

Exchange to the University of Calgary.

In my masters I went to the University of Calgary for one semester. In one word it was amazing and if I could do it again, I certainly would. The people in Canada are the nicest you'll ever meet, the Rocky Mountains are just too beautiful and there is so much stuff to do around Calgary. Besides all the awesome trips we made, we had to go to school of course.

I'm a law student, so I attended law school. In Canada the system is a bit different from our system. You'll have to do three years of undergraduate before you can go to law school. Since studying for Canadians is pretty expensive, most of the people in law school do have a part-time job at some sort of law firm. This results in the fact that the level of the classes is high. People also really participate in the classes, and you're expected to do the same. If you don't, the professors just ask you every question. The classes are quite small, I think my biggest class was about 25 people.

I took four courses in Calgary: Human Rights Law, Oil and Gas Law, Basic Tax Law and International Trade Law. Since I am already in my masters back in Groningen, I was allowed to take third and fourth year courses. Which was nice, because the first year classes are really an introduction to law, so way too easy and you'll get bored. I am studying Tax Law back in the Netherlands. The only downside of going to Canada with a bachelor in Tax Law is that you're not allowed to take many tax courses because you don't know their system. The only tax course available in the fall semester this year I could take was Basic Tax Law. On the other hand, I now was able to take some classes, which I normally couldn't take and that was nice.

The course on Basic Tax Law was nice. It was a third year course, so the level was okay, but since I am a Tax Law student, not all the material was too hard. We talked only about the income tax, which is completely different from the Netherlands, and we treated a lot of ideas about levying taxes. Since Canada has nine provinces and above that a federal government, the system is different. It was interesting to see how that works out in a tax system. You'll have to study for this course, but my other three courses were way harder than this one, but also because I am a tax law student. Alberta, the province Calgary is in, has a lot of oil and gas, so I decided to take a course on that subject. It was awfully hard, but insanely interesting. I had 6 hours of classes every week for that course, but I never didn't want to go. Every other week you had to prepare a case and present it to the rest of the class. When I heard all this, I was about to swap the course for another one, but I am glad I didn't. And in the end for the final exam, I knew already so much, because all the cases I've had in class and all the other materials were also talked about during the lectures. The course on Human Rights didn't have a book to study, but only case law. In the beginning I thought that was nice, but it was hard. You'll have to read a lot. The advantage of this class was that since human rights are a widely spread idea, you can use your knowledge from back home. We had a lot of guest lectures in this

course, which made it interesting. The last course I took was International Trade. I would recommend everybody to take this course! The professor of this course is really funny and she makes the classes really nice. You just want to go to spent time with her. The materials are also pretty interesting in my opinion.

They expect your English to be almost next to perfect. Before you can attend the U of C, you'll have to take an English test, TOEFL. On your test you'll have to get a score of minimum 100. I almost got 100, but they let me in. On the courses I took, I didn't had to write a lot of papers, but if you do, they take points for incorrect English. In the end, if you tell them English is your second language, they're not so hard on you, but they expect you to improve during the semester. You'll improve because you live in an English spoken environment. My English wasn't near to be perfect when I left, but it has got way better. I don't think this is something you'll have to worry about.

In the first week they organise a lot of social events with all the new students and with all the exchange students. You can choose which one you want to attend, and if you don't want to at all, you don't have to. There is also a club fair the first week. On this fair you can join every club. From sports clubs to religious clubs to harry potter clubs. Everything you can think of, there is a club. It's nice to join one or two clubs because they have a lot of events, so you'll get t know people easily. You should definitely go to all the Dinos games. The Dinos is the football team of the University. You can visit all the matches for free if you show them you student card! They have one dollar beer and hot dogs, you'll sit in the sun and it's just amazing. The weather in Calgary is always good! I didn't have one day with rain or snow, that only happens during the night. There is an office for exchange students which organises trips. I never attended one, but I heard it is nice.

