



OTAGO GLOBAL

Student Exchange Programme

@otagoexchange



Otago Global Student Exchange

otago.ac.nz/study/studentexchange



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Host University | McGill University |
| Semester & Year of Exchange | Winter Semester 2019 |
| Otago degree(s) | Bachelor of Arts & Science |
| Major(s) | Psychology and Anthropology |

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

| Course title | Language of instruction | Otago equivalent | Otago credit value |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| ANTH 319 | English | 200 level ANTH | |
| ANTH 361 | English | 200 level ANTH | |
| ANTH 458 | English | 300 level ANTH | |
| PSYC 412 | English | PSYC 318 | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Any comments about these papers?

I would recommend getting as many courses approved on the pink sheet as possible, as I really struggled to get enrolment to all my courses and ended up changing some last minute. As long as your head of department approves it, you can change your courses as late as January so don't stress too much about getting into classes. I ended up finding one of my favourite courses last minute on the day of course enrolment! I would also definitely recommend doing 4 courses rather than 5, as its still full time, and far less work! My flatmate did 5 and it seemed super stressful! I found ANTH 319 was organised super well, and by far one of my favourite classes, so if you are doing ANTH/ARCH would definitely recommend any classes with Nicole Couture, she's amazing! Also, PSYC412 counts for a 300 level psych paper, but was relatively easy, and the prof is really engaging and funny!

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

I found, at least for arts, the expectation for doing all assigned readings was a lot higher, especially in anthropology. I also had a lot of weekly assessment. Generally, lectures are a lot more interactive than at Otago, its almost like lectures and tutorials are merged into one, with people asking lots of questions throughout class (sometimes for very irrelevant questions). I found that the academic mentality was

very different at McGill, with students putting a ridiculous amount pressure on themselves and doing so much more work than required. My 300 level anth classes were assessed quite generously, with it being broken down into smaller midterms or finals, quizzes and papers. It was cool, in ANTH319 we did a journal project to integrate the readings and class content in groups, and some of the art we turned out was awesome! Also, for one of my finals I was allowed a cheat sheet, and for two of my final papers I had to submit essay proposals with a lot of sources and got feedback, so the amount of academic hand holding is a lot higher than at Otago. For PSYC 412 there were two midterms and a final, with it all being MCQ which was not bad at all! I would say McGill is perhaps more theoretical in their teaching than Otago, with no labs and the heavy reading component. One tip I wish I had known was to avoid seminar classes! I loved my ANTH458 class, however it was SO much work, with weekly 1000 word essays, around 150 pages of reading a week, a large final paper and a presentation, not to mention the 3 hour classes purely to discuss readings, which I think is fairly standard in anthropology!

Accommodation

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

I flatted at the top of Clark St, just off Sherbrooke, with two other girls who were finishing up second year. One girl was American, the other French which was a really nice balance. I found the flat through a Facebook group “International Roommates in Montreal”, pretty late in December, and subletted from a girl who was away for a field semester, so the lease was only 4 months, which worked perfectly for me. The location was really good for me, as it was a 15/20 minute walk to all my classes, but also just at the bottom of the plateau where loads of the best cafés, clubs, vintage shops and restaurants are. Maybe the best thing about my location was that I was a block away from Eva B – a vintage store and café, I pretty much lived there, soy lattes were \$2! If I were to find an apartment again, I would even move further up the plateau or to Mile End as my friend lived there and I loved visiting her, the vibe is amazing. Even though it’s a bit of a hike, you can get metro passes for \$50 a month, which would definitely be worth it if you were further out. I know a lot of people who lived in the Ghetto (the main student area), in student housing and loved it, however, they are 14 person flats which I would have really struggled with. I found it great living out of the McGill bubble a bit and got to make friends with locals and find out all the best tips/places to visit!

Money matters

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

My rent was \$650 CAD a month, which is quite high for Montreal and I know now I could have gotten a cheaper place, so keep an eye out for cheaper rooms. Wifi is pretty cheap in Canada, I paid around \$12 a month for unlimited, which would be even cheaper in a flat with more people. The real killer for the winter semester is hydro, which can get up to \$100 per person a month in Jan/Feb as its so cold out, so try and look for apartments where water is included in rent, or its in a bigger apartment building as power rates tend to be lower. Phone plans are quite expensive here, I got a good deal as I was there just after New Years, but expect to be paying around \$40/50 a month! My flights to Montreal were a bit expensive as I was coming from the UK, I think I paid around \$1000. However, I got a boxing day sale for my flight home, which was \$700 from Vancouver to Brisbane, as I planned to travel America/Canada in May, then go to Australia for a few weeks on the way home. The visa process for a one semester is super easy, its just an ETA, through the Canadian government that costs around \$7, and its approved almost instantly. Sometimes to enter the US/Canada they require you to have a flight out of the country booked, so just check what is required before you leave NZ! I found groceries quite cheap here, especially as I cooked mostly vegan with my flatmate. Fresh produce isn’t taxed and is super cheap, with avos being 69c the whole way through winter at my local supermarket! If you’re living near the plateau I would recommend making the hike to Segals, it’s a somewhat stressful experience, but the bargains are UNREAL. Metro is really expensive, and Provigo, whilst convenient

