

THE GULF ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM (GIISP)

Student Pre-Arrival Guide –2024-2025



“Imagine a place where...you are part of something special.”

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Introduction

Hello and a warm welcome from the Gulf Islands International Program team!

Gulf Islands International Student Program (GIISP) supports all international students in the Gulf Islands School District. GIISP is committed to ensuring you will be part of our inclusive community. A part of a community of learners that is founded on the principles of global awareness and cultural understanding.

Territorial Acknowledgement

GIISP gratefully acknowledge that we live and learn on the shared, traditional, unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the Hul'qumi'num and SENCOTEN speaking peoples, who continue to use and steward these lands.

Our School

We are very excited to welcome you to Salt Spring Island soon! You will be joining us at Gulf Islands Secondary School.

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

It is important to understand that the information in this Student Arrival Guide is subject to change, as we follow the Federal and Provincial government rules and regulations regarding travel restrictions, and at any time these may change.

Find more information on the [Government of Canada Website](#)

We look forward to meeting you soon!



Pre-Departure Information for All Students

Please find below very important pre-departure information

- **Communication and Relationship Building with your Host Family:**
 - Prior to coming to Salt Spring Island, connect with your host family by having several Zoom, WeChat, or FaceTime 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? Will it be inside the airport at the arrivals area or in the short-term parking lot?
 - How will you recognize them?
 - Exchange phone numbers and email addresses. Add their information into your phone



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, it is suggested students bring a cell phone, as this is a common method of communication with their host families. Canada has many phone plans that work well for international students.

In your CARRY ON:

You will need to bring the following things with you on the plane. DON'T put these in your suitcase, but have them with you at all times!

- Cell phone and charger
- Laptop
- Passport
- Wallet
- Change of clothes
- A mask

Important documents (printed) in your CARRY ON:

- Study permit or permit confirmation document
- Contact emergency information sheet for GIISP team
- Custodianship documents
- Letter of Acceptance
- Homestay Profile and contact information

In your SUITCASE:

Regular items such as:

- Clothing
- Toiletries
- Personal belongings
- Books

Please avoid traveling when sick and to avoid exposure to other illnesses, do the following....

To minimize your risk of exposure, 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
- Minimize trips to the bathroom
- 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 fresh mask, if you choose
- Log in to the Free Airport Wi-Fi
- Text or WhatsApp your host family and let 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 GIISP 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
- Receive your study permit at immigration and review it, to make sure the information is correct.

For assistance at the:

- **Vancouver International Airport**, look for Customer Care Ambassadors (blue jackets, white shirts). They can assist you and help with watching/caring for you and minors in transit. They can also help with language barrier issues and if by chance 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**, 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 that you have arrived
- Proceed to baggage pick up while physical distancing and meet your host family (please confirm with your host family if they will meet you in the arrival area or outside the airport in the ShortTerm Parking lot)
- Check in with the GIISP Homestay Coordinator (Sue Kernaghan) by emailing your name and that you have arrived to: Email: sue.kernaghan@shaw.ca

- Your host family or person who will pick you up will be waiting for you once you exit the doors into the main area of the airport
- Your host family might not hug you or shake your hand as you have just travelled, please do not take offense! It doesn't mean they are not happy to see you!

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 isn't required.

Monitor your physical health and mental well-being

- Contact your host family and your Homestay Coordinator immediately if you are not feeling well, if you notice a change in your health or if you are feeling sad or lonely.

Laundry and Linens

- When you arrive at your homestay, your travel clothing should be removed and placed in your laundry basket.

You are a member of the family

- Try to spend more time communicating to your Canadian family than with your family and friends back home – spending too much time talking to family and friends back home may make you feel more isolated and lonelier.
- Actively work on building a relationship with your host family.
- When your host family invites you to an activity or to eat with the family, make sure to take the opportunity and become an active part of their family.

Practice good hygiene

- Wash your hands frequently. When soap and water is not available, use hand-sanitizer.
- Keep your bathroom clean.
- If you are ill, do not attend school or be in physical contact with others.

Use proper coughing and sneezing etiquette

- Cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hand.
- If using a tissue, throw away the tissue in a plastic lined garbage container immediately.

Appendix 1: Gulf Islands International Program – Contact Information

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

For any questions or concerns regarding school and courses, your first point of contact is your teacher, the International Program Counsellor at the school, or the International Program Managing Director. They're also able to assist you with other questions, by directing you to the person who has the answer and can help. They're at your school to help you! Don't hesitate to go talk to them!

Gulf Islands International Student Program Team

	Staff	Title	Phone	Email
	Dan Sparanese	District Principal	250-538-7596	dsparanese@sd64.org
	Sheri Wakefield	International Program Managing Director	250-537-9944 ext. 1203	swakefield@sd64.org
	Sue Kernaghan	Homestay Coordinator	250-537-9944 ext. 1218	sue.kernaghan@shaw.ca
	Nia Williams	International Program Counsellor	250-537-9944 ext. 1212	nwilliams@sd64.org
	Chelsa England	International Student Program Assistant	250-537-9944 ext. 1218	cengland@sd64.org
	GIISP EMERGENCY # - After Office Hours, Evenings and Weekends in Case of Emergencies		1-250-537-6720	