



My Trip to Canada

My trip to Canada actually began about a year and a half before I travelled abroad when my sponsor parent came to volunteer at the Centre and asked me if I would like to visit her in Canada. Of course I said yes and so she and Madam began the paperwork so I could go. First, I had to get a passport and then Madam and my sponsor parent began the long process of getting a Canadian visa. Sometimes I wondered if the visa would ever come but finally about three weeks before I was to take the plane the visa was granted. I was so excited.

I left for Canada on July 31. It was my first trip on a plane and when I arrived at Bole Airport, I was scared. I travelled as an unaccompanied minor and so a nice man took me through immigration, put me in a lounge and when it was time to go through security and to board the plane he accompanied me all the way. He showed me my seat and how to work the seat belt. He also talked to the cabin crew who would be looking after my section of the plane. He even let me phone Madam so she would know that I was safely on board.

I watched movies and played games on the trip to Frankfurt and when we landed there, I was taken to a special lounge for children who were travelling alone. There we could watch videos, play video games, have something to eat and get to know other children.

All too soon it was time to board the plane for Vancouver. That flight was much longer than the flight to Frankfurt. By now, I knew what to do on the plane and I even slept a bit. I was met by a man in Vancouver who helped me go through customs and immigration and who took me to my sponsor parent who was waiting for me. That was not the end of my trip, however. We had to travel to Victoria on

another plane and by the time I boarded that plane I was so tired that I slept throughout the 15-minute flight. Madam Elizabeth's car was at the airport and we drove to her house with me sleeping most of the way. Once we got there, I had something to eat and then had a bath and went to bed. Madam tells me that I was asleep before my head hit the pillow.



The next morning we went to the grocery store so I could choose what I wanted to eat. On the way, I saw a woman driving a city bus. Madam told me that there were women bus drivers in Victoria and in Vancouver. I think it is good that women are allowed to be bus drivers.

After breakfast we went for a walk along the beach. Madam lives by the Pacific Ocean and I just loved seeing the ocean, and sitting down in the harbour where the big cruise ships that are on the way to Alaska come in to dock. We watched the passengers get on and off the ships and Madam told me all about the cruise ships and the various kinds of activities that can be done on board. Do you know the ships have several swimming pools, climbing walls, gyms as well as a lot of restaurants, computer rooms, libraries, shops, hospitals, and of course bedrooms where the passengers sleep. I would like to take one of these ships one day.

That same day I went to a friend of Madam Elizabeth who is both a medical doctor and a teacher of India sacred dance. She had invited

two of her students who are sisters to come and show me Indian dance. They also take Irish dancing and one takes ballet as well. They taught me some of the hand movements for Indian dance as well as some Irish dance steps. I showed them some Ethiopian dancing and they found it very difficult because in Irish dancing you have to keep the upper body absolutely still.

The next day I went to the house of a friend of Madam Elizabeth. There was a special welcome to Canada lunch for me with a delicious chocolate cake which said "Welcome to Canada, Mekedes".



I am now going to list some of the other things I did during my month in Canada. To explain each one would take too long, but here are some of the highlights: touring St. Michael's University School with Mr. Peter and Madam Jane, eating in restaurants, meeting some Ethiopian people who live in Victoria, attending Ethiopian camp for a weekend, going to the Royal BC Museum, going to two potluck

lunches, going to the IMAX theatre, going to the Aquarium in Sidney, making Canadian friends, especially Emma, being able to play musical instruments, learning how to barbecue, learning how to make pasta from scratch, learning how to swim and kayak, going to Zumba class and having three private ballet lessons, watching a dance performance outside, going to the Symphony Splash, going on the big ferry to Vancouver, going to Squamish and seeing Shannon Falls and Quest University, seeing the University of British Columbia, driving with the top down in a Triumph 6, visiting Butchart Gardens, riding on a carousel, visiting a heritage village in Burnaby, the Planetarium and Science World, choosing an ice cream from 218 flavours, and finally shopping in shopping centres and little boutiques.

The best part of all was making friends with many people who were all so kind to me. People were interested to meet me and to get to know me. They wanted to learn about Ethiopia and to show me their city. Many of them even gave me presents.



Victoria and Vancouver are beautiful and interesting cities with lots to do. But I learned most from the people I met who were warm, welcoming and who helped me to improve my English. I shall never forget these people and I hope I will get to see them again one day.

by Mekedes Yirga