was also quite pricey, however they do a McGill discount Mon-Weds, which is nice! Shopping at Segals for me was so worth it. We would eat so many bagels and make huge meals with fresh veggies for around \$20-\$30 a week! I got comprehensive travel insurance for about \$550 for the UK, US, Canada and Australia for 6 months cover through Southern Cross.

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

I used a mixture. When travelling the US I used a Cash Passport, which I just picked up from ASB for a small fee, it was pretty reliable! In Canada I either used my contactless ASB card (which incurred a tiny fee) for day to day things, then used a Canadian bank account to pay rent and hydro, and for some places that didn't take credit. I opened a student account with Scotia Bank, I just had to bring in my passport, McGill acceptance letter and my ETA for ID and it was super easy!

Visas & Insurance

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

As aforementioned, you have to apply for an ETA which isn't a visa but allows you to remain in Canada for 6 months, just through the Canadian government site, its super easy!

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, McGill had mandatory international student health insurance, that was around \$365 for the semester, which was payable through Minerva (the McGill portal).

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There are so many clubs and societies available to McGill students, ranging from Outdoor clubs to acapella, make sure you go to the clubs and socs night to sign up to some! I signed up for the SocieTEA, which was very wholesome, the Anthropology society (good for meeting people on your course and had a wine and pizza night which was ideal) and MISN. The MISN ran some really cool trips throughout the semester! I ended up going to Quebec City for the winter carnival (make sure you explore the city rather than hanging around that area, it's a beautiful place!) and to a sugar shack in Spring (the maple taffy was amazing, as was maple syrup in your coffee!). The trips were really cheap and are a fun way to see the surrounding cities in the province. I'm not big into skiing/snowboarding, but if you are make sure you go on the Jay Peak trip, loads of my friends went and had the best time!

What was the university/ city like?

I fell for Montreal hard and fast (literally, the ice is deadly), and desperately want to permanently live there one day. McGill's campus is beautiful, with old buildings and snow covered fields in winter, the arts building is SO much nicer than Burns. But be careful its deadly in winter with ice around! Montreal is the sort of city where anything goes, and I love it for that. You could walk down the street in anything and no one will blink an eye, its so accepting and varied; a real melting pot of people. I loved the French aspect, and its really gave my rusty skills from school a run for their money! If you want better service places, for sure have some French going there, as French is the official language after all! Montreal isn't a huge city per say, but its very spread out, so there is so much to experience, make the most of the first week before classes start for sure!

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

Montreal is great for its culture, with so many galleries, museums, cafes, bars and restaurants! In winter, many museums such as the Museum of Fine Arts do free entry for the first Sunday of the month, which is a great winter activity. Also, the city is absolutely covered in murals, so it is almost like walking around a gallery outside! If you like vintage shopping, Montreal is the place for you! There

