

HWDSB

Admissions Office

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK



www.hwdsb.on.ca/international

curiosity • creativity • possibility

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Welcome to Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

We would like to warmly welcome you to Canada and Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

It is an exciting and challenging experience to move to, study and live in another country. You may face many difficulties down the road, but you are not alone. The Admissions Office staff, HWDSB Welcome Centre staff and school teachers and staff, will all help you gain a successful and enjoyable learning experience.

This orientation handbook includes important information and advice to help you adjust to this new environment and to begin your journey successfully.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB)

HWDSB is located in the city of Hamilton, the 4th largest city in Ontario, Canada. The Board has 13 high schools and 80 elementary schools with close to 50,000 students.

The Admissions Office is the main department in HWDSB to serve international students directly. It is located within the HWDSB Welcome Centre, located at 465 East 16th Street, Hamilton, ON L9A 4K6.



Contact Information

Admissions Office

Email: admissionsoffice@hwdsb.on.ca
Tel: 905.527.5092 ext. 2235 or 2324

HWDSB Welcome Centre

Hill Park Learning Centre
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
465 East 16th Street
Hamilton, Ontario, L9A 4K6

Office hours:

8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Monday to Friday (except holidays)

Admissions Office Contacts

Name	Position	Email	Phone
Sandra Valeri	Principal of International Education	svaleri@hwdsb.on.ca	905-527-5092 Ext 2429
Nancy Fan	Supervisor, Admissions & International Educational Programs	nfan@hwdsb.on.ca	905-527-5092 ext. 2235
Lily Zhang	International Marketing and Recruitment Officer	lzhang@hwdsb.on.ca	905-527-5092 ext. 2332
Gail Intson	Admissions Office Assistant	gintson@hwdsb.on.ca	905-527-5092 ext. 2324

Secondary School Contacts

School	Guidance Counsellor	Email	Phone
Bernie Custis	Ms. Filomena Wyatt	fwyatt@hwdsb.on.ca	905-296-2504
Westdale	Ms. Tracy Kuder	tkuder@hwdsb.on.ca	905-522-1387
Nora Frances Henderson	Ms. Sandra Mitchell	smitchel@hwdsb.on.ca	905-389-2234
Glendale	Ms. Marjorie Hewitt	mhewitt@hwdsb.on.ca	905-560-7343

Secondary School Graduation Requirements

To graduate and obtain the **Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)**, you must:

- ✓ Earn a **minimum 30 credits (18 compulsory, 12 elective)**
- ✓ Pass the **Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)** or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy course
- ✓ Complete **40** hours of community involvement

* Please see the chart on the next page for more details.

To apply to universities in Canada, you must:

- ✓ Obtain the OSSD
- ✓ Pass minimum of six Grade 12 courses
- ✓ Pass an English proficiency test (TOEFL, IELTS, CAEL)
- ✓ Meet any additional requirements set by individual universities

Your guidance counsellor will meet with you one-on-one to help you choose courses that meet your academic goals and personal interests; and help you apply to universities in Canada, the United States and other countries.

Equivalency Credits

Students who have successfully completed one or more years of secondary school in their home countries are granted equivalency credits. The equivalency credits are recommended by secondary assessors from the Assessment Centre and granted by the Principal of your current school after the first semester ends.



The Credit System

A credit is granted upon successful completion of a course that has been scheduled for a minimum of 110 hours.

- In a regular 5-month semester, you must study a minimum of 3 day school courses each semester to maintain your **full time** status unless it's the last semester when you graduate high school.
- You can only drop a course with the permission of your guidance counsellor. Parental permission for you to drop a course must be sent to the school guidance counsellor.
- You may add a 5th course at night or a summer school course (in July) only with the permission of your guidance counsellor and the Admissions Office. These courses require extra fees.
- If you study **3** day school courses in one semester, you may study **1** night school course without paying extra fees; upon permission of your guidance counsellor.

What do you need to graduate?

