you wake up, look outside, and it's already dark? That's Canadian winter. I still remember the first time I saw the sky turn black at 4:00 PM. My brain refused to accept it. How could it already be night?

This is when the dreaded winter blues crept in, I was sad and unproductive most of the

times. I didn't even realize what was happening to me until my sister, who apparently knows everything, handed me a bottle of vitamin D tablets. I took one, and I kid you not, the next day, I felt like a whole new person! Turns out, I was just *vitamin D deficient*.

So, lesson learnt: If you feel like a walking zombie during the winter, it's probably your body begging for some sunlight. Try a Vitamin D supplement, or better yet, go outside when the sun's actually around!

#2 Feels Like - WHAT?!

Before moving to Canada, I thought temperature readings were straightforward. *20°C is a little chilly, 10°C is cold, and 0°C is freezing*. Simple, right? WRONG. Because the wind chill will betray you. A simple 0°C day can feel like -10°C in the wrong conditions. The air physically hurts your face, and it's like winter wants to *fight* you for some reason!

So, lesson learnt: Always check the "feels like" temperature before you step outside and layer up like a human burrito. Also, please moisturize, or your skin *will really* hate you!

#3 Delayed Transit is Your Daily Workout

Ah, the TTC. Toronto's public transit system. It already has delays on a *normal* day. Now add a snowstorm? You're going to be so late. On top, some GTA bus stops are just poles in the ground, others have roofs, and a *lucky few* have heaters (a blessing in disguise). Either way, standing outside waiting for a delayed bus in freezing temperatures is an experience no one prepares you for.

So, lesson learnt: Always, *always* check transit updates before leaving home in winter, and maybe leave way earlier than usual. And yes, even when it's -20°C, drink water! Unless you want to end up as a frozen raisin on the sidewalk!

#4 Snow in Spring?

Back home, I used to complain about the scorching heat on my birthday. Now, I complain about the cold! Canadian winter doesn't care about your calendars, trust me. It starts as early as October and doesn't fully leave until *May*. That's right. *May*. One day, you think spring is here, the birds are chirping, and life is good - then BAM! It's cold again. Just to remind you who's da boss.

So, lesson learnt: Never, EVER assume winter is over just because you saw *one* sunny day. Hold off putting away your winter jackets, and make sure you check the weather when you go out because spring is just winter's intermission!

The Winter Playbook

Now, I don't want to scare you. Canadian winter *is* rough, but it's also an experience you don't want to miss! So, here's your official to-do list to make sure you're living your best winter life!

- It's time for winter shopping! Shop for winter clothes at [Decathlon](#), [The North Face](#), or more affordable stores like [Winners](#), [Marshalls](#), [The Bay](#), or even [thrift stores](#).
- Experience true Canadian winter by attending the [maple syrup festival](#), or visiting the [sugar shack event](#) (although the event is canceled for 2025, it may return in 2026).
- Take advantage of the snow and go [tobogganing/sledding](#) on nearby hills, or learn how to ski at [Blue Mountain](#)!
- Go ice skating at [Nathan Phillips Square](#) (you can get rentals), [The Bentway](#), or your [neighbourhood rink](#).
- Lastly, stay up to date with winter happenings in your area by following Instagram pages like [todotoronto](#) and checking [Google Events](#).

Adding Extra Colours to the White

You thought the fun wishlist ended? Nope. Winter may be cold and white, but think of it like a snow cone; you get to choose how much color and flavor you want to add to it!

♥🌨 Christmas lights, holiday markets, and festive vibes.

🌨🌨 Snowman-building competitions with friends.

🌨🌨 Hot chocolate, cozy baking sessions, and winter movie marathons.

🌨🌨 Winter walks and beautiful trails in the arms of nature.

Make Winter Your Own

I hope I've convinced you that winter, despite its icy challenges, has its own kind of magic. A magic that makes Canada, well, *Canada*.

And sure, I still get caught in snowstorms, I still miss the sun like it's a long-lost friend, and I STILL have a love-hate relationship with the "feels like" temperature. But here's the thing, I've stopped trying to just survive winter. Instead, I've learned to find colour in all that white, because winter's not just about getting through it, it's about making it your own.

So go ahead, grab your brightest crayons, and make it as weird, wild, and wonderful as you can. Because, let's face it, if you're going to live through the snow, you might as well enjoy it!

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Next blog, *"Do I Really Need That?" Living on a Student Budget*, publishing on Saturday, March 8th.

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