

SAANICH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM (SISP)

Student Arrival Guide –2022-23

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“Transforming lives and communities through intercultural experiences”

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Contents

Introduction	1
Territorial Acknowledgement	1
Our Schools	1
Covid-19: Vaccinations	2
Vaccines Approved by the Canadian Federal Government	2
Fully Vaccinated Status Defined:	2
Pre-Departure Information for All Students	3
Communication and Relationship Building with your Host Family:	3
If You’ve Already had Covid-19 and Recovered	3
Completing Arrival Plans	3
Checklist of what you need to have ready at the border	3
Entering Canada: Fully Vaccinated Travelers	4
Packing, Airport and Flight	5
In your CARRY ON:	5
In your SUITCASE:	5
Arrival in Canada	6
Upon arrival at Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, or Montreal Airports, make sure you:	6
Upon arrival at Victoria International Airport (YYJ), make sure you:	6
You’re Finally Here! Now What?	7
If You Develop Symptoms or are Diagnosed with COVID-19	7
Resources	7
General Program Information, Rules and Expectations for All Students	8
Current Rules in British Columbia	8
Important Rules for SISP Students:	8
School Bus and Public Transportation	8
Homestay Information and Expectations	8
The two most important things - Integration and Communication	9
Integration:	9
Communication:	9
Everyday Important Things	9
Problems with your host family?	10
Appendix 1: Saanich International Student Program – Contact Information	12

Introduction

Hello and a warm welcome from the Team at the Saanich International Student Program (SISP)!

SISP oversees and supports all international students in the Saanich School District, on beautiful Vancouver Island. SISP is committed to ensuring each international student has the most enriching experience possible. We strive to provide a caring, safe, and culturally rich environment in schools, homestays and the community.

Territorial Acknowledgement

SISP acknowledges with great respect the WŚÁNEĆ People on whose traditional territory we live, learn, teach and work. The WŚÁNEĆ People have lived and worked on this land since time immemorial and their historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Our Schools

We are very excited to welcome you to Saanich! You will be joining one of the great schools in our School District:

- Claremont Secondary School
- Parkland Secondary School
- Stelly's Secondary School

In this Student Arrival Guide, you will find important and detailed information about preparing for your journey, arrival in Canada and your stay here with us in Saanich. Please read this information carefully.

We look forward to meeting you soon!

Spencer Gray
Principal
Saanich Schools International Student Program

Covid-19: Vaccinations

Students arriving in Saanich are required to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. You have already provided your proof of vaccination in your student application.

Vaccines Approved by the Canadian Federal Government

- ✓ AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD (ChAdOx1-S, Vaxzevria, AZD1222)
- ✓ Bharat Biotech (Covaxin, BBV152 A, B, C)
- ✓ Janssen/Johnson & Johnson
- ✓ Moderna (mRNA-1273)
- ✓ Pfizer-BioNTech (Comirnaty, tozinameran, BNT162b2)
- ✓ Sinopharm BIBP-CorV)
- ✓ Sinovac (CoronaVac, PiCoVacc)

Pre-Departure Information for All Students

Communication and Relationship Building with your Host Family:

- Prior to coming to Saanich, connect with your host family by having several Zoom, WeChat, FaceTime or Microsoft TEAMS video meetings to get to know one another.
- Speak with your host family about your arrival information:
 - When will they pick you up?
 - Where will they meet you?
 - How will you recognize them?
- SISP also sends arrival flight itineraries to your host families.
- Exchange phone numbers and email addresses and program this information into your phone

Checklist of what you need to have ready at the border

You will need to have the following items with you for assessment by our government officials at the border:

1. Proof of vaccination - **People's Republic of China, Hong Kong and Macau only**
2. Passport
3. Study Permit Approval Letter if you have one
4. Letter of Acceptance from SISP
5. Custodial Documents
6. Homestay Profile and contact information

Packing, Airport and Flight

In this section you will find information on what to bring with you, and what to be mindful of during your flight and at airports. Please note: all students will have to bring a cell phone and a laptop or tablet when coming or returning to Canada for the 2022-2023 school year.

In your CARRY ON:

You will need to bring the following things with you on the plane in your carry on luggage.

