

### **My personal report:**

I have been on an exchange for five months in Canada. I lived in Calgary and studied law at the University of Calgary. Instead of living on campus I rented a room in a big house with three other girls. The girls were really nice, but soon I realized that all the exchange students lived on campus and that it was hard for me to make friends living so far away from school. So I went to residence service and they got me a room on campus. It was the best thing that could happen! I had my own private bedroom, shared the washroom with one girl and shared the living room with three other girls. The rooms were big, I even had a walk in closet and all of sudden it was so easy to meet people! In one day I met twenty people and of course I had my three roommates. They were all from different countries, Ecuador, Austria and England. Everybody was so friendly and it was fun to learn about each other's culture. My roommates and I cooked typical dishes from our country for each other and drank tea together before we went to bed. I've always lived together with my boyfriend in an apartment in the Netherlands so it was nice to have three girls as roommates for once.

When the courses started I noticed it was completely different than law in the Netherlands. First of all the classes were really small. The teachers knew most people by name so it was also a lot more personal. And most important the teachers were funny and told a lot about their own experiences as a lawyer. This made the classes very interesting and less boring like in the Netherlands. A challenge for me was definitely that the classes were in English. It's not hard for me to have a normal conversation in English but the law terminology was completely new to me. So in the beginning it was hard for me to listen to the teacher and make notes at the same time but after a few weeks it got easier and easier.

What I really liked about living on campus is that you're always surrounded by people. If you want privacy you can sit in your room, but if you want to do something fun there is always something happening, like free hot dogs, football games, movie night, clothing sales and sports! A big thing in Canada was definitely working out. Everybody does sports and tries to live healthy. I really liked this about Canada. I got a student pass from the University of Calgary so I could use the sport facilities for free. So every week I went to the gym, did yoga, swimming and boot camp. They even had a climbing wall on campus and a ski club. It was a little bit like you see in the American movies. I loved it!

One of the reasons why I wanted to go to Canada is because the nature there is beautiful. Calgary is a perfect location because it's one hour away from the Rocky Mountains. So during the week I went to classes and explored Calgary and in the weekends I went to the Rockies to hike and later when it was colder to snowboard. Canada is absolutely gorgeous! Me and other exchange students rented a car every weekend and then we hiked the whole day. It's amazing to walk for hours through the mountains and see the most beautiful clear blue lakes. One thing you should be

careful for is bears. So we always took bear mace with us. This is pepper spray to scare bears away if they want to attack you. Unfortunately or maybe you can see it as luck I've never seen one. I did see moose's, mountain goats and even a wolf!

In the beginning of the semester there was an introduction week for all the exchange students. This was an opportunity to meet people, to get directions for campus (because campus is big!!) and to learn more about the Canadian culture and weather! The weather is completely different then in the Netherlands. They warned us that the temperature can go up or down with a difference of 20 degrees, so you should wear layers so you're prepared for every kind of weather. Even though they warned me for this I couldn't really believe it, but they were right! On a Sunday I was hiking in the sun in my short pants and a t-shirt. The next morning I woke up and all of a sudden there was snow everywhere and it was -10. I couldn't believe it! But also this was part of the experience and I didn't mind the snow at all.

Later in the semester it got colder and colder and it was time for snowboarding! I love snowboarding so I couldn't wait to go up into the mountains. My best friend moved to Canada because she fell in love with a Canadian guy so I visited her. She lives on Big white, a big mountain for snowboarders and skiers. We snowboarded a whole week and the view was breath taking. All the trees were covered in snow and looked like little creatures. It's hard to explain, but it was something I've never seen before.

My trip to Big white wasn't my only trip. I've been to Vancouver, the Rocky mountains, Jasper national park and even Las Vegas! The States are so close to Canada and it's cheap to fly or even drive there. So being on exchange in Canada gives you the opportunity to see more of the States as well. All these trips were amazing and it was fun to explore and see more than just Calgary.

And then ice hockey! As most people know, ice hockey is the main sport in Canada so when I was there I had to go to one of the games! The games are really entertaining, exciting and even rough. The players fight each other and when that happened I was in shock! There was blood on the ice but all the Canadians were cheering and for them it was so normal. So soon I realized that ice hockey is a rough game where fighting is allowed so now and then. In the breaks they entertained people with the kiss cam, winning prizes and quizzes. It was fun to experience this typical part of the Canadian culture.

In these last 5 months I have met so many people, have done and seen so many beautiful things and experienced so many adventures. I've done so much that I don't know where to begin telling about these adventures. The best way to explain it is like this: For me the exchange was one of the best parts of my whole study and one of the happiest times of my life. I consider myself incredible lucky that I was able to see so many breath taking places and to meet so many wonderful people. I never expected to find so many good friends in only 5 short months and because of them home will never feel completely like home again. Going on exchange is something that everybody should experience once in their lives!