18 compulsory credits

Students must earn the following compulsory credits to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma:

- 4 credits in English (1 credit per grade)*
- 3 credits in mathematics (1 credit in Grade 11 or 12)
- 2 credits in science
- 1 credit in Canadian history
- 1 credit in Canadian geography
- 1 credit in the arts
- 1 credit in health and physical education
- 1 credit in French as a second language
- 0.5 credit in career studies
- 0.5 credit in civics

Plus one credit from each of the following groups:

New

- 1 additional credit in English, **or French as a second language, or a Native language, or a classical or an international language**, or social sciences and the humanities, or Canadian and world studies, **or guidance and career education, or cooperative education****

New

- 1 additional credit in health and physical education, or the arts, or business studies, **or cooperative education****

New

- 1 additional credit in science (Grade 11 or 12), or technological education, **or computer studies, or cooperative education****

In addition to the compulsory credits, students must complete:

- ✓ 12 optional credits***
- ✓ 40 hours of community involvement activities
- ✓ the provincial literacy requirement

*A maximum of 3 credits in English as a second language (ESL) or English literacy development (ELD) may be counted towards the 4 compulsory credits in English, but the fourth must be a credit earned for a Grade 12 compulsory English course.

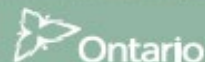
**A maximum of 2 credits in cooperative education can count as compulsory credits.

***The 12 optional credits may include up to 4 credits earned through approved dual credit courses.

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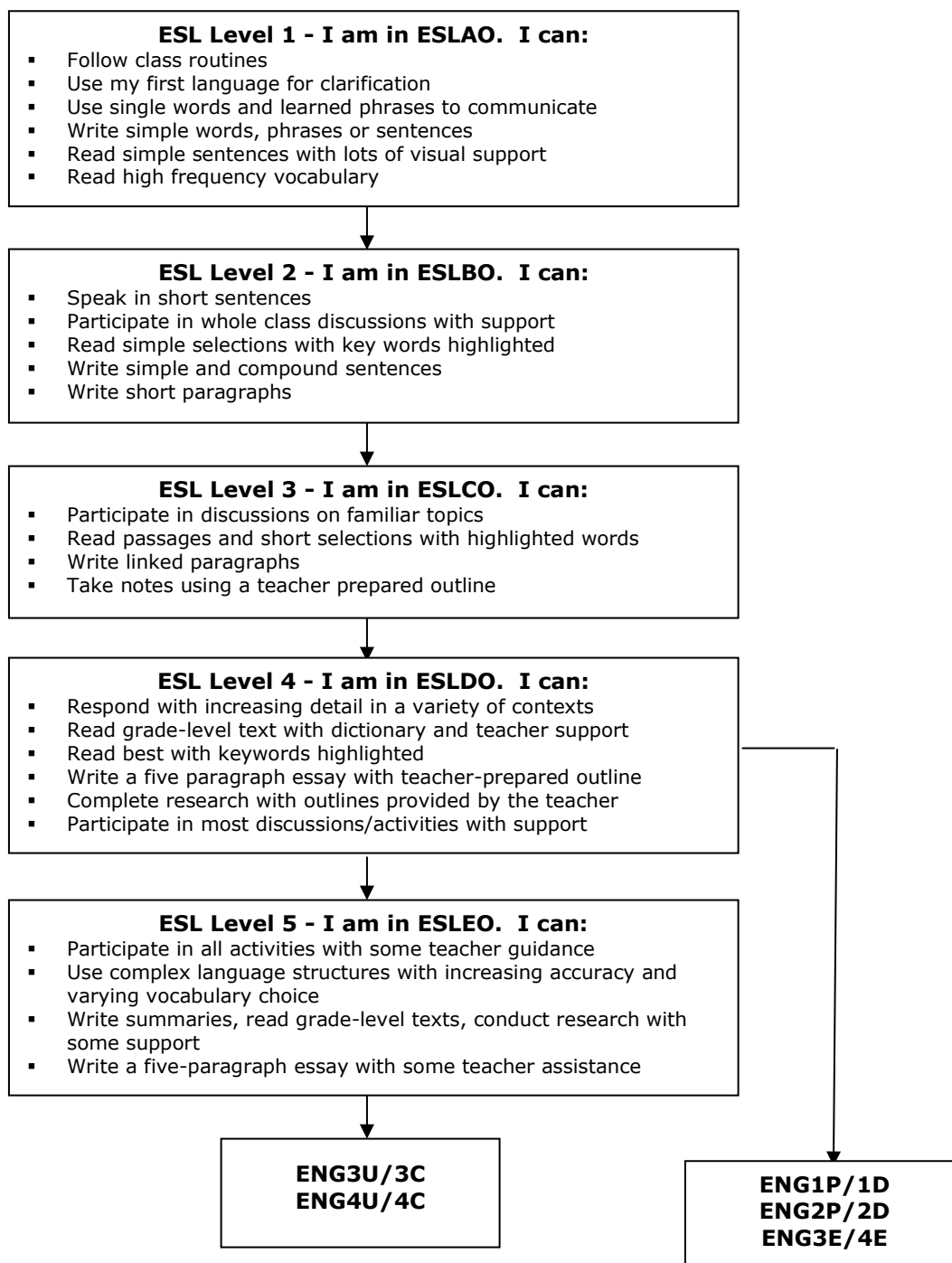
reach every student



English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a Second Language (ESL) is for students whose first language is a language other than English and who have age-appropriate first-language literacy skills and educational backgrounds. ESL is studied concurrently with other subjects.

