



# EC Vancouver - International Student Handbook (2025)

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## 1. Welcome to Vancouver

This handbook is designed to help international students adjust to life in Vancouver. It covers essential information about housing, healthcare, safety, and well-being. You'll also find detailed resources for banking, transportation, childcare, mental health, and community connections. Vancouver is a multicultural city that welcomes newcomers and provides many services to support your studies and personal life.

## 2. Daily Life in Vancouver

### 2.1 Transportation

Vancouver's public transportation system is run by TransLink. It includes:

- Buses (city-wide coverage)
- SkyTrain (rapid transit linking downtown, Burnaby, Surrey, Richmond, and the airport)
- SeaBus (ferry between downtown Vancouver and North Vancouver)
- West Coast Express (commuter train to Fraser Valley suburbs)
- Mobi Bike Share (bike rentals across the city)

You can pay using a Compass Card (rechargeable), day passes, or single tickets.

More info: <https://www.translink.ca>

### 2.2 Internet, Phone, and Cable Services

Major service providers in Metro Vancouver include:

- Freedom Mobile: <https://www.freedommobile.ca>
- Public Mobile: <https://www.publicmobile.ca>
- Koodo: <https://www.koodomobile.com>
- Shaw: <https://www.shaw.ca>
- Telus: <https://www.telus.com>
- Fido: <https://www.fido.ca>
- Bell: <https://www.bell.ca>
- Virgin Plus: <https://www.virginplus.ca>
- Rogers: <https://www.rogers.com>
- Novus: <https://www.novusnow.ca>
- **PhoneBox (popular with international students): <https://www.gophonebox.com>**

Tips: You may get student discounts or bundle services. Always read contracts carefully.

### 2.3 Banking Services

Opening a bank account usually requires:

- Passport or government ID
- Study permit/student visa
- Proof of enrollment
- Canadian address
- Social Insurance Number (SIN, if available)

Banks with student-friendly accounts:

- Vancity: <https://www.vancity.com>
- Scotiabank: <https://www.scotiabank.com>
- Coast Capital: <https://www.coastcapitalsavings.com>
- Bank of Montreal (BMO): <https://www.bmo.com>
- Toronto Dominion (TD): <https://www.td.com>

- Tangerine: <https://www.tangerine.ca>
- Royal Bank of Canada (RBC): <https://www.rbc.com>
- CIBC: <https://www.cibc.com>
- HSBC Canada: <https://www.hsbc.ca>

## 2.4 Cost of Living

Estimated monthly costs (2025):

- Accommodation (shared): \$1,200–\$1,500
  - Groceries: \$300–\$500
  - Transportation: \$120–\$185
  - MSP Health Insurance: \$75
  - Cell phone: \$40–\$70
  - Entertainment/Misc: \$100–\$200
- Total: \$1,900–\$2,800 (varies by lifestyle and location).

## 3. Housing and Tenancy

### 3.1 Housing Costs & Options

Approximate rental prices:

- Shared apartment: \$1,500/month
- Private apartment: \$2,000+/month

**EC Options: homestays, student residences, private apartments, shared housing.**

### 3.2 Housing Search Tips for Long Term Students

Tips:

- Search early and use multiple platforms.
- Consult the housing options with EC or your agent, if available.
- Ask other students for recommendations.
- Visit properties in person when possible.

### 3.3 Other Housing Resources

- VanMates: <https://www.vanmates.com>
- 4Stay Housing: <https://www.4Stay.com>
- Unique Accommodations: <https://www.uniqueaccommodations.com>

### 3.4 Avoiding Housing Scams

Warning signs:

- Listings that seem 'too good to be true'
- Requests for money before viewing
- Landlords refusing to meet in person

Learn more: <https://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca>

### 3.5 Tenancy Rights & Insurance

BC tenants are protected by the Residential Tenancy Act.

- Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB): 1-800-665-8779 | <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/landlordtenant>
- TRAC (Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre): <https://tenants.bc.ca>

Tenant insurance protects belongings against theft, fire, or damage. Providers: Insurance BC, Westland Insurance, Sonnet Insurance.

## 4. Health and Safety

### 4.1 Medical Services Plan (MSP)

All students staying 6+ months must enroll in MSP (\$75/month). It covers doctor visits, hospital care, and tests. There's a 3-month waiting period. Apply: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/msp>

### 4.2 Health Insurance

During the MSP waiting period, you need private insurance. Providers: Guard.Me (<https://www.guard.me>), Sun Life (<https://www.sunlife.ca>), Manulife (<https://www.manulife.ca>). **EC offers Guard.Me at weekly rates.**

### 4.3 Emergency & Non-Emergency Contacts

- Emergency (police, fire, ambulance): 911
- Vancouver Police non-emergency: 604-717-3321
- BC Ambulance non-emergency: 604-872-5151
- HealthLink BC (nurse advice): 8-1-1

### 4.4 Student Safety in Downtown Vancouver

Downtown Vancouver has busy nightlife and some areas with higher risks (e.g., near East Hastings). Safety tips:

- Stay in well-lit, populated areas at night.
- Use SafeWalk services where available.
- Use the Transit Police OnDuty app.
- Carry Naloxone (free at pharmacies). Training: <https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone>

## 5. Mental Health and Well-Being

### 5.1 Crisis Support (24/7)

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: Call or text 988
- Crisis Centre BC: <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca>

## 5.2 Counselling & Mental Health Services

- Here2Talk (free for students in different languages): <https://here2talk.ca>
- Foundry BC (ages 12–24): <https://foundrybc.ca>

## 5.3 Addiction & Overdose Support

- HealthLink BC: 8-1-1
- BC Centre on Substance Use: <https://www.bccsu.ca>
- Toward the Heart (Naloxone info): <https://towardtheheart.com>
- Insite Supervised Consumption Site: <https://www.vch.ca/en/insite>

## 6. Childcare Options

- YMCA Metro Vancouver: <https://www.gv.ymca.ca/child-care>
- Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre: <https://www.wstcoast.org>
- VCC Childcare: <https://www.vcc.ca/services/childcare>

## 7. Community Integration & Student Life

### 7.1 Cultural & Religious Organizations

- SFU Multifaith Centre: <https://www.sfu.ca/multifaith.html>
- Vancouver Christian Fellowship: <https://www.vcfvancouver.ca>
- Vancouver Catholic Church: <https://www.holyrosarycathedral.org/>
- Vancouver Buddhist Temple: <https://vancouverbuddhisttemple.com>
- Latincover: <https://www.latincover.ca>
- Chinese Cultural Centre: <https://www.cccvan.com>

### 7.2 Sports & Recreation

- City of Vancouver Recreation: <https://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture>

Search recreation options in your city: Burnaby, New Westminster, or Richmond at your local recreation centres.

## 8. Other Resources for Newcomers

- WelcomeBC: <https://www.welcomebc.ca>
- WorkBC: <https://www.workbc.ca>
- MOSAIC: <https://www.mosaicbc.org>
- HelloBC: <https://www.hellobc.com>