are so many stores around, with lots of pop-up ones throughout the year, my favourite were the Flohmark ones, I got a great heavy winter coat there my first week there! As for food and drink the list never ends. A quintessential Canadian food is poutine, and everyone will argue Quebec is the best for it! I would recommend La Banquise (they do dairy free cheese if need be) or Patati Patata, its such a good meal after a night out or on a really cold day! Montreal is also famous for its bagels, with a rivalry between Saint-Viateur (the best in my opinion) and Fairmont. They are cooked fresh and cost 90c each, but make sure you have cash! They are located in Mile End, one of my favourite areas for cafes, vintage shops and bars! Make sure you walk up all the streets in the Plateau, the bars and cafes are endless! Some of my favourites were Casa Del Popolo and Darling. I would also recommend venturing into little Italy in spring, there are so many nice cafes and stores! Also, Old Port is beautiful, especially on a sunny day in winter, as all the festive lights are still up! There are so many amazing cafes and museums there, I would recommend Tommy and Le Petit Dep, but get there early before all the tourists roll in! I would say to walk around as much as you can, even in the winter, there's so much to see and it's the best way to experience a city. When the snow melts a bit, walking up Mount Royal more was amazing, its such a chill walk but is so beautiful, especially at sunrise and sunset. Nights out in Montreal are fun, and whilst a lot of it is house parties and Bar Des Arts/Managament Bar (\$1 beer from 5:30 on Thursdays on campus!), a classic night out is Café campus. Its just the right mix of fun and trashy, with bangers all night long, if you have a good group it'll be fun! Just make sure you get there early to get entry for cheaper and take cash! Also on St Laurent is Two chow, which is perfect after a night out. It's a cash only Chow Mein place, only open on nights people go to town, for \$2! So good! One really cool thing Montreal has are 'anticafés', where you just pay for the time you spend there. They have loads of snacks, barista coffee, tea, you can even make toasties, rice and waffles. They are really nicely lit and great for smashing out an essay (if you hate the library like me). As a huge coffee/café addict, I found I would go to a different café most days. Honestly coffee is not the best in Canada, and with tax and tip you are going to pay a lot more than at home. To find really good cafes download the app Third wave, it's a collection of Montreal Cafes, that tells you the vibe and gives reviews of them. I can provide so many café recommendations, legitimately feel free to email me! Some of my favourites include Café Olympico, Arts Café and Café Dei Campi. Also check out the cat café here, it's a very good rainy/snowy day activity! An app I discovered in my last week weeks (on the Canadian app store) is Quench, where every day you can claim a free drink at certain bars across Montreal, and you only have to leave a tip! Such a good way to get into the nightlife! I had blue gin that turned pink at one bar it was amazing! Also, Megabus is a lifesaver in the East Coast, I managed to go to Toronto twice for \$20 return (would definitely recommend going in Spring when the weather is warmer). I went for 4 days between my finals and loved all the cafes and vintage stores!

Any tips for future students?

My biggest tip is to say YES to everything at the start of exchange, it gives you a great chance to meet a whole range of people, and means you will be invited to everything when semester slows down. My first week I went up Mount Royal in -20 with heaps of other students, and was out almost every night! It helped me make a great foundation of friends here, and it meant I always had something on which was great! I initially was really reluctant to spend money going out for drinks, meals and coffee, but its so worth it for the experiences, and remember it is what you have been saving for! Also, I decided to stay in Montreal over Spring Break which I really ended up appreciating as it gave me so much time to explore the city without the pressure of schoolwork! Don't feel pressured to go away, Montreal is great over the break! One thing I regret is leaving a lot of my work to the last minute, I would definitely try and chip away at it throughout the semester, as even if you are on pass/fail, you still have to pass your classes! On that note, make sure you talk to people in your classes, so you aren't just in the exchange bubble! Its also so handy to have friends to get notes off in case you miss a class or need people to study with! I ended up getting drinks with my classmates after finals which was lovely! One

major error I made was arriving on the evening on the 31st December. As Quebec is quite conservative everything was closed till the 3rd, meaning I could not sort out a sim, my bank or bedding for days and was quite stressful! Finally make the most of the great culture in Montreal, not only are there murals and street art everywhere, but so many amazing bands come through for usually \$18-35, I saw some of my favourite artists! Definitely download Songkick as it tracks when your Spotify artists are coming to cities! Also learn some French at least, it'll make a difference and the city will feel more accessible!

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!
I am so glad I went on exchange, especially to Montreal as it felt like the perfect city for me. Its just the perfect mix of European and Canadian, it really is a city where really anything goes. Don't be surprised if you come home with a nose ring and pretty much vegan though! I know I did. The winter is rough, so make sure you have lots of good thermals, socks and layers, and a decent coat or puffer. There is no point in investing in a Canada Goose or anything, I just layered smart and I was fine with a fairydown/big thrifted wool coat! The -35 windchill is Unreal, but just keep moving and you will be ok! I would definitely recommend investing in footwear though, I bought Timberlands and they would keep you warm down to -20 and had decent grip. A lot of people got Blundstones or Caribou also! I walked everywhere in winter, and as my phone was old it would die within 20 minutes of being outside (even if fully charged) so it really helped me get to know the city. Its so do-able if you just get out heaps and stay social! I wish I was staying longer through summer, as the city transforms with spring and nicer weather, its buzzing! I saved most of my travelling till May, though I took a few short trips to Toronto and Quebec City for long weekends which was lovely! Just make the most of everything, say yes to as much as you can, and explore as much as possible. Montreal is so easy to fall in love with, as are the friends you will make there! Such a happy four months for me! Trust me, you'll never want to leave!! Just remember, French is the official language here! Be ready!

