

HEC Montreal - Montreal - Canada

Did you come across any problems during your application at the university? Subjects or country specific?

No, I think everything went smooth. For me nothing went wrong, for Koen some of the subjects he had chosen were rejected by Tilburg University, so that is something that you have to take a look at. For me, it was easy to enrol into the subjects however the communication could have been a little bit better.

How did you arrange housing, any tips here?

From the university we got a few websites. One arranged housing especially for exchange students. So the online subscriptions open on a certain day and you need to make sure that you subscribe as fast as possible. There are furnished apartments especially for exchange students, which you can rent for six months. You will live with other exchange students, and that was ideal, but there were not that many apartments, you had to be really fast. So the guy I spoke to at the Exchange Dinner of Asset recommended it to me that was where I got it from. So I had an apartment before I went to Canada and I would definitely recommend you to have housing before you arrive because housing is pretty scarce, and expensive. So, if you can arrange something upfront, I would do it, because otherwise you would live in an Airbnb hostel and of course that you don't want that when you are on exchange. You have a shitload of luggage, and you want to do stuff so you want a home base. The apartment was cheaper built than in the Netherlands, so you could hear the neighbours quite well, even though that didn't really matter. It was small and expensive.

It was really nice to live with exchange students. In Montreal, for HEC, there is one exchange group of around 300 students each year. You can do the intro week with them, also the housing you have to select with the university you have, and then you live with students from the same university. So, I knew all of them from the welcome week, which was nice, we became friends. The week is not mandatory, but I would definitely recommend it. I liked it more than the TOP week.

What is the best time to arrive?

Most people arrived a week before the welcome week, we already joined a Facebook group, so through that group people already met up before the welcome week and got to know each other and the city a bit. I guess it is nice to settle before you really start. But I went to my family first for about a month. And then I arrived around 5 days before the welcome week. Then we went to a festival with a few guys. And two days after that we left to explore the Northern part of Canada for three days. You can definitely consider traveling during the summer. Most people already had their housing arranged and that was also the best option, try to do it beforehand if possible.

Are there any specific items to pack for your region?

You need a travel charger or something like that. When I was there the weather was really mild but it can be minus 20 in November, December, so I would suggest buying your winter coat there as it takes a lot of space in your luggage, they sell them there. I guess in the snow it is also nice to have some boots. In the summer for me, it was really nice, around 30 degrees. Normally it should start snowing around the end of October, beginning November. In my year it only started snowing in the second day of Christmas due to El Nino. But other than that, I guess some phones don't work in North America, some are not compatible. So make sure you have a phone that works there. Drop Stroopwafels or other Dutch candies if you think you are going to miss them.

How did you have to adjust to the cultural differences?

You have to give tips everywhere, also in the bars. I experienced sometimes, if you don't give a tip they just won't give you a drink, they just refuse to serve you, so you really have to. But even at the subway they have a box for tips, and if you don't give tips they give you a really nasty look. Also the way of teaching is very different, there were only small classes with around 40 people. I didn't even see a large lecture room, I am not even sure if they have them. So that was really nice, classes were 3

hours with only a 15 minutes break, that's quite different from here as well. The lectures were really interactive and useful. During the lectures you make a lot of assignments and you have discussions. The lectures were basically mandatory. It is in Quebec, so most of the university are in French. But if you follow your courses in English you are at a separate part so you see all your friends. They had a lot more group work and presentations.

Do you have any suggestions for associations to join or other ways to come in contact with local/exchange students?

There is an exchange committee at HEC, HEChange, they arrange the welcome week and trips and parties every week. If you go to the activities you will meet new people. They throw you in the Facebook group and there you can subscribe for the welcome week, I would definitely recommend joining this. After that you just go to their parties or to the university's parties. The locals aren't very open to exchange students, they mostly speak French and some are bad at English. The one's that do the exchange committee are locals and they are nice to talk to.

Are there any places that you have to take a visit to?

Yeah you have to travel! Cuba is a common vacation spot for Canadians because the Americans couldn't come there. New York is only a 6 hour bus drive, with Greyhound, a two way ticket costs you around 100 euros. So find a cheap Airbnb and you will see New York for a real good price. Niagara Falls of course! With HEChange you can go to Boston, Quebec City and Ottawa. Definitely join those trips. If you go north there is a place you can go whale watching, hiking. I was able to choose my own lecture schedule, when you subscribe for courses, exchange students have priority. You're quite free in what you choose. So I chose courses so that I had classes only on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. So I was able to travel in the weekends. Cuba was during the fall break and the rest during the weekends. In the summer you can travel as well so you'll find your time. You don't have anything to do in the weekends so you will have enough time to travel then. You also have to travel to Mont – Tremblant in the Indian summer.

Golden tip

Save enough money, because you don't want to miss any trips. When you are there, don't think too much about the money because it is a once in a lifetime experience. Canada is more expensive than the Netherlands so keep that in mind. Tip for saving money: on Tuesdays, go to Café Campus, there you can buy a pitcher of beer for 5 Canadian Dollars, that was the cheapest you could get.

There are three areas you can live in, you have the city centre, the university and le plateau, I lived at the last one. There is a mountain in the middle and then you have the three areas around. I would recommend living at le plateau, because a lot of students live there, and there is some sort of nice hippy atmosphere. You can go out there, but also downtown with all the clubs. Traveling to downtown took around 5 or 10 minutes with the underground. The university took around 20 minutes by bus. You get used to walking and the public transport is really cheap.

Last tip, use Uber. It is really cheap, if you share with 4 people, from my apartment to downtown, you pay around 15 Canadian Dollars, that is around 10 or 11 Euros, divided by four, it costs barely anything!