

## **Report Exchange**

At the University of Groningen I study the Dutch variant of law and I specialized in International & European Law. After three years of this, I was ready for something new so I decided to go on an exchange and experience what it is like to study law in another country. In January 2017 I headed off to Canada.

## **Study program Canada**

Since my interest field is very broad I was happy to be able to choose lots of different kinds of subjects. In the end I took four courses of 6 EC's / 3 Canadian points each: Legal Theory: Perspectives, Legal Theory: Indigenous Legal Traditions, Selected Topics II: Climate Change, Sex & Gender.

The courses at the University of Calgary were pretty intense. The law students there had to go a long way before they made it to law school. First you have to obtain an undergrad, then undergo a lot of difficult exams and tests and after that you can apply for law school. That makes the students very determined and hardworking. My classmates were often older than me, around 28 while I was 22 at the time. I learned a lot from them and their mentality and the courses were extremely interesting. It is an experience to be surrounded by extremely motivated students and the quality of the education was very good as well.

Most of my classes were what we would call seminars. Small groups in which a lot of discussion took place. We always had to prepare for the classes by reading different articles on the topic of the week. In class we would discuss the articles or someone would give a presentation on their interpretation or opinion on the article. Because of the small groups, there is a very personal atmosphere, where everyone knows each other's name. This created a very good study environment.

All in all, my program at the U of C was very interesting and I enjoyed studying there a lot.

## **Language**

The main language in the Western part of Canada, and so in Alberta, is English. They have somewhat of an accent and tend to say 'eh' a lot, but it definitely made it easy to get around! It is very convenient that you don't have a language barrier when you talk to your teachers, advisors or people at the supermarket!

## **Finance**

Canada is a country that is relatively more expensive than The Netherlands. My housing was my biggest spending, which cost me little over 2000 dollars for the semester. Another big spending was grocery shopping. In January Canada gets very cold, so you are dependent on the bus / train to get around. About once a week I would buy all the groceries I needed for that week. The groceries are expensive. For example a pepper would cost you \$4 per lb. Also the trips I made were quite expensive. I enjoy skiing a lot and a student day pass would cost me about \$70 (excl. rental). Going out for diner is relatively less expensive as in Netherlands! Also, the university's dining center offered cheap meals every day. You always find your way on how you spend your money wisely. On beforehand, I saved up money by working before I came to Canada and also the Marco Polo fund is a help! Canada is indeed an expensive county, but for me it was totally worth every cent I spend!

## **Preparation and contact**

Beforehand I got put in touch with the ladies from the international office in Canada. They were so helpful and created an open environment where I could ask all my questions. The winter semester for law only starts two weeks later than the regular semester, therefore I unfortunately missed days like orientation day. Because of that I did feel like I was more dependent on myself and had to take a lot of initiative.

### **Housing**

I got to live in residence, which is like you see in American movies. It's a big flat with students in it on campus. There were several residence buildings and I got to live in the most international one. Even though all my three flat-mates were from Canada, over 70% of the people in the building were from all over the world.

Living on residence is a lot of fun. Every day a sports activity was organized for us, for example Friday was our squash day and I love to play squash! On Thursday I often joined the Volleyball activity and afterwards we would go to the University bar: The Den. Also, plenty of other events for your floor or for the whole building were organized, like midnight pancakes.

### **Culture**

The Canadian culture is a Western culture. The people are extremely friendly and proud to be Canadian. Almost everyone I met was so open, enthusiastic and you can ask a question to anyone. If you go to the supermarket, the cashier will never be grumpy. They ask you how your day is going and are up for a chat. This was very funny at the beginning and also very welcoming. Also, people always hold the door for each other. All in all, I loved the politeness of the Canadian people that I have encountered.

### **Free time**

In my free time I often went to the gym which is located on campus. A lot of people at the U of C are very sporty and it's super fun to go workout together. Otherwise, I enjoyed my time going to Kensington (one of the neighborhoods of Calgary); joining the residence activities; hanging out with other exchange students and my favorite thing of all: going to the mountains! Banff national park is only 1-2 hours away and the nature there is just stunning. I went to see the mountains almost every weekend: hiking, going to hot springs, seeing the lakes, it was just beautiful to be able to spend my time there! I would sometimes go with a group friends and we would hire a car and just go. The other option was to go with the International Office. They often organized trips like exploring Lake Louise, going snowshoeing, seeing an ice hockey game and many more!

### **Travelling**

Around the middle of the semester it was time for reading week. A week off where most of the students take the opportunity to do some more exploring of this big country. During this week I went to Vancouver & Vancouver Island together with 7 other exchange students from all different countries. To go on a trip with such a cultural mix is so much fun! We rented a van and drove all the way from Calgary to Vancouver. The drive itself was just stunning and it was a lot of fun to see more of the country. By the end of the semester I also made a road trip in an RV with three of my friends!

I am so happy and grateful that I got the opportunity to go on an exchange. I feel like this period was one big beautiful journey, in the educational sense as well as in the cultural, personal and geographical sense.