

Student Report by Sabrina Schwarz

Tips for you and insights into my year at the University of Alberta

I spend my year abroad at the University of Alberta, in Canada. I flew right after the Canadian Field Course of 2013 from New Brunswick to Edmonton, to reach my final destination for the next few months: cold, cold Alberta...

I hadn't arranged an apartment or anything to stay in, before I came to Edmonton, since I made bad experiences in the past signing rental contracts without even seeing the place, the roommates, the area etc. So what I did instead was to contact people from a Christian organization called Young Life that I knew from my student exchange year from 10 years ago. I would have chosen couch surfing as well, but that way I got in contact with real Canadians right away. Chris (the Young Life coordinator for South Edmonton) and Amy, a wonderful couple my age and their newborn Babyboy Max, were kind enough to let me stay in their house until I found a place to move in to... Well, we liked each other from the very start and so I ended up living in their guest room for only a little rent (400 CAD) for the next ten months! I can recommend everybody to choose a host family. Mine was actually perfect since it was more a roommate + family deal, just great! I learned a lot of the Canadian way of life, didn't spend the holidays by myself, had a real home when I went home from the UofA, found close friends and a large and awesome host family, and got to spend time with the cutest baby in the world, I also saved a lot of money.

This brings me to my next topic: Money. Even though I got a scholarship, I was not prepared for all the costs coming over me these months. There are the institutional costs for the UoA, which are about 600-700 CAD a semester, the expensive rent (my friends paid all about 700-800 CAD/month) and the very expensive living costs (food and drinks) alcohol not even included. I ended up working at a coffee shop on campus to have at least a little money to travel and participate in interesting conferences and eat healthy. I can therefore recommend either to save up a lot of money (at least 5000 Euros) or to get a job on campus in addition. This has positive and negative sides though. On the one hand you meet very nice and interesting people from all over the world and you make a lot of friends, on the other side you have less time to study. If you are looking for a job, you should check out the bill boards in the hall at the General Students Building (GSB) or Hub Mall, or simply get in contact with the store manager of the different fast food restaurants. I can recommend the Daily Grind, a coffee shop in GSB, the manager is nice and they pay over the average.

Well, about studying at the University of Alberta in general: I was very lucky to have picked/got assigned to John Acorn as my supervisor, the kindest and very competent docent at the University of Alberta. If I had any questions regarding lectures, payments or about my master thesis I had several options to ask competent people: there was John Acorn, Alex Drummond, Andreas Hamann and Amanda Brown (administrator for our department). Every question was answered soon and helped me out to find the right way. I'm very thankful for such engaged and kind people at the University of Alberta!

In general, there are so many options for students no matter what your needs are: there are cool clubs you can join (unusually at the beginning of the semester there is a fair of all clubs in the big arena, there I joined the photo-club) or apply for the Peer Programm (I met all my friends there) or if you have any other needs like health issues there is the UofA health department or if you like sports there is the gigantic gym with swimming pools and all kinds of sport activities. The University of Alberta is one of the most important income sectors for Edmonton and is therefore very well organized, also Canadians are over the top polite and supportive, you should therefore never feel alone.

I had a great time, met amazing people, learned a lot (about myself and academically), made great experiences and found that being brave and to live the year your own way, is the best you can do. Than you get a full range of new impressions and build up your self-esteem too. Good luck for you and enjoy!

