

The true north

General information

Last spring I received an email from the Education Service Centre that I was elected to become an exchange student at Haskayne School of Business, which is the business faculty of University of Calgary in Calgary, Canada. I was super excited about this news, because I've been dreaming about going to Canada for such a long time. So, during the fall semester of 2016, I went to Canada to study at Haskayne and experienced four of the best months of my life! If you're doubting whether to go on exchange, please apply as you will absolutely not regret it.

Preparation

Now I was elected to go to Haskayne, there were a couple of things that had to be arranged upon arrival. The first thing I did was reading previous student reports again, to see what I might expect. Secondly, I did the official application at Haskayne School of Business. On the application form, you have to fill in the courses you would like to take, including approval of ESE. It is useful for to check out the courses in advance and write down the courses you like, get them approved at ESE and send the application to Canada. You can always switch courses when you're there, so the courses you write down on the application do not have to be your final choice. Important to mention, I did not have to do a TOEFL or IELTS test.

Then I started making a budget, to make sure I would have enough money when I was there. After that I booked my plane ticket. The official semester started 12th of September, but the week before was an introduction week. I decided to go to Calgary on the third of September. I also immediately booked my flight back, but I recommend you do that when you know the final exam schedule, which will be posted at the end of October. Fortunately for me, my flight back was the day right after my last exam (December 23rd), but a friend, who also immediately booked her flight back, had to change flights because it was in conflict with her exam schedule. Furthermore, the housing at the campus requires you to leave within 24 hours after your last exam ends.

When my application was approved by Haskayne School of Business, I started looking for housing. This was pretty easy, although it takes a long time before you get admission that the room is reserved for you. I recommend applying for housing immediately after you get your approval of application, because I heard it was filled up quickly after. I stayed at Cascade Hall, which is a pretty new building. You will get your own bedroom with a bed, mattress, desk, chair, drawer and walk-in-closet. The bathroom is shared with one other roommate, and the living room and kitchen are shared with three others. In total there are four bedrooms, two bathrooms and one kitchen and living room in an apartment.

It is also useful to get a credit card, for me that was way cheaper than collecting cash with my debit card, and credit cards are accepted everywhere.

Arrival

When I arrived in Calgary, I stayed my first night at Hotel Alma, which is the hotel on the campus. The second day, I went to Cascade Hall and there were a lot of students ready to help all new people moving in. There was a special shuttle bus going to the stores, so you could buy cutlery, sheets, groceries, etc. In the following week, there was an introduction week. This was very nice to get to know people, the campus and find out how things work on UofC, although this week is more for first year students than for exchange students. You also need to pick up your student card, which automatically includes a public transportation sticker. With that, you can use the train and bus for free for the whole semester. However, you do need to pay 130 CAD in advance in order to get the sticker.

Courses

Then the classes started. I took Intermediate Financial Accounting II (ACCT343), University Calculus II (MATH267), Econometrics I (ECON495) and Psychology of Everyday Life (PSYC203).

ACCT 343 was just as it is at ESE, but the topics are more in-depth and you learn how to account for IFRS and ASPE instead of IFRS and GAAP. This course had two group projects, which had a quite heavy load. Also, the exam is written instead of multiple choice as you're used to at ESE.

MATH267 is actually difficult math, but for me it was fun to do, as I like to solve these kind of problems. In the beginning it was hard, I figured I forgot a lot, but after a couple of weeks it went just fine. There were two midterms and two-weekly assignments, but the course load was doable.

ECON495 was an honours course, which was pretty hard. The exams were easy though. In this class you learn about several econometric topics and do STATA assignments. This course is harder than the introductory econometrics course I had at ESE.

PSYC203 is an introductory Psychology course and to be honest the best course I followed in Calgary. It was very interesting to learn the basics of psychology. There is one group assignment, which was actually really fun to do: make a goal for your group and get it to work out. Our goal was to make a sleep schedule and see what happens. Besides the group assignment, there are 3 midterms and one final exam. The course load is not heavy, the professor was really good, the course matter is interesting and it is easy to get a high grade.

All courses were worth 3 credits, which converts to 6 ECTS per course. I did not incorporate the courses in my elective space. In general, I think the professors were good, they knew their stuff and were more than willing to explain multiple times if you did not understand what was going on. There were also weekly office hours where you could stop by with questions. What is also different from ESE, the professors at UofC really try to get to know you and are interested in you as a person.

Finances

Canada is more expensive than the Netherlands when it comes to fresh and healthy food. On the contrary, all unhealthy stuff (think Tim Horton's, which is an absolutely awesome coffee shop only in Canada) is super cheap. In Alberta, there is only a 5% tax, making it the cheapest state of Canada. That is also the reason gas is really cheap. Below you will find my income and expenses.

Income		Expenses	
DUO	€ 1,152.00	Housing fee	€ 50.00
Scholarship	€ 500.00	Housing	€ 2,300.00
Public transport compensation	€ 392.00	Flight	€ 940.00
Parents	€ 600.00	Food/Drinks	€ 300.00
		Groceries	€ 750.00
		Trips	€ 600.00
		Phone	€ 25.00
		School equipment	€ 60.00
		U-pass	€ 95.00
		Tenant insurance	€ 115.00
		Bed linen	€ 180.00
		Hotel first night	€ 100.00
		Stuff for the apartment	€ 35.00
		Other	€ 315.00
		Sport	€ 135.00
Total	€ 2,644.00	Total	€ 6,000.00

Daily life

In the beginning, everything looks so bright and new, although soon enough everything will start to feel normal. During the weekdays, I had classes every day, after classes I did homework and cooked dinner with my roommates. Every Wednesday, there is Wing's night at the Den, where you can get 10 delicious chicken wings for only \$3,50 (I recommend the honey garlic wings). Every Thursday, there is Thursden: the Den turns from a restaurant into a club/bar with nice music and a great party. However, in Canada people do not go out until late, most of the clubs already close around 2am. Be sure to be at the Den before 11pm, because it is mostly really busy and you can't get in. Alcohol is pretty expensive, luckily we found cheap wine that was also drinkable. In the weekends, we rented a car and went on trips in the Rocky Mountains. Be sure to find someone who is 25 or older and who wants to drive, since then you don't have to pay an extra fee when you rent a car. There are so many beautiful things to see in Canada, you absolutely don't want to spend your weekend studying ;). We went to Banff National Park, Glacier National Park, Kananaskis, Vancouver and way more!

Calgary itself is not a special city, it's really quiet after 1am and the clubs downtown are mostly country clubs. The Calgary tower is pretty nice, comparable to the Euromast. You can see all over the city and afar you see the Rockies.

Also important to mention: Canada. Is. Cold. I experienced -20 degrees Celcius with a windchill of -30. This happened in the end of November and continued until I left. My tip is to bring thermal clothing to make sure not to get hypothermia.

All in all, I absolutely loved my stay in Canada! If you go here, be sure to go to Tim Hortons, get some maple syrup, poutine and Coffee Crisp, and visit as many national parks as possible!

Below you will find pictures of the beautiful true north. If you have any questions about going on exchange, don't hesitate to contact me at moreenvandermooren@hotmail.com!



