

Quebec FAQ and misconceptions.

Will I understand the accent?

Canadian French has undeniable differences in both syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation that many English language assistants will be unfamiliar with on arrival. Regional differences and dialects, however, are part of the language learning process and assistants will have to adapt to hearing different accents whether they are in the South of France, Réunion or Québec.

Due to the proximity of the US border, many initially 'unrecognizable' words will have roots in English. 'Je vais aller parker mon char' may not include the 'voiture' that you're used to, but 'char' sounds remarkably like its English counterpart! Regional accents in Québec are distinctive and diverse, so it will take time to tune into native speakers and understand them word for word. Canadian French is still French, though, so it's unlikely that you'll be struggling for months to grasp what people are saying.

Will I come back with a Québécois accent?

If you spend a year of your degree studying in Wales, or Scotland, or Ireland, will you adopt their accent? Accepting a post in Québec is no different. Everyone has a different capacity for picking up accents, and some English language assistants will pick up the vernacular and Canadian French lilt at the drop of a hat. Others won't. Most assistants will have studied French in a European context for 6+ years, and 8 months in a North American setting may not have a significant impact on pronunciation and accent.

My school said it's really hard to get a place on the Québec programme.

With around 30 posts for English language assistants in Québec, it is one of the smaller intakes on the Language Assistant programme. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't apply for a place! Potential candidates will be invited to an assessment day where the British Council are joined by our overseas Canadian partners who want to see that you've carefully considered Québec and are passionate about the potential academic year ahead.

Remember that if you put Québec as your first choice but are unsuccessful in gaining a place, your application will be automatically considered for posts in France and you can still have the opportunity to be a language assistant.

I'm worried I will be isolated.

The exact number of places and location of posts in Québec vary from year upon year. There are fewer positions in cities because of the aims of the language assistant programme - a higher proportion of the population in cities such as Montreal already possess English language skills, and there is less demand for English language assistants. As such, many posts are in smaller towns, often away from larger cities.

Québec is much larger than the UK, and it can be difficult to grasp the vastness of the province before arrival. Travel between towns can take significantly longer and can cause some language assistants to feel isolated in their posting. Small towns, however, provide the opportunity to engage with the community and contribute more to school life. Certain years, there are also several posts in the same town which offers support from fellow British Council English language assistants close by. In previous years, language assistants in Quebec have formed friendships with those on a similar language teaching exchange scheme between Anglophone and Francophone Canadian provinces. There are several hundred of these language assistants throughout Québec.

The British Council's overseas partner, the Québec Ministry of Sport, Education and Leisure, provide both a welcome briefing in Montréal and an information session in Québec city. These take place over several days and offer English language assistants the chance to meet the other assistants on the programme, who often form a close-knit group!

I can't drive and I've heard there are no public transport options.

Many posts are in smaller towns and do not necessarily have efficient transport links between them. There are, however, a network of buses and some rail links that can be used to travel extensively across the province. These buses may just take slightly longer, but that is to be expected given the size of Quebec! There are several bus operators in Québec, and more information on inter-town transit can be found [here](#).

Canadian trains are run by [Viarail](#). Please note that trains are not the foremost method of travel in Canada as they often are in the UK, as fares can be slightly high compared to the average salary. Some language assistants in Quebec do decide to purchase a car upon arrival to gain additional flexibility, and there are rental car companies for assistants who would like access to a vehicle on an ad-hoc basis. Many assistants in the past have used organised ride-sharing services, such as [AlloStop](#) or [Amigo Express](#). These must be used with appropriate caution.

I don't think I'll be able to cope with the cold.

Weather conditions must be seriously considered before submitting an application to Québec, as conditions are severe. Winter lasts for several months, with deep snow and temperatures of -25 degrees. It's worth being in mind, however, that snow is not a new concept in Canada! Their infrastructure is developed accordingly and appropriate winter clothing can be purchased or rented upon arrival. A Québécois winter will bring many opportunities that you would not find in other locations, including after-working skiing, dog-sledding, the infamous [Québec carnival](#), winter musical festivals such as [Igloofest](#) in Montréal, or ice-skating along the Rideau Canal. While the cold brings challenges, swapping 10 feet of sand for 10 feet of snow will present unforgettable opportunities and activities.