- **Each ESL course is worth one credit.**
- **3 ESL credits can be counted toward your compulsory 4 English credits.**



Tips for Studying English

- Talk with your teachers and classmates
- Join the ESL Club or Homework Club
- Join other school clubs or sports teams
- Participate in school trips
- Talk with your Homestay family every day
- Be a volunteer



More Studying Tips

- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Make sure you understand what the teacher wants you to do. If you are quiet, the teacher will think that you understand what he/she wants you to do for the assignment.
- Be on time for class. Students who are late will be marked as late on the attendance sheet. If a class is missed, see the teacher the next day to find out what was missed.
- It is a student's responsibility to organize their time after school to study. Time should be planned carefully to balance schoolwork, practice English and also relax or pursue other interests.
- Hand in all assignments on the day that they are due.

Studying in Canada

The following are some characteristics of Canadian education which may be different from your home country:

- Students are encouraged to always ask questions for clarification.
- Students are encouraged to discuss their opinions and ideas in class respectfully and listen to and consider the opinions and ideas of teachers and other classmates respectfully.
- Group work is an important part of school learning; it stresses co-operation, tolerance and compromise. It is also evaluated as part of the report card in the Learning Skills section.
- Students learn not just information, but how to arrive at conclusions, to solve problems and to analyze.
- Plagiarism (submitting the work of another person as your own, or copying the work or words of another person and presenting them as your own) or cheating is a serious offence. Students must learn how to cite appropriately.



Report Cards

You receive two reports each semester: a mid-term report card approximately half way through the semester and a final report card at the end of the semester.

The final mark of a course is based on many factors including quiz/test results, homework completion, group work, project completion and final exam results.

Note: Final exams only count for up to 30% of your final mark. You need to study well throughout a semester to get good marks.

January - Final exams for semester one are at the end of January.
June - Final exams for semester two are at the end of June.

People in the School


School staff are eager to help international students adjust to their new learning environment.

Principal:	In charge of the programs at the school and works closely with staff, students and parents.
Vice-Principal(s):	Assist the Principal in running the school and look after discipline matters.
Guidance Counsellors:	Assist in planning students' timetables. They provide information about other programs in the school, the community and at colleges/universities.
Teachers:	Students have different teachers for different subjects. Teachers are called Mr. Ms. or Mrs. as appropriate and the person's last name, rather than "Teacher".
ESL Teachers:	Help students learn English and strategies for success in their other classes.
Teacher-Librarians:	Help students to access resources on the Internet and learn about books, Internet sources, videos and magazines.
Office Administrators:	Assist in registering students.

School Year Calendar—Do not plan trips away during the regular school days or exam days. If you have to, you must notify school and receive school principal approval.

Ministry of Education **Secondary**

School Year Calendar 2023 - 2024

Legend ↓ **H** - Statutory Holiday **E** - Scheduled Examination Day **P** - Professional Activity Day **B** - Board Designated Holiday  Half Day

Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1 st Week					2 nd Week					3 rd Week					4 th Week					5 th Week				
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
August 2023					1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31	
September 2023	18	1						1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29
October 2023	20	1		2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31			
November 2023	21	1				1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	
December 2023	16							1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29
January 2024	14		4	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31		
February 2024	18	1	1				1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	
March 2024	14	1						1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29
April 2024	21			1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30			
May 2024	22					1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31
June 2024	13	2	5	3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28					
July 2024				1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31		
TOTAL	177	7	10	Note: The 2023-2024 calendar provides for 195 possible school days between September 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days																								

Code of Conduct

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has a **Code of Conduct** that applies to all students at its schools. It can be found at:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/secondary/supports/safe-schools/code-of-conduct/>

Based on HWDSB Code of Conduct, each school has developed its own **School Code of Conduct**. Copies of the School Code of Conduct are available at each school. If you are not given one, please ask a teacher or a guidance counsellor to help you get one.

