



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Queen's University
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	S2, 2023
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	Master of International Development and Planning
<b>Major(s)</b>	N/A

### Academics/ course load

*Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?*

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>
SURP851 – Environmental Policy	English	
GPHY889 – The Geography of Citizenship	English	
DEVS492-003 – Global AgroFood System	English	
DEVS492-004 – Tourism in Transition	English	

Total Otago credits gained: ☐ 54 points ☐ 72 points ☐ 108 points ☐ 80

*Any comments about these papers?*

I absolutely loved SURP851, any planners, geographers, environmental management students etc would enjoy this!

*How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?*

I took 4 papers/courses and had one 3-hour seminar per class. I did find that the workload was a lot more intensive and constant than at Otago where I tended to have busy and quiet periods. My classes were all internally assessed so I didn't have any finals. I did have a lot of presentations, almost one per week! My papers were structured in a way that had lots of little weekly assessments or mandatory requirements (including attendance) which kept me busy!

## Accommodation

*What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?*

I stayed in the Kingston Housing Coop. I lived in a house with nine other flatmates, (but the house was so large it didn't feel like there were ten of us!). There were five international students on exchange and five domestic students. I was on the (optional) meal plan which is a little bit like halls in that those on the meal plan eat together in a central dining hall which is nice, you get to meet people from all over the world! Overall though, you have way more independence than being in a hall! The co-op also runs events and has a budget for each house to hold events/parties. It's definitely an option worth considering, my room was fully furnished and warm - all utilities, maintenance services, and cleaning supplies are included in the cost. I got the international student package and my room came with linen, pillows, duvet, towels, and a desk lamp.

## Money matters

*Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance*

Return flights: AKL – YVR, YYZ – YVR – AKL = \$3,500 NZD

Studentsafe Insurance: \$780 NZD (zero excess)

Accommodation: Kingston Housing Co-op: \$4000 CAD for accommodation (incl utilities, laundry etc) plus \$1850 CAD for the meal plan, and \$70 CAD for the international student package.

Spending money: Approx \$9,000 NZD (day-to-day expenses plus travel including 2x 1 week cruises, flights/accommodation/food/activities for New York, Vancouver, Alaska, Calgary, and Arizona, and train rides to Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal etc)

*What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)*

I used the Wise card, would highly recommend!

## Visas & Insurance

*Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?*

Canada – Visitors ETA visa (\$7 CAD)

Recreational travel: USA – Visitor ESTA visa (\$21 USD)

Both of these are pretty simple to apply for with a NZ passport, relatively quick turnaround too.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Yes, UHIP - \$252 CAD for one semester

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

*What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?*

Your student ID card gives you free access to the gym and you can pay \$70 CAD for access to the gym's group fitness classes for the semester (same system as Unipol). I also joined the Queen's Equestrian

Club, it cost \$260 CAD for 7 riding lessons and access to the club's social events etc, it was so much fun! The Outdoors Club was great too, cost \$20 CAD to join, just note that you have to enter a lottery for their trips, but they're so much fun!

*What was the university/ city like?*

Very similar vibe to Otago and Dunedin. Kingston is very student-oriented, uni and town are close to each other. Queen's has a really pretty campus, especially in the snow!

*Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?*

Crave in downtown is amazing! Common ground on the second floor of the ARC on campus is also great! Super affordable and a great wee study/catch-up spot!

Definitely worth taking the ferry over to Wolfe Island and driving/cycling to Big Sandy Bay beach (although there is a small fee to enter!).

*Any tips for future students?*

The local Kingston bus is free with your student ID!

The group fitness classes at the ARC are \$15 off during the first week of classes (\$70 CAD instead of \$85 CAD)

Queen's students can get a free ticket to most of the home sports games (ie football), definitely worth taking up if you're into watching sport!

Definitely make the most of your time, if you don't have classes on Mon/Fri, take the long weekends and go to Toronto, Ottawa, or Montreal as they're close enough for a long weekend trip!

Kingston can get cold in the winter, especially when the wind comes off Lake Ontario, so definitely worth packing a good down jacket, windbreaker, and a pair of boots/shoes that have decent tread as it can get icy.

A few travel tips/hacks:

- If you book early enough, the train costs the same as the bus and is a much more pleasant way to travel (it's quicker and has Wi-Fi onboard!). Discount day is Tuesday.
- Most of the Canadian airports have a free express security service, which saves heaps of time standing in security queues! Bookings open 72hr before your flight departs.
- A lot of the airlines have promotions but unlike in NZ, you have to enter a promo code to get the deals, either sign up to the airlines' mailing lists or go to the sale section online to get the promo codes!