- Cell phone + charger
- Laptop/tablet
- Passport
- Wallet
- Change of clothes
- 2 masks
- A travel sized bottle of hand-sanitizer (100 milliliters or less)
- Important documents (printed):**
 - Study permit or permit confirmation document
 - Custodianship documents
 - Letter of Acceptance
 - Homestay Profile and contact information
 - Contact emergency information sheet for SISP staff

In your SUITCASE:

- Disposable face masks
- A cloth face mask
- One large bottle of hand sanitizer (good quality!)
- Box of Covid Rapid Antigen tests
- Thermometer**
- Regular items such as:
 - Clothing
 - Toiletries
 - Personal belongings
 - Books

Please do not travel if you are sick or showing any symptoms that could be related to Covid-19. You will not be able to board your flight. Even if you were able to board your flight, your Canadian medical insurance will not cover you if you showed symptoms prior to your arrival in Canada.

To minimize your risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other transmittable diseases, please follow the guidelines detailed below:

- Wear a mask in the airport and on the flight
- Wash hands frequently and avoid touching your face
- Practice Social/Physical Distancing
- Use hand sanitizer when necessary
- Sanitize your personal space and high touch areas
- Keep your cell phone charged
- Bring a refillable water bottle and food with you (check with airline what foods are allowed)
- If you need help at the airport, go to the Information Desk or look for volunteers who can help you!

Arrival in Canada

When you arrive in Canada, you will need to proceed through the airport while maintaining physical distance where possible. You will need to undergo a screening by a Canadian Border Services or Quarantine Officer. Please have your documents as outlined under “packing” ready to provide to the Canadian Border Services. Most of our students’ first port of entry is Vancouver Airport (YVR), however, if you are flying via Calgary, Toronto or Montreal, the information below applies the same.

Upon arrival at Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, or Montreal Airports, make sure you:

- Wear a mask is recommended
- Log in to the Free Airport Wi-Fi
- Text or WhatsApp your host family and natural parents/guardians letting them know you have arrived in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, or Montreal
- Have your documents ready to share with Canadian Border Services Agency:
 - Study permit or permit confirmation document
 - Custodianship documents
 - Letter of Acceptance
 - Homestay Profile and contact information
 - Contact emergency information sheet for SISP staff
- Listen carefully to Canadian Border Services Agency agents, and if you don’t understand something, ask questions
 - Go through immigration and baggage pick up while physical distancing (see steps below)
 - Receive your study permit at immigration and review it, to make sure the information is correct.
 - For assistance at the:
 - Vancouver International Airport, if you need help, look for Customer Care Ambassadors (blue jackets, white shirts). They can assist you with watching/caring for you as a minor in transit. They can also help with language barrier issues and if you miss a flight and need to be in the airport overnight, they will make sure to check in with you. Students can also use customer care phones if they don’t have cell service, etc.
 - Calgary International Airport, the Customer Care Ambassadors will be found wearing red uniforms, if you require any assistance, please reach out to them.
 - Montreal-Trudeau International Airport, the Customer Care Ambassadors can be found wearing red jackets with black pants or skirts and are there to help you.
 - Toronto International Airport, if you require any assistance, please reach out to any staff member at the airport.

Upon arrival at Victoria International Airport (YYJ), make sure you:

- Connect to the airport Wi-Fi and message your host family and natural parents/guardians that you have arrived
- Proceed to baggage pick up while physical distancing
- If you have an emergency call the SISP emergency phone at: **250-812-0731**

You’re Finally Here! Now What?

- Decide if you will wear a mask in public spaces as it is no longer required under federal law, although you may still wish to wear one as they are an effective individual public health measure that you can easily implement to protect yourself and others.
- Choose if you will wear a mask on public transit and BC Ferries, as the provincial government encourages this although it is not required.

Please keep in mind that even though you are fully vaccinated, you have just traveled around the world and been through busy airports. It will depend on your host family how comfortable they are with socializing with you and being in close proximity to you during the first few days. Have a conversation with your host family once you have arrived (or even before, via FaceTime/Skype/Zoom/WhatsApp) about comfort levels around:

- Being in the same indoor space with a mask on or off
- Being in close proximity to each other (for example, sitting side by side on the couch)
- Hugging, shaking hands, etc.

If You Develop Symptoms or are Diagnosed with COVID-19

If you are experiencing even mild symptoms including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, loss of sense or smell or taste, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, headache, body aches, extreme fatigue or tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting or diarrhea, you should:

- Immediately talk to your host family
- Complete the [self-assessment tool](#) with the help of your host family
- Follow the directions on the self-assessment tool and contact public health authorities if, when and how recommended
- Contact the Saanich International Student Program or have your host parent contact their Homestay Coordinator.
- Follow the directions of the Public Health Authority
- Your natural parents may be asked to travel to Canada to care for you if required

Resources

- [COVID-19 Symptoms and to do if you have these symptoms:](#)
- [COVID-19 Information](#)
- [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Tips for cleaning and disinfecting, including garbage collection and laundry procedures](#)

General Program Information, Rules and Expectations for All Students

Current Rules in British Columbia

British Columbia, the province where Saanich is located, no longer has Covid-19 restrictions in place. This means wearing masks in public indoor settings is not required by public health and it is a personal choice if one wears a mask. Masks are encouraged on public transit and BC Ferries, but not required.

