

During my semester exchange at the University of Toronto, I had a fulfilling and enriching experience. Upon my arrival, I had the opportunity to connect with another exchange student from my home university, the University of Freiburg. Together, we embarked on exploring the vibrant city of Toronto, taking in its unique sights and experiences.

Aside from our academic responsibilities, we eagerly engaged in various extracurricular activities offered by U of T. These included options like the chess club, book club, gym, and swimming pool, providing a wide array of choices to enhance our overall university experience. However, we soon realized that balancing these activities with our rigorous studies proved to be quite challenging due to the intensity and busyness of our coursework.

Within a week of our arrival, the Inbound team organized an informative orientation event. This gathering proved to be invaluable as it provided us with essential information about living in Canada, including details about health insurance, mental health support, and the various facilities available at U of T. The event served as a crucial resource for us throughout our semester.

I must commend the Inbound team for their continuous support throughout our time in Toronto. Whenever I encountered any challenges or needed assistance, I found great comfort in knowing that I could simply send them an email and receive a prompt response on the same day. Their unwavering help contributed significantly to making our semester abroad a smooth and enjoyable experience.

Prior to my arrival, securing a spot in the courses I desired proved to be quite challenging. I consistently encountered waitlists for the classes I wanted to enroll in. However, just before the academic semester commenced, I managed to secure a place in all of my preferred courses. Although all of my classes were conducted in person, the professors also offered hybrid options for consultation hours, allowing students to choose between attending in person or via Zoom. However, attending classes in person was crucial as it formed an integral part of the course experience, and thankfully, the pandemic regulations did not adversely affect my classes.

Similarly, the process of securing student residence was also arduous. I paid the application fee to be placed on the waitlist for student housing at U of T's Graduate House. Unfortunately, I was unable to secure a place there due to the extensive queue. However, they promptly refunded my application fee upon my cancellation. As a result, I had to explore alternative housing options in the private market. I utilized Facebook groups and the kijiji.ca website to search for suitable accommodations. It's

disheartening to note that housing in Toronto is overpriced and in high demand. Nevertheless, I was fortunate enough to find a room in a two-bedroom apartment in the private market, and I was quite satisfied with my choice.

One of the most challenging aspects of my semester exchange was finding a balance between my studies and personal life. The courses I took were characterized by their intense and demanding nature, designed to keep students occupied throughout the semester. Additionally, numerous deadlines were spread across these courses, further adding to the workload. However, I must admit that this particular aspect of my experience was also my favorite. Despite the challenges, I gained a wealth of knowledge and invaluable skills, particularly in time management. I learned how to efficiently juggle multiple projects simultaneously, allowing me to make the most of my time and resources.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Toronto and cherished the unique experiences it offered, particularly in terms of the organization of courses and the communication between professors and students. The educational system at the University of Toronto differed significantly from my home institution, the University of Freiburg, providing me with invaluable insights and perspectives.

In addition to my academic pursuits, I had the opportunity to explore various places in and around Toronto, albeit not venturing too far. I had the chance to visit captivating destinations such as Niagara Falls and other cities in Ontario. However, I must admit that I found the public transport system in these areas to be less than optimal. At times, as a pedestrian, I felt somewhat uncomfortable, as the infrastructure seemed more favorable for car drivers. Nonetheless, within the city of Toronto itself, the public transport system was reasonably satisfactory.

One aspect that left a lasting impression on me was the prevalence of homelessness in Toronto. The sheer number of individuals affected by homelessness was striking, and on occasion, I felt a sense of unease and insecurity.

For future students planning to go abroad, I have some practical tips based on my experience in Toronto. Firstly, it's crucial to be well-prepared financially since Toronto is known for its high cost of living. Additionally, considering Canada's stunning beauty beyond Toronto, you might want to allocate extra funds for exploring other parts of the country during your semester. Travel expenses can add up quickly, so budgeting accordingly is advisable.

Another tip is to aim for accommodation closer to the campus. The campus area offers a pleasant and secure environment, while relying on public transportation from other areas can be expensive, less secure, and often unreliable in terms of punctuality.

Furthermore, I highly recommend taking advantage of the various opportunities offered by the University of Toronto. They organize a wide range of events specifically for exchange and international students, as well as general events open to all students, often at no cost. The university also boasts remarkable initiatives such as theater groups, dancing clubs, and excellent sports facilities. Engaging in these activities will undoubtedly leave you with a positive impression of the university as a whole.