## Overall Experience

*Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!*

I have really enjoyed my semester abroad! I arrived in North America in the middle of July and travelled with my parents around Eastern Canada and New England (USA) before going on a cruise up to Alaska from Vancouver, which was amazing! I arrived in Kingston the week before classes started and attended some orientation sessions with the Queen's International Department, it was a really hot summer so there were plenty of swims at the pier too! During the first week, there is a clubs open

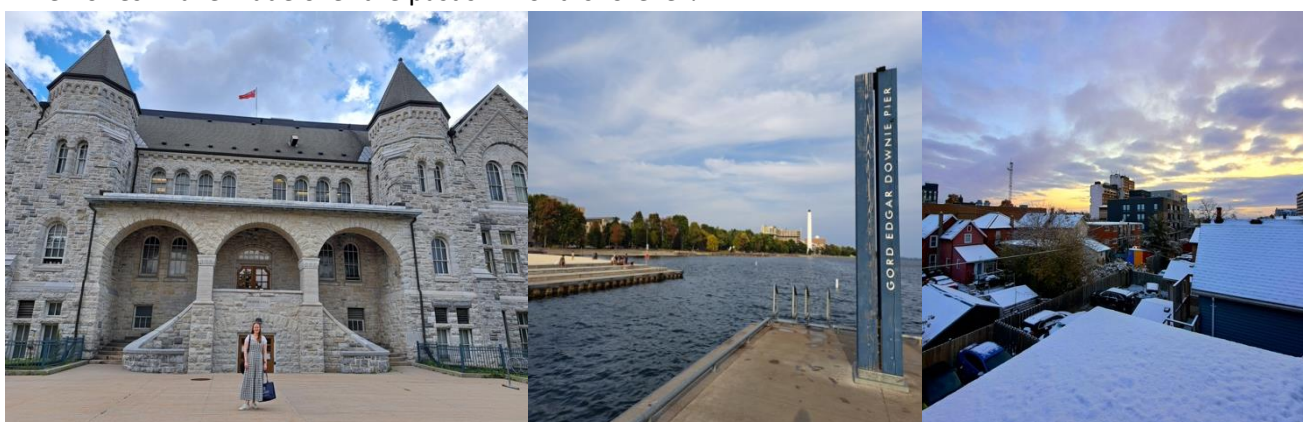


house and you can go explore the different clubs offered at Queen's (fun fact, after Harvard, Queen's has the most university clubs in North America – there is something for everyone!). I signed up for the Outdoors Club and the Equestrian Club, they were so much fun!

I really enjoyed my classes; given that all my classes were seminar-based, they tended to be a mix of presentations, discussions, and teaching. All of my profs were very helpful and my classmates were all so welcoming!

That being said, I was able to get away for long weekends (as I didn't have any classes on Thursdays or Fridays) to make the most of my time in North America! I went on a long weekend trip to Calgary and Banff, visited Toronto and Niagara, went on day trips to Brockville (next to Kingston) and Watertown (upstate NY), spent mid-semester break on a cruise around the Maritimes (Canada) and Maine (US) to see the fall colours, and spent a week in Arizona during the exam period.

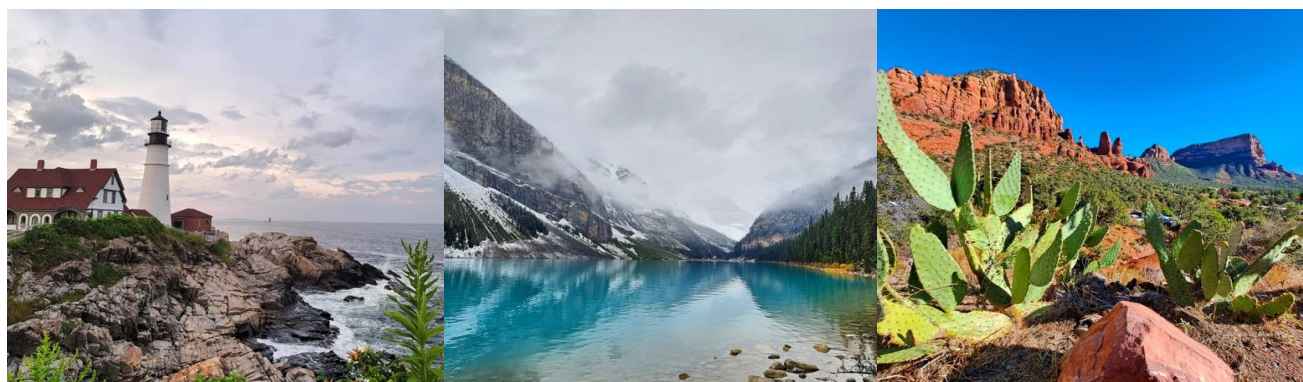
I am so glad I went on exchange! I have met so many new people and had some great experiences! Queen's and Kingston are great and everyone is super friendly! I will treasure the friends and memories I have made over the past six months forever!



*Queen's University and the town of Kingston – swimming in the summer, snow in the winter!*



*Weekend away with the Queen's Outdoor Club and riding lessons with the Queen's Equestrian Club*



*Travels: Lighthouses in Maine, Lake Louise in Banff, and the red rocks in Arizona!*