



### **Every beginning is hard ...**

Our journey began when we got the email at the end of January that we got accepted for a study abroad at the University of Calgary. However, in August there were some difficulties that led to our study abroad at the University of Saskatchewan. We were not sure if we got accepted to the university until September/October, but an email came with a notice that we got in it. So, we were finally able to plan our stay in Canada. Since we got accepted at the U of S as exchange students who have a "Direktaustauschplatz" we didn't have to worry about paying tuition, which was great because tuition in the States and Canada is crazy expensive! We only had to pay both the student fees at our home university and the U of S, which also covers the bus ticket and administration fees. With the bus ticket, we were allowed to ride the bus transit around Saskatoon for free. Be aware that if you get a "Bafögaustrauschplatz" that you might have to pay the tuition in advance; however, you'll get the money back.

### **Scholarships**

Moreover, the Carl-von-Ossietsky Universität Oldenburg offers a lot of scholarship such as the Mobilitätzuschuss, Fernwehzuschuss and PROMOS for exchange students. As we are not in Europe anymore the Erasmus scholarship does not apply. So, if you want to apply for a scholarship get informed beforehand! We applied for all the scholarship and in the end, it was worth it since we got the Fernwehzuschuss, which again helped a lot in managing the money for our study abroad.

### **Saskatoon**

The winter term starts on 2<sup>nd</sup>, January so we decided to leave a few days earlier to get accustomed to the cold winter of Canada. We arrived in Saskatoon, which is a small city with lots of bridges all over the place. If you decide to come here, you should be aware that it can get cold... really cold! We had temperatures which went down to -51° C. Normally, the weather is not too bad but with the windchill, it gets pretty chilly. However, Saskatoon has lots of sunny days and if you have time there is a nice walk around the

riverside. Additionally, the Canadian winter lasts a lot longer than ours, so it was not untypical to have  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  in April either.



## Housing

So, Josh and I stayed in Seager Wheeler, which is the cheapest residence of U of S. But if you decide for this residence be aware of the fact that it is not the nicest, prettiest or modern looking apartment you'll inhabit the next few months. My first impression of it was shocking and it lasted for a while. Why you may ask? Because you have to share the apartment with 5 more roommates, which you never met before and there is only one bathroom with two toilets, a bathtub and a shower. However, you have your own sink in the room which made it a little bit less dreadful. There is also a common shared living room and a kitchen. The residence will not provide any blankets or pillows; however, other international or exchange students might leave their blankets and pillows behind. Another thing is that you will encounter lots of electric static and electric shock everywhere in SW so be prepared for that. After a while, you just get used to it. Since SW is a pretty old building there might be bedbugs, rats or any other insects as additional roommates. I was fine for the first 3 months; however, during my last month there two of my roommates got bitten by some kind of insects, we assume that it was bedbugs, so the whole apartment got treated, which was a horror because for once it is not nice to have bedbugs and secondly it was during the finals where we had to move all of our stuff out of the room so that they would be able to treat it. The following weeks we would have to move the stuff out again for an after treatment, which again meant that I would have moved out all my stuff again. Nonetheless, do not be scared now! Josh's apartment was perfectly fine and he did not have any trouble with bedbugs – and I didn't have it either for the first few months. Overall, the stay at SW was pretty nice because the university was only 10-15 minutes away and there was a bus station just a short walk away. We are glad that we decided to stay at the residence because you'll get to meet a lot of other

international or exchange students and they are only a walk away from you if they live at College Quarter or Grad House. Another point we would like to shed light on is College Quarter, well we didn't live there; however, a lot of our friends stayed there, and it is more on the expensive side, but you'll have a much nicer flat than SW. Depending on oneself there are apartments with two or three roommates, two bathrooms and a commonly used living and kitchen area. Nonetheless, we would definitely recommend staying the residence because it is much easier to meet new people with it. And personally, I can also recommend SW, despite the hassle with the bedbugs, if you are staying for one term.

### **ISSAC**

During the whole term, the ISSAC does a lot of events such as going to the university theatre, hockey games, excursion to the Remai Modern Arts Centre or playing curling. At the beginning of the term, the ISSAC did a scavenger hunt in order to get to know other internationals/ exchange students and to get to know the tunnel system of the university. If you decide to live on campus in Voyageur Place (VP) it is most possible to reach nearly every building within the tunnel system. By going to the events we've met a lot of other international and exchange students, so we would highly recommend going to these events for once they are fun and you get to meet a lot of interesting people and friends.

