



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

Host University	University of Alberta
Semester & Year of Exchange	S2 2019
Otago degree(s)	BASc
Major(s)	Chemistry, Religious Studies

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Environmental Chemistry	English	CHEM304	18pts
Special Topic - Monsters and Evil	English	RELS300	18pts
Design Fundamentals	English	ARTS100	18pts
Astronomy: Black Holes	English	SCI100	18pts
History of Astronomy and Cosmology - Not for Credit (Audit)	English	ARTS100	N/A

Any comments about these papers?

Chem was hard. This was likely because my background doesn't match the other students, but it was also way more dry than it could have been. Huge class and no labs, felt super impersonal and without the fun energy that chem has at Otago.

RelS was super interesting, as one would expect from monsters and evil, reasonably full on (but rewarding) assignments and great prof. Definitely worth participating in class.

Design was a serious time commitment; think 15 hours per week to meet a pass grade. Reasonably tedious as well, a lot of time spent on finicky details but such is first year courses.

Astro was honestly kind of a joke, I probably spent 40 minutes per week on this course (including the lecture) and went into the final without considering study. Content was interesting but also the kind of thing you can learn on YouTube in a couple of hours. Prof is super passionate about the subject.

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

So chill. Like went to uni two days a week and it was enough with a bit of cramming around the sides for design, though my chem grades have definitely taken a hit! Midterms are a bigger deal, and finals aren't as big of a deal. Good grades in the humanities (and apparently in the business school) are very easy to achieve. Bigger classes in general and so you don't necessarily get to know your prof unless you put a bit of work into that relationship, and it can be tricky to make friends especially in upper level classes where people are already a bit cliquey. Definitely worth mustering up some extroversion at the start of the semester to meet people that you can study with.

## Accommodation

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

I stayed in Pinecrest House and it was great.

Pros:

- everyone is international, so it's easy to find people to skip school with to go to the mountains!
- Literally on campus
- Double bed, big room, loads of storage, good social spaces
- Not catered which gives freedom and saves money. Catering available if you wanted it.

Cons:

- super expensive
- Can be tricky to meet locals

All of the other residences were similar in terms of pros/cons except HUB, which was much much less social, and very pest infested, but it is substantially cheaper.

## Money matters

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

All in NZD:

Accommodation: \$4,330 plus \$500 deposit

Visa: I think \$8?

Food: expect the same prices as you'd pay in New Zealand x110% and then in CAD (quite expensive)

Flights: \$1,700

Insurance: \$850 comprehensive including ski package (I used 1cover because they've looked after me in the past and they have again since I've been here)

Uni Costs e.g. compulsory insurance and transit: \$450

Winter Boots and Jacket: \$400

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

I had my ASB visa debit which worked pretty well (i pay offshore margins of 1.1% but no transaction fee) until it got stolen in which case it was lucky I also had a Canadian bank card, which I've also used for paying things like my phone bill and tuition fees because they're a pain about paying stuff online.

## Visas & Insurance

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

I just had an ETA, which was a 5 minute online form, but if you have a study visa you can work and it makes signing up for a bank account easier (most banks give you a free \$300 for signing up with them but you can only do it with a valid visa).

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yup

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

RA's were useless, organise in residence events yourself. Outdoors club is AMAZING, they run trips most weekends in the year for super cheap with piles of lovely people. Get some good waterproof boots and snow pants if you want to hike from late September onwards though. The climbing gym on campus is free and really great. I did a climbing class which was a great way to meet locals, get qualified and stay motivated. I also did a dance class which was fun; check the free stuff at clubs day for discounts on classes. Whatever you do, don't leave without seeing the mountains.

What was the university/ city like?

Edmonton is fine; I think it's not a city i'd be a tourist in but there are some great arts communities to be found and wherever you are you'll always find your people! It's proximity to the mountains is by far the most attractive thing about it. Politically interesting the university was the only suburb in the whole province that voted left in the recent election.

The University is really nice, exceptional sports facilities (free indoor ice skating all year too!), but it's big. Worth finding the indoor passageways while it's warm enough outside to get lost if necessary.

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

The mountains

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The Buckingham does live music on Monday and free pumpkin carving in October

The lakes all freeze enough to go skating; get cheap skates at Totem Outdoor Outfitters (or on Kijiji, the trademe equivalent). Value village is great for thrift shopping.

Beyond Edmonton/ the mountains I visited: Vancouver, Squamish, Whistler, Vancouver Island, Yellowknife and Quebec City. Definitely recommend Whistler if you want to spend a lot of money, and Yellowknife for the quintessential Canadian experience.

Any tips for future students?

Go early, the summer doesn't last long. Get into the mountains as soon as you can- I spent all of August in hostels in the rockies, which was a great way to meet people and to get good recommendations. Buy the rockies trail guide, it's great. If you want to see Lake Louise in the summer, do it in the evening.

It's going to be a lot more expensive than you expect.

## Overall Experience

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

Theres a magic in the rocky mountains unlike anything else.

I've hiked over 500 kilometres and done almost a cumulative month of rock climbing climbing. I've connected with people from all over the world and been shown some of the most spectacular spots by locals that I'm thrilled to call my friends. We've been dog sledding, camped in the snow, seen the northern lights, snowboarded through some of the most powdery snow we've seen in our lives, had hot cider at a Christmas market and cheap wine in Whistler, we've cross country skied and ice skated across lakes, watched the seasons change, seen sunsets, sunrises, bears and moose. We've carved pumpkins, been to drag shows and been thrift shopping, marched for climate and seen Greta Thunberg speak. Sometimes we even considered studying.

I arrived with no expectations and am leaving with a wealth of knowledge, friends for life and stories to tell my grandkids. I do really love New Zealand but Canada I'll be back.

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