Important Rules for SISP Students:

- **Travel:** travel outside of our local area without your host family is not allowed during the month of September (or February for new semester 2 students). After that, if you wish to travel outside of the Victoria area, you will need to submit an online [Travel Application](#) for each trip via our website. Trips requiring an overnight stay must have an approved chaperone who is 25 or older.
- **Alcohol and drugs:** all SISP students are strictly prohibited from drinking alcohol or consuming drugs during their stay here, regardless of your age or what the rules are in your home country. SISP maintains a Zero-Tolerance Policy when it comes to consuming alcohol or drugs.
- **Driving:** SISP students are not allowed to drive a motorized vehicle during their stay here, nor can they obtain a driver's license. This is not covered under our insurance.
- **School:** SISP students need to follow school rules, attend school regularly, complete homework assignments and maintain a satisfactory level of academic achievement.
- **Working:** Not possible while in Canada. You are a student here to study.
- **Volunteering:** All requests to volunteer must be approved by SISP or your assigned school.

School Bus and Public Transportation

- **School Bus:** Saanich School District has a school bus system. However, many of our students prefer to use Public Transportation. When you have arrived, please check with your host family whether you need a School Bus Pass. Your host family is responsible for registering you for a school bus pass on the [Saanich Schools Transportation](#) website.
- **Public Transportation:** BC Transit is the public transportation service in our area. To find bus schedules, fares and where to buy bus cards, please visit [BC Transit Website](#). Your host family can also help you with this, so don't hesitate to ask them for more information!

Homestay Information and Expectations

Your host family is a very important part of your stay here in Canada. SISP host families are wonderful families who are eager to give you a fantastic experience. Of course, as you will be joining a family that is different from your own, there will be new things, rituals and family traditions to get used to. The information in this section is to help you establish a strong relationship with your host family and avoid any unnecessary issues.

The two most important things - Integration and Communication

Integration:

Trying to be part of the family is an important responsibility you have while you are here. Your host family will appreciate it when you:

- Engage in conversations
- Talk about your home and country
- Are home for meals - dinner is a great time to connect with your host family
- If your host family invites you to activities you should go!

Communication:

Communication is the key to building trust and respect with your host family as they are responsible for you and are your parents while you are here.

Make sure your family knows where you are at all times, text or phone them to let them know, clearly communicate the following details:

- Where you are and where you are going
- Who you are with
- When you will be home
- Let them know if your plans have changed
- Let them know ahead of time if you are going to miss dinner
- *Example: I'm on the {bus number} bus, heading to Uptown Mall with {friend's names} and going to go for dinner at {name of restaurant}. I'm now at the restaurant. I'm now on the {bus number} bus and will be home at {time}. Please respond to your host family in a timely manner, especially when they ask you to clarify or ask you to provide more information.*

Everyday Important Things

Food:

- Talk to your host family about the foods you like and dislike.
- Go grocery shopping with them and show them what you would like.
- Talk to your host family about breakfast and lunch preparation.
- Share recipes from your home and country.
- Be home for dinner often.
- Be open to trying new foods.
- It's ok to politely let them know if you don't like something after you have tried it.

Manners:

Canadians are considered very polite and say "please" and "thank you" a lot. You are expected to adopt these habits while you are here. If you are unsure about how to be polite in a situation just ask, they'll be happy to tell you. For example, even though host parents are expected to make dinner for you, it is customary to thank the cook for the meal and let them know that you enjoyed it.

Showers, Laundry, Chores

Showers:

- Limit the length of time you shower to 10-15 minutes.
- Make sure you put the shower curtain inside the shower before starting the water.

- Clean up any water that gets on the floor.
- Do not shower late at night when your host family is trying to sleep.

Laundry:

- Your host family will let you know how they would like to handle the laundry.
- Some will want to do your laundry for you and others will teach you how to do your own laundry.
- Do not do laundry late at night.