Failure to abide by the School Code of Conduct may result in removal from the school register without refund of tuition fees.

Student Participation Agreement

1. It is the student's responsibility to maintain a current **Study Permit** from Citizenship & Immigration Canada.
2. Tuition fees will be paid in full prior to a Letter of Acceptance being issued.
3. The student is required to maintain continuous **health coverage** through Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's carrier – Student Guard Insurance.
4. The student must observe and adhere to the following:
 - all federal and provincial laws of Canada
 - rules, policies and regulations of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
 - school Code of Conduct
5. The student is also expected to attend school regularly, meet homework expectations and maintain an academic standing of at least a **"C" or 65%** grade point average.
6. Information regarding the student's attendance, academics and emotional, medical and psychological concerns can be shared with parents, custodians/guardians, school and Board staff in order that necessary guidance and assistance can be provided.
- 7. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Admissions Office if there is any change to custodianship, address, telephone number or emergency contact.**
8. If the student is less than eighteen (18) years of age, he or she must reside in a selected residence approved by their parent/guardian or assigned custodian in order to remain eligible to participate in the International Student Program.

Any breaches to the above terms are subject to disciplinary measures and may result in the student being removed from school and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board International Student Program **without refund of tuition fee** and/or any other compensation.

Class Attendance

You must attend classes regularly. Your school and the Admissions Office work together to monitor your class attendance. Also, the Admissions Office communicates with your parents regarding any concerns related to your attendance. Continuous absences despite warnings and counselling may result in non-admission for future semesters.

Change of School within HWDSB

- Requests to change schools within HWDSB must be submitted to the **Admissions Office** in writing before March 31st for September transfer and November 30th for February transfer
- After receiving your request the Supervisor of Admissions will talk to you, your current school and the school you wish to transfer to in order to make a final decision.
- You cannot change schools during the first semester unless special conditions apply and approval is given by the Admissions Office.
- School transfers are subject to the capacity of the school you want to transfer to, proof of your home address, your attendance and academic record.
- Acceptable proof of address includes a homestay agreement, apartment/house lease or property ownership paper. Bank statements or cell phones are not acceptable.

Change of Custodian

- You **must** inform the Admissions Office if you are changing your custodian.
- You **must** submit new notarized custodianship letters from your parents and the new custodian to the Admissions Office to change your custodian.
- If you are under the age of 18, you **must** live under the care of a custodian **at all times** in Canada.

Change of Address

- If you are moving, inform the Admissions Office immediately of your new address/contact information. Please provide proof of new address, such as a homestay agreement or utility bill of your new homestay.

Living On Your Own

- You must **NOT** live on your own under the age of 18.
- After you reach 18 years old, if you want to live on your own, you **must** inform the Admissions Office and ask your parents to send their written permission to the Admissions Office.

Allergies or Health Problems

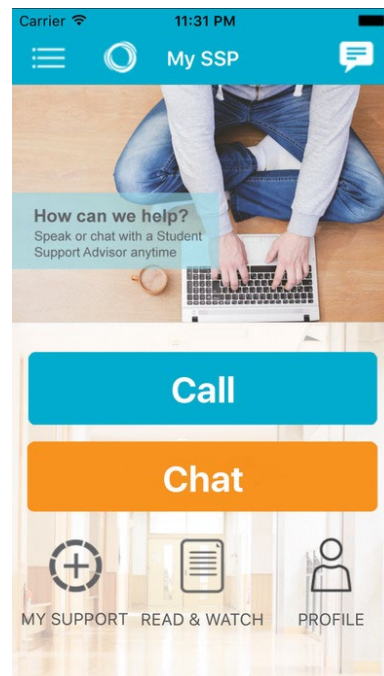
If you have any health problems or allergies, you **must** notify your school.

Health Insurance

Your medical insurance provider is called "Guard Me". Keep your insurance card in a safe place and refer to your benefit summary pamphlet to find out what is covered. If you have a medical emergency use the phone to call 911 for an ambulance to come. Go to www.guard.me for more information.

Keep Me Safe Program

Free and fully confidential counselling support available to international students 24 hours a day, every day. You will have access to multicultural experts that have experience working with International students and speak your language. They can provide support for your needs with adapting to new culture, relationship issues, dealing with stress, addictions, school and family troubles. You can access support through telephone, chat, video, mobile app or web. Download the free **My SSP** App from the App store or Google Play. You can also call 1.844.451.9700 or +1.416.380.6578 or visit www.keepthesafe.org



Smoking

By Ontario law, you are not allowed to buy tobacco, cigarettes or cannabis if you are under 19 years old.

