

# My Canadian exchange

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I remember when I had arrived to Canada I was barely able to understand what was happening around me, except that I was in a taxi traveling to the address my landlord gave me. I was tired, so tired after almost one day long travel without sleep. I don't know if it was the fatigue but I was a little



afraid when I'd seen my house because that was the moment when I realised that I was going to stay there for four months, 16 weeks which indeed seemed long at that moment. I was renting a room in a house in which there were 5 other people: turkish, german, south-american, spanish-australian (none knew how such thing was possible to be spanish and australian at the same time), and a canadian lady who lived upstairs alone. All these things were irrelevant when I entered my room finally, all I cared for was

my bed and a sleep I desperately needed. I remember the strange smell of the wooden house, which became more weird because none of the tenants but me could feel it. This smell was everywhere when I fell asleep. After fourteen hours I woke up at 2 am. 'Ah, this is jet leg then' I told myself, in hungarian of course. I felt pretty uncomfortable with talking in English in the beginning, I felt that speaking that foreign language was a barrier between my thoughts and the things I wanted to say. But fortunately I'd arrived one week prior to the start of my semester, in August, which turned out to be a sunny month, as well as September. A quite unusual phenomenon: no rain for weeks in Vancouver. This made more likely to start exploring my new environment, my new city by day long walks. It was a very a good decision to arrive that soon.

I used that week to arrange everything for my new „life” there. Cellphone, bank accounts etc. I had no problems with the city, the people there, everything were more or less the same as in Europe, Hungary. Except the mobile service providers: I found them quite expensive compared to my country. The week's busy days made me comfortable with English. My first perception of Vancouver was „It's huge. Very huge”. Because of that everyone had to travel a lot, but Skytrain was at our disposal. That helped a lot. And SFU gave us the U-pass with which we were allowed to use all means of public transportations... well not in my first week of course 😊.



The Simon Fraser University (SFU) had an event called the Orientation during which new students could become familiar with everything on the Burnaby Campus. It was really worth it. Really! Not because of the information they gave us but because of the people I could meet there,

and the boat cruise they arranged for us, exchange students later. That was the day when I started to enjoy not just endure being there. Pretty soon, huhh? The whole are had been introduced to us. I really liked that we had many available possibilites to do some workout and sports. Later on I spent my freetime playing squash.



After the Orientation days the classes started. I was enrolled in three courses: my project lab, one social studies about Canada and one engineering course, but I took my courses at my home university as well. The biggest surprise was the project course; it was very different from the system we had in the Technical University of Budapest. It took me about a month or so to realize how much better that system was at SFU: weekly written reports, weekly consultation and so

on. I am still in a classic five-year/one degree system, so it is different. The other courses weren't so different in the means of the lectures but they had many assignments, many more then we had in Hungary. I made the mistake that I wanted to study as I had used to do. Eventually my schedules got really tight, I was procrastinating everything and I was barely able to finish my work on time. As far as I know many of the european exchange students made that mistake. This was a very important lesson for us all. Despite the fact that I had some problems with my schedules I truly enjoyed studying there: especially because I received a place at an IRMACS office because of my project lab! The project lab was really useful for me and I'd learnt a lot, thanks to my professor Shahram, who was really patient with me and helpful! I really feel though that I would had need a second semester to show what I am capable of, because I felt the same when I started my university: I had to learn how to study, again. A different system. If I am going to have the chance I will recommend these ways of studying to my home university.

SFU was really multicultural, just like the rest of Vancouver; students were there from everywhere around the world! I'd met Belgians, French, English, Scottish, Irish, Spanish, Danish, German, Polish, Ukrainian, Fiji, Swedish, Norwegian, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, USA people! And these people were only from SFU. The city was even more diverse. It was a good experience to meet all these nationalities and understand what cultural differences were: different ways of living, different ways of thinking but at the very same place, at the very same university. Most of the Europeans gathered in the European Social Club (ESC) which organized some social events for us, like going to Whistler (the city where the 2010 Winter Olympics will take place). Joining them and the Outdoors club was one of the best decisions I made. Now I have friends from all around the world, invitations to everywhere. Some advice: Facebook is really useful in this case ☺





Outside SFU I spent most of my time with my friends of course, but other than that I was doing sports like cycling and hiking all the time. In Vancouver there were plenty of possibilities for such activities! Many mountains to see, many parks to visit and everything was beautiful inside and outside the city. I am sure that everyone who was there has heard and visited Stanley-park, one of the biggest parks (if not the biggest) in Vancouver. I was there during the fall term so I hadn't been able to try everything but I had my good time there: kayaking, skydiving, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, hiking, cycling and so on. Even if something bad had happened everything went straight forward and easily. In my case I had a bicycle accident in which the car's driver was the faulty, and my bike got damaged beyond repair but ICBC, the local insurance company paid my new bike! As I heard they weren't so helpful all the time but they

speeded everything up since I was an exchange student with a very limited time there.

The night life in Vancouver... well. I must admit that wasn't that good (mostly because of the long line-ups everywhere), but it wasn't so bad either because we went downtown almost every week anyway 😊. I think Granville street speaks for itself during the nights, it is a must see! And if someone was bored of Vancouver just made a trip to the cities nearby: Seattle in the US, Banff, Jasper and so on. The Canadian Rockies are amazing! (And amazingly cold sometimes.)



So much experience I had there! It was good to come home, but it was really bad to leave! I – personally- enjoyed it from start till the end! Hehe, except the flight home which took 5 and a half days because of the vast amount of snow and Christmas (and lost baggages of course) 😊.

If I had the chance to go back later, I would definitely do so.

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