Chores:

Each homestay is different so make sure you discuss what chores you are expected to do. Most homestays will ask students to:

- Help with the dishes
- Make the bed and tidy the bedroom
- Clean up after yourself in the kitchen and public areas
- Some homestays will expect students to:
 - Clean the student bathroom
 - Do their own laundry

Heating and Lights:

- Families in British Columbia keep their homes quite cool, 20 degrees is normal for us.
- Some host families will allow the students to heat their rooms to 25 degrees, but they must turn the heat down when they are not in the room.
- If the heat is on, please do not open windows, as the heat will escape.
- Please turn off the lights and heat when you are not in your room.

Computer and Internet Use:

- Minimize the amount of downloading that you do. Host families may have to pay extra if you download too much, there is a limit per household.
- Stop gaming and video chatting at an early hour, around 10:00 PM so you do not disturb the family members while they are trying to sleep.

Problems with your host family?

Adjusting to life in a “new” family may take a while and you can expect that both you and your host family will need some time to get used to each other and to establish a relationship. Open communication with your host family is very important! Please remember that your host family is likely very different from your own family back home and will view things differently than you do. As long as both you and your host family are respectful about differing views, this does not have to be an issue.

If you feel your placement with your host family is not working out, there are a few steps you should take:

1. **Talk to your host family:** when an issue arises with your host family, the first step should always be to talk to them about this. Many times, a host family might not even be aware there is an issue. If they don't know, they can't make changes to make you feel better!

2. **Contact your Homestay Coordinator:** book an appointment with your Homestay Coordinator to talk about the issue and what you have already done to address this with your host family. Your Homestay Coordinator will give you strategies to talk to your host family to resolve the situation.
3. **Meeting with Host Family and Homestay Coordinator:** if, after using the strategies your Homestay Coordinator gave you, the situation is still not improving, your Homestay Coordinator may organize and mediate a meeting with you and your host family to discuss the issue and see if there are any possible solutions. This opportunity usually assists with resolving the situation.
4. **Potential Change of Host Families:** if, after all the previous efforts, and there isn't positive progress and the issue persists, you may request a move to a different host family with your Homestay Coordinator. Your Homestay Coordinator will assess the situation and make a final decision, based on you and your host family's efforts to resolve the issue as well as the availability of another suitable host family. This will take time to arrange.

Important note: A casual request to change host families without any efforts to improve the situation will not be entertained. Students will not be moved immediately and without discussion with the host family first, unless there is an emergency situation or the student is not safe.

Appendix 1: Saanich International Student Program – Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns regarding your Homestay, please contact your Homestay Coordinator.

For any questions or concerns regarding school and courses, your first point of contact is the International Student Advisor/Support at your school. They are also able to assist you with all kinds of other problems by directing you to the person who can help. They are at your school to help you!

Saanich International Student Program Staff

Staff	Title	Phone	Email
Mr. Spencer Gray	Principal	250-514-8354	sgray@saanichschools.ca
Mr. Colin Guiguet	Senior Manager	778-676-0447	cguiguet@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Ernestine Mager-Fagel	Homestay Manager	250-880-4950	efagel@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Kristen Belusic	Homestay Coordinator Claremont & Royal Oak	250-655-2723 250-217-6727	kbelusic@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Kimberly Ewer	Homestay Coordinator Stelly's & Bayside	250-217-9368 250-655-2721	kewer@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Erika Bertram	Homestay Coordinator Parkland & NSMS	250-655-2726 250-880-1589	ebertram@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Naoko Tsumori	Program Assistant	250-655-2720	ntsumori@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Lea Hoffmann	Program Assistant - Accounts	250-655-3022	lhoffmann@saanichschools.ca
Mr. David Ding	Program Assistant	250-655-2725	dding@saanichschools.ca
SISP EMERGENCY #	After Office Hours & Evenings in Case of Emergencies	250-812-0731	

School's International Student Advisors:

School	International Student Advisor	Email
Parkland Secondary School	Mr. Gary Choo	gchoo@saanichschools.ca
Parkland Secondary School	Mr. Jeff Hilton	jhilton@saanichschools.ca
Stelly's Secondary School	Ms. Asha Sidhu	asidhu@saanichschools.ca
Stelly's Secondary School	Mr. Dan Berger	dberger@saanichschools.ca
Claremont Secondary School	Mr. Graeme Mitchell	gmitchell@saanichschools.ca
Claremont Secondary School	Mr. Shon Ryan	sryan@saanichschools.ca

School's International Assistants:

School	International Assistant	Email
Parkland Secondary School	Ms. Sara Benson	sbenson@saanichschools.ca
Stelly's Secondary School	Ms. Angela Davey	adavey@saanichschools.ca
Claremont Secondary School	Ms. Lori Rampon	lrampson@saanichschools.ca