In Ontario, smoking/vaping is not allowed in:

- Public schools, both inside the building and on school grounds;
- Outdoor recreational areas i.e. parks, playgrounds, beaches, recreation fields;
- Stores;
- Bus/train shelters or stations;
- Restaurants and bars;
- Offices;
- Sports arenas;
- Cinemas



If you break the above laws, you will be removed from HWDSB International Student Program without refund of tuition fees. HWDSB strongly suggests that you do not smoke even if you have reached the age of 19.

Alcohol and Drugs

The legal age for drinking alcohol in Ontario is 19. You will be removed from HWDSB International Program without refund of tuition fees, if you:

- Drink alcohol under the age of 19;
- Drink to excess if you are 19 and above;
- Use or distribute illegal drugs including marijuana; and/or
- Use false identification.



Travelling

Before you join any school trips, you must obey the school's policy to have a signed permission form from your parents. Also, before you travel to cities outside of Hamilton with your friends or Homestay family, it is your responsibility to notify your parents and get their permission.

Driving

The legal driving age in Ontario is 16. By Ontario law, all drivers who are 21 and under, regardless of licence class, must have a blood alcohol level of zero when operating a motorized vehicle.

Culture Shock – The adjustment process and what to expect

Newcomers to Canada go through a sequence of stages in adjusting to their new circumstances. The adjustment phase will normally take about 4 to 5 months.

1. Arrival and first impressions:

When students first arrive they are **excited** to be in a new environment and everything seems new and wonderful.

2. Culture Shock:

Difficulty in making new friends and learning English may cause newcomer students to become **less optimistic**. It is normal to miss friends, family and everything that was familiar. Depression and homesickness are feelings that may be experienced.

3. Recovery and Optimism:

As new friends are made and school success is experienced, students begin to **feel better**. Students are more confident about fitting in at school.

4. Acculturation:

As students become more comfortable with their new surroundings and develop a balance between the new culture and their own, they are able to **appreciate** what the new experience is bringing to them.

Safety and Security

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Be careful to whom you give your name or address.▪ Travel light and try not to flaunt expensive jewellery, gadgets, clothes or "flash" cash.▪ Ensure that others know your whereabouts.▪ Plan the safest route to your destination.▪ Keep to well lit areas.▪ Keep valuable property, wherever possible, under lock and key (e.g. your passport, laptop, etc.)▪ Keep a vigilant eye on bags and property.▪ Pick your friends wisely.▪ Trust your instincts! If you feel uncomfortable in any place or situation, leave it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Go out unaccompanied after dark. There is safety in numbers.▪ Accept lifts from strangers.▪ Wander into unknown areas.▪ Hitchhike.▪ Loan or lend money without your parents' consent▪ Do not give expensive gifts to staff

Grocery Shopping

There are places to shop for food in Hamilton.

Supermarkets - Sobey's, Fortino's, Metro, Food Basics and No Frills.

The Hamilton Farmers' Market and Nations Fresh Foods are located in Jackson Square. The Farmers' Market is open on Tuesdays, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Nations Fresh Foods is open daily from 9am – 9pm.



There are lots of restaurants in Hamilton. Look at the brochure in your package.

Banking

When you arrive in Canada, it is a good idea to open a bank account. There are many different banks in Hamilton. Your parent/guardian/custodian can help you open a bank account or you can search for your nearest bank on the internet.

Transportation

Hamilton has a first rate transportation system. Special fares are available to students who are 19 years of age and under during the school year.



City Bus Service

The buses in Hamilton make getting around Hamilton quite easy. There is information in your package about bus schedules, routes, maps and Trans-cabs. There is also information on: <http://www.hamilton.ca/CityServices/Transit/>.

A photo ID card for secondary school students can be obtained from the Ticket Office at the Hamilton GO Centre, 36 Hunter St. E., Monday - Friday 9:00 am until 5:00 pm (except holidays).

Regional

The Bus has bus service to



Bus Services

Terminal in downtown Hamilton places outside of Hamilton.

<http://hamilton.foundlocally.com/Trans/Trans-Buses.htm>

WHAT TO DO FOR FUN

There are lots of different things to do for fun in Hamilton. Check out the following website for ideas: www.tourismhamilton.com

- Sports Activities to do or to watch
- Theatre
- Outdoor Activities
- Social Activities



NOTES

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