

Exchange University of Calgary, Fall 2015, IJsbrand Hertogh

I did my exchange at the Haskayne school of Business, University of Calgary. First of all I would like to encourage all of you to apply for the exchange programme as my exchange was one of the most exciting times I've had in my life. I can assure you, no matter where you go, that you will not regret it!

Preparation:

One of the first things that you should do if you get selected for the University of Calgary is applying for residence. I recommend that you choose to live on campus as almost all of the international students live on campus. This will allow you to get in touch with a lot of people that have similar interests as you. Most internationals want to see as much of Canada in their time there, so the international students organise a lot of trips. You can apply for residence online by using the University of Calgary residence portal. You should do this as soon as possible as the residence on campus tend to fill quickly. I would recommend the Cascade or Aurora buildings to stay in, because these buildings have the most higher year and international students. Aurora Hall is newer and more expensive than Cascade Hall. I would also recommend booking your flights early. You can fly directly to Calgary from Amsterdam. Do not forget to order bed sheets in advance, as they are surprisingly harder to get than you would expect.

Choosing courses can be started somewhere in May/June. Do not worry about your choices too much, as you will be able to change your courses up until the third week of classes. You will not need a visa to study at the University of Calgary. Visas are only required if you intend to stay longer than six months. I did not have to do an English test either, but you should check this with the exchange-coordinator at the University of Calgary as they might have changed this.

I would also recommend that you get a credit card. Credit cards are widely used in North-America and a lot of purchases require to have a credit card. If you want to rent a car, for example, you will need a credit card.

Arrival:

I arrived one weeks before the classes would start. This is when the orientation week (O-week) starts. You can choose to arrive earlier though, this will give you the opportunity to explore the country. The orientation week is mainly aimed at first year students. I would say that the activities during the day are not that helpful, but the parties during the night will give you the opportunity to meet a lot of the other international students as nobody has started their classes yet. Shortly after my arrival I got myself a Canadian SIM-Card and I would encourage you to do the same. I did not get a Canadian Bank account though as I mainly redrew cash and occasionally paid with my credit card.

Courses:

Because most courses do not directly continue where the courses at the EUR stop, makes it tough to decide which courses to choose. Most courses will either require you to have more knowledge of the subject or have elements you already studied before. This of course only applies if you choose courses in your field of expertise. I chose courses that are directly

related to my study, which helped me diversify and get a broader vision of the study. From my experience the professors were all really good professors, but if you would like to check what other students thought of a professor, I would advise you to check out: www.ratemyprofessors.com. When I was still in Rotterdam, I decided to do the following 4 courses:

AMAT 481 (Intro to mathematical Finance):

This courses gave me more insight in the financial world. It covered a wide spread of derivatives (options, futures etc.). We were learned how to compute prices of the products and eventually simulated some prices using matlab. The professor was great and always talked about Manchester United. So if you like football, you should have a chat with him!

AMAT 491 (Numerical Analysis 1)

This course overlapped a bit with what we had done in Econometrics. It was a bit more theoretical though. Instead of just programming the algorithms, we also had to understand the deeper thought behind the algorithm so that we would be able to use it on variations of the original problem. The teacher was decent, but had a weird way of teaching with almost no interaction with the students.

Business courses

The business courses in Canada have a lot of interaction. During the lectures, problems will be presented to the students, who will then have a short amount of time to think about this and then present it in front of the group. What I really enjoyed about this, is that this allowed me to develop my presentation skills further, as this is not possible in the econometrics programme. Besides this, I had to write some case studies, which helped me to get a better at writing in English. The courses also tend to have their focus on the oil, gas & energy market. This should not be that surprising if you consider the fact that oil is the primary sources of income for the province Alberta.

BSEN 401 (Business in Canada)

This courses focussed on the strategic management side of businesses in Canada. We had to write case reports on specific Canadian companies every 3 weeks. The final grade was determined by these reports combined with a mid-term and a final project. The final-project was a bigger study on a company done with a group of 4.

SGMA 575 (International Business)

This course was really enjoyable as it was interactive. A lot of international students chose this course, which made it a unique experience. All the different nationalities resulted in a lot of interesting insights. The grade consisted of three midterms and a debate. The debates mainly covered recent economic events.

Finances:

Living in Canada is a bit more expensive than in the Netherlands. Even though I was fortunate enough to have an attractive exchange rate (due to the low oil prices), the living cost were still higher than those in the Netherlands. Especially Alcohol and tobacco are really expensive. I tried to list some expenses below:

Residence: 3300 CAD for the whole period (without a meal plan)
Phone Bill: 25 CAD
Ski club activity: 230 CAD
Ski passes: 65 CAD/day
Residence insurance: 50 CAD

You have the opportunity to add a meal plan to your residence subscription. This meal plan allows you to eat everywhere on campus for the amount that you paid for. Although it is timesaving, I would say that it is not necessary. From all the exchange students that I've met, nobody made use of the meal plan.

Road trips:

As a lot of students make road trips to explore the mountains and spot wildlife around Calgary, I would suggest that you also save some money for this. Renting a car, will cost (depending on your age) approximately 75 dollars per day. You should find a couple of other students so that you guys can go together and share the price. Don't worry, this will not be hard ;). Besides the car, you can also make use of the greyhound busses. These busses tend to have a lot of delays and therefore I suggest that if you make trips, you just rent a car. A car is also way more useful in, for example, Banff as most sightseeings are located pretty far from each other.