### **University of Saskatchewan**

The U of S offers a lot of activities which we used. As the term started many sports activities started as well and you can sign in at a few. For example, we sign in for volleyball. You can play competitive or just for fun. We were the worst volleyball team, but we had definitely a lot of fun and we also learned a lot, since one of our teammates used to play for a university in Chile. At the end, we were also able to get close to win a match! Apart from that, the PAC (physical activity centre) has a big gym which is pretty much open all day. And I had a lot of fun using the climbing wall. You were able to find me there twice a week. Also, they changed some routes every second week. Hence, you won't get bored at all. To be honest I wasn't able to finish all of them, since some are really challenging. Furthermore, they have a swimming pool inside, squash and tennis fields and the bowl in the middle of the U of S was used as a skating rink for ice skating during the winter. To rent the shoes was completely free! Additionally, the U of S has a hockey-, volleyball-, basketball- etc. team which plays every week and to watch them is completely free as well. Besides, to the sports clubs you have the opportunity to join other clubs as well. For

instance, I joined the games club. They play Mario Smash Bros every Wednesday. First you have a warm-up and at 6 pm starts the tournament. Yes, Mario Smash Bros became so famous that they host a tournament every week. But also, another game club offers boardgame days. Another club is the debate club. A good friend of us loves to debate and took this opportunity. At the beginning of the semester I met a German girl. She told me about the charity campaign called 5D4H (5Days for the Homeless) and I joined it. I was a homeless participant for the campaign. My job was to sleep outside for 5 days to raise awareness for homeless youth in Saskatoon. The campaign raised over 15 thousand dollars. EGADZ is the organisation in town where the money went. They help homeless youth the whole year. Thanks to them! Also, on campus are some places to get help from. It could be either for math at the math help centre or with your essays at the writing centre. Each centre was very open, and they took the time to help you with your problems and were helpful. The Wellness Centre was another one, which provided help for students for instance they provided help in case of mental problems, helping one to cope with them.

A highlight of the week was definitely Toonie Tuesday. Toonie Tuesday is at the university pub called Louis. The entrance is usually two dollars (Toonie) and the beer from the tap is a toonie as well. A secret tip is to get the U of S calendar at the service desk because there are lots of coupons for Subway, Booster Juice and even Louis, where you get the entrance for free! We have been there pretty much every Tuesday with our friends. The best thing about Toonie Tuesday is anyways the karaoke. You can sign in and sing the songs you love in front of a bunch of people. Many people are lovely to listen to. Some of them are doing a good performance. At the end of the day, you will have a lot of fun there.

### **Studying**

Now let us talk about the most important things with studying abroad, studying! Hang and I took three classes. Two of mine were online and the third class was a lecture. Hang took two lectures and one online class. The classes in Canada are different from the classes in Germany. The lectures reminded us a lot of high school. You interact with the professor; the classes are really small and the classrooms looked like high school classrooms. Hang thought also that the workload of the assignments reminds her of homework from high school because she had to do weekly assignments. I think it is less work than back in Germany. I think it depends on what subject you are studying. Especially the online classes were completely new to us. We never experienced those classes in Germany. The topics

were really interesting, but to figure out this kind of classes was difficult since we had to learn how to learn online. It might sound weird, but it is totally different from lectures. Also, the workload is much higher than the workload for lectures. Anyway, for every class I had to read or listen to the class every week and every second week I had to submit an assignment. Each participation and assignment will be graded and counted into the final grade. So, you have to start working on your grades from the beginning. After two months we had to write a midterm exam. For some classes they expect you to write two midterm exams. I did not like to write any online exams. If you never had an online exam before you will be overwhelmed. First of all, it was difficult to learn for the exams because the lectures have a lot of information. Secondly, it is an open book exam. Yes, that's right, you were allowed to look into the lectures, any books or even google for every question. This makes the questions very difficult since they do not want you to google every answer. So, our tip is to be well prepared, look through every lecture and think what a question for the exams might be. The exams for the lectures were similar to the exams back in Germany.

### **Midterm Break**

But doing an exchange not always means you have to study the whole time sometimes it is also about gaining experience and exchanging culture. So, during your study abroad you'll have a midterm break where you basically have a reading week to prepare for the exams. But most of the time people use this break to explore Canada; so did we. We've spent the break with friends exploring the Northern Territories of Canada and lots of other students go back home for the break or travelling the Rockies. It is a great experience and you get to see other parts of Canada, so we would highly recommend going travelling since it is quite busy during the whole term.

### Every Journey ends ...

... and it teaches us a whole lot. Personally, for me being an exchange student at the University of Saskatchewan has taught me a whole lot and I highly recommend everyone who wants to do an exchange or full-time study abroad that they should definitely do it. When I got the notice of being admitted I was drawn between happiness but also fear of what is going to happen; however, everything eventually worked out. Doing a study abroad means that everything, in the beginning, will seem unfamiliar and just simply said different be it the academic system or the cultural difference. Nonetheless, by engaging with the different situation it helps oneself to grow not only career-wise but also on a personal level. We both greatly enjoyed our stay in Canada and especially in Saskatoon!

If there are still questions on your mind, we would love to answer them via email or personally.

