

Victoria Day

A Celebration of Canada's Heritage and History



Victoria Day is a national public holiday celebrated across Canada on the Monday preceding May 25th. It marks the birthday of Queen Victoria, who ruled the British Empire during a time of major global change. Queen Victoria was born on May 24, 1819, and her reign lasted from 1837 to 1901, making her one of the longest-reigning monarchs in history. During her reign, Canada evolved from a group of British colonies into a unified, self-governing Dominion under the British Crown.

The holiday was first observed in 1845 in Canada West (now Ontario) as a way to honour the Queen's contributions and celebrate her birthday. Following her death in 1901, Canada officially declared the day a national holiday. Although Canada has had many monarchs since Queen Victoria, this day remains dedicated solely to her, reflecting the deep respect Canadians have for her role in the country's development.

Today, Victoria Day is more than a royal celebration. For many Canadians, it marks the unofficial beginning of summer. Across the country, families take advantage of the long weekend to open their cottages, plant their gardens, or enjoy outdoor activities. Cities such as Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver host fireworks displays, concerts, and parades. In some provinces, it's also referred to as the "May Two-Four" weekend — a nickname that references both the date and a popular size of beverage packaging — making it a time of both historical reflection and modern fun.

One symbol you'll often see in pictures and decorations for Victoria Day is the maple leaf. The maple leaf has long been a symbol of Canada, dating back to the 18th century when it was adopted by early settlers and military units. Over time, it came to represent the land and people of Canada, and it now appears prominently on the national flag. Including the maple leaf in Victoria Day imagery is a way to show national pride and connect Queen Victoria's legacy to the modern identity of Canada. It reminds Canadians that while the holiday honours the past, it also celebrates who they are today.

Despite its British origins, Victoria Day is uniquely Canadian. It is not widely celebrated in other countries that were part of the British Empire. In Quebec, the day is celebrated as National Patriots' Day to honour a different part of the province's history, showing how traditions vary across the country. Whether marked with flags and fanfare or simply a relaxing weekend with family and friends, Victoria Day remains a symbol of Canada's roots, growth, and the shared moments that bring Canadians together year after year.