In Calgary I lived on campus. If you watch the movie Cool Runnings you'll see the campus: the movie was shot there. Nowadays it's more high tech, but you'll get the idea. The campus was build for the Olympics of '88. This means that a lot of the facilities used during the Olympics are now used by the students of the U of C. For instance, my building was next to the speed-skating hall, which is still used for World Championships, but when there is no WC, you can use it. The campus is big, it took me about 20 minutes to walk from one side to the other side. There is a train station at campus, so it's really easy to get to downtown. Especially because you'll get a public transport card from the University. You have to pay C\$120 for it, but there is no choice, you'll have to get it. It's worth it for sure because you'll use it a lot. (When you arrive you'll have to pay C\$210 I believe, and then you're covered for everything after that, i.e. public transport and all the other facilities.)

Almost everything you can think of is on campus. There is no big supermarket, but small stuff you can get. There is a gym on campus, which you can use for free. There is a bar on campus which is open every Thursday evening. The entire University shows up, so you'll have to be on time to get in. Canadians tend to party way earlier

than we Europeans do, so after a while you'll get used to it. If it's full, you can always decide to go downtown to one of the clubs over there!

I lived on the seventh floor of Rundle Hall. On my floor lived mainly international students. In the beginning I wasn't sure, I was happy about that, but afterwards I realised that living with a lot of internationals was better. That sounds weird, but I wanted to take trips everywhere every weekend and other internationals do want to do the same. If you're Dutch, you don't want to go to the islands every weekend, but if you're for instance Brazilian, you want to do that kind of stuff every weekend. I also met a lot of Canadians, and from time to time they came along, or I just went with Canadians. So my worries about not knowing the Canadians and not really getting to know their culture, was nothing to be worried about!

The building I lived in didn't have a kitchen, only a cooker and a microwave. The campus has a dining hall, where you can eat. You'll get a mealplan on a card. Every time you eat something, they take some money of your account. You can eat burgers everyday, but there is a lot of healthy food as well. It's always busy in the dining hall, so there always somebody you know with whom you can eat. It's a social happening.

My accommodation was really cheap. My accommodation including my mealplan was cheaper than my rent alone in Groningen. (It really depends on which building you live in though.) So I had a lot of money to do things. The only thing was, I had to share my room. I had a really nice roommate. You're not always together in a room, so if you need some time for yourself, don't worry, you'll have it! And it's really nice to have a roommate, because you'll get to know twice as much people. The floor I lived on had a big living room (about 50m²) with couches and tables and chairs. Always somebody was hanging out there, so if you wanted company, you could find it!

During the week I was in Calgary, but in the weekends I was 'on vacation'. Calgary is a 45 minute ride from Banff, so within the hour you'll be in the Rocky Mountains. The city Calgary is not really interesting to visit, there is nothing much there. Living in Calgary on the other hand is nice. You have a lot of nice neighbourhoods with nice places to sit outside and drink coffee. If you know where to go, it's a cozy city. The city is four times as big as NYC, so it's big, but you can go everywhere pretty easy, the public transport system is good, and you'll meet a lot of really nice Canadians who love to show you around, so within two weeks, you know where to go and where to be. Since the city is not the most interesting, we went outside the city a lot. Like I said, Banff is a 45 minute ride. The Rocky Mountains are really pretty and you can do a lot of stuff over there. In the first week of vacation, we rented a motorhome and went to Jasper. I went to Seattle and Vancouver during the second vacation. Yes, you'll have two times a week of vacation before December. It sounds like you'll need a lot of money to do this, but renting a car for a day for five people including gas, costs about C\$6 each. They don't do small cars on the West coast, you'll be pretty comfy in the car.

One last insanely big advantage of Calgary, you can ski from October till May. I love skiing, so I made sure I skied as much as I could. My first day of skiing was October 13!! The University sells cheap lift passes, you can rent a car, leave around 8 in the morning and you'll ski from 9 to 5, and at the end of the day, you're home again. If you ask me, it's the best. One small thing, it's freezing. This year was apparently pretty warm, but I've had days where it was about -35. Luckily it never rains in Calgary and around. You'll have sun almost every day which makes it a lot better and the air is really dry, so it doesn't feel like -35 but more -20, which is still really cold.

The year ended on December 20, but my last exam was already on the 5th. If you have to, you can go back to Groningen to take the exams of the first semester over here, but if you don't you'll have a month and a half to see more of Canada! Go go go!