If you want to make trips that will take multiple days, I recommend that you stay in hostels. The hostels in Canada cost around 30 dollars for a night and offer pretty good quality. You will meet a lot of fun people in the hostels!

Daily life:

My average week is pretty easy to describe. I would attend lectures and went to the gym/pool in between. If you go the University of Calgary, you can make use of all their sports facilities for free. On Monday and Wednesday nights, there is wings night. During wings night Canadians eat cheap chicken wings and watch sports. On Thursday night there is 'Thursden'. The Den is a club on campus and on Thursdays it will be packed. During the weekends I either chilled during or went out in downtown Calgary. For bars, I would recommend 'National' and 'Craft' on 10th Ave. If you are looking for more of a night club, you should check out 'Common Wealth' or 'Cowboys'.

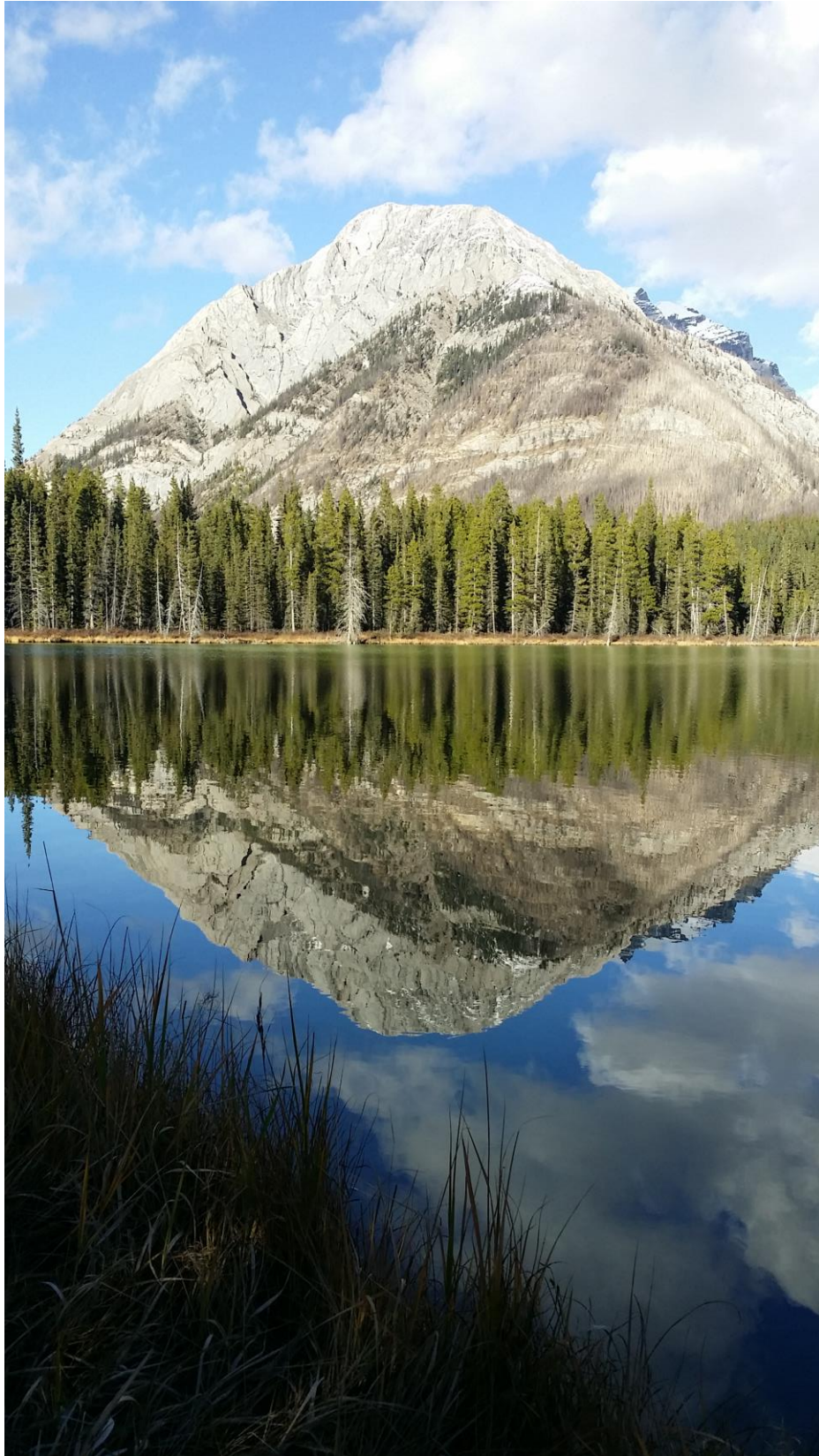
I spend a lot of the weekends outside of Calgary though. I went to Vancouver, Edmonton and made a lot of trips to the mountains. The mountains are beautiful all around the year. I also saw a lot of wildlife, including orcas when I was in Vancouver. From November on you will be able to ski in the Banff area. I was lucky enough to catch the northern lights on one of my last days in Calgary too.

I hope that this reports will help you with planning your exchange!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on Facebook or by email!

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PS: I added some pictures ;)



Possibly the best shot I've taken in Canada.



Lake Louise

Calgary Flames game:



Skiing:

