

I've had several reasons to want to go to Canada, especially the incredible North American nature that I wanted that I've wanted to experience my whole life, and which only left Canada since the United States weren't really an option in this political in this political climate. Academically, Canada was also really interesting to me, because there I could study environmental science in English in a scope that is just not possible in Freiburg due to the rather small amount of LAS students and the therefore limited course catalogue.

Since I live with type 1 diabetes, most of preparations for going abroad were focussed on medical questions, like making sure that I would be able to either bring all the supplies I needed with me or to somehow get them there. Unlike some other countries, where entering with medical supplies caused many issues and delays, for example New Zealand, the process of applying for a visa and travelling to Canada was absolutely smooth. The only annoying part was having to travel to Düsseldorf to give fingerprints, which literally takes half a minute and kinda made me feel like I just payed over a 100 euros for an unnecessary 10h on a train. Everything, else, however, from preparations at home over travel planning to getting from the airport to the university was very easy, probably also because both universities were really helpful. However, one thing that someone thinking about doing an exchange at Acadia should definitely do is ask someone who went there about the various dorms, because the information provided on the Acadia website is absolutely inaccurate. (I guess I can also include the information here for anyone who might be reading this: Party Dorms: Cutten (only first years/ 18 year olds), Dennis, Chip, Chase, Barracks; Chill ones: Sem, Tower, RoJo, Christofor, Tully).

Due to Covid, unfortunately, I was not able to experience as much of Canada as I was hoping to (I was planning to travel after the Winter term, however, due to covid the only part of Canada far away from Acadia that I actually got to explore was the Toronto airport where I got stuck twice, don't fly with Air Canada I suppose). From what I have gathered, however, I'd say that it's in general pretty similar to Germany, obviously with some differences of various sizes. To me, people seemed very outgoing and friendly, maybe even more so than in Freiburg. On the other hand, however, people seem to care very little about sustainable behaviour and leave on all the lights and take the car for trips that would only take like five minutes by foot. I obviously cannot say that the experiences I had at Acadia are representative for all of Canada, especially due to the setting of Acadia. The university is literally in a 4000 people village in the middle of nowhere, with some other, equally small villages scattered around, and Halifax, the next city, being about 1.5 hours away by car. While that location certainly has its positive sides, like the incredible Nova Scotia landscape



and the incredible vicinity to the ocean (I could see it from my room and it was only a 20 minute walk away, and an absolutely amazing farmers market. However, the rural surroundings can sometimes be felt in the local, non-university people in a negative way. There sometimes were some openly racist comments made during events which included the local population which no one seemed to really care about and I was harassed verbally and physically for not looking how people in town thought who was assigned masculine at birth is supposed to look. That being said, the other 99 percent of the people there were absolutely amazing. One of my favourite memories, together with many late-night walks at the coast, was just meeting a random middle-aged woman at a bar with some friends, being invited to a family party at her place the next day and ending up on a couch with her and a friend at 2am cutting her dogs hair, which was just surreal ride, and somehow also a microcosm of my entire time there.

I really enjoyed the courses and general learning atmosphere at Acadia. Something that was quite new to me were some of the huge lectures course I attended, like Environmental History, The Arctic Environment, and Psychology of Sex and Gender, which had more students in them than there are in my entire LAS cohort. The atmosphere of these huge classes, in which is not really possible to ask questions and stuff took some getting used to, however, all of the professors were really friendly, replied quickly to emails and had office hours to which you could go and ask as many questions as you wanted. My favourite courses, however, were the ones offered in the Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ESST), like Investigating Sustainability or Media and the

Environment, which happened in a small circle class room setting and were structured around a lot of student participation and discussion, which I think is great concept, and which was especially worthwhile in the ESST courses were the other students who all were really motivated, engaged, and incredibly nice. Finally, some of the more pop-culture oriented courses I got to take, *The Album as a Musical Masterpiece* and *Fantasy Literature*, also followed the same, discussion oriented outline and were also very interesting. The absolute highlights of my courses, however, were the excursions for my ESST classes, which usually involved some knowledgeable local guides, extraordinary views and a whole lot of fun in general. All in all, I was really happy with the courses I was able to attend, and I was only able to attend them thanks to the great staff at the Acadia Registrars office, who helped me completely changing my schedule and course selection after I found out about so many great options later on. The other staff that I was in personal contact with, like Res Life and the Counselling Centre, were also really helpful and really nice. The latter part is also certainly true about most of the students at Acadia, some of which have become great friends to me during my time there. While I found it pretty hard to connect with people during the welcome week at the beginning of the exchange, mainly because most other people there were fresh out of high school, the entire thing changed once I moved out of my dorm that was first years only and once classes started. Another great way of meeting people were some of the clubs I participated, like Pride or the Climate Action Club, and my work as a tutor for the German department (which is a great possibility for everyone going to Acadia, the work is super chill and pretty fun, and the people at the German department are really nice and even set me up with further jobs like translating documents for grad students, which was really interesting).

The difficulty level of the courses at Acadia was slightly less than I was used to from UCF courses, a circumstance that I really enjoyed because that allowed me to also focus on some things other than studying, which is a thing that I'm not really able to in Freiburg. However, I also know that some other exchange students who weren't used to studying in English struggled quite a bit. However, the courses were still challenging, and so I was able to take quite a lot from my time there. First of all, there obviously was all the things that I learned in the various courses, especially the focus on environmental linguistics in the course *Media and the Environment* was amazing. However, just being there also was enough to learn a lot of thing and make a great many new experiences. The structure of the semesters, for example, which sees you having either a midterm or an essay every single week, forced me to adopt a working structure that was entirely different from the one I employed in Freiburg, where all the graded stuff comes in a huge block at the end of the term, which is might be really useful, depending on what kind of schedule future study programs or employment opportunities might have. Getting to know new people from all over the world and catching a glimpse of their cultures is obviously also a great plus. Some of the differences between Canada and Freiburg, especially when it comes to sustainable behaviour, also reminded of the fact that Freiburg is still a bubble in a whole lot of ways, and leaving that bubble and interacting with people from outside of it is always causing an important shift in perspective. Furthermore, living in English-speaking country for many months was obviously great for my English, especially in non-academic,

conversational type of way. I also learned a lot of things from courses about topics that are simply less of focus in LAS specifically, especially the intersection between environmental science and social sciences, which is a topic that interests me greatly and a field that would love to work in later on, which makes these courses incredibly valuable to me. What might prove even more valuable, however, might be the experience of living in another country and making connections with young people from all over the world who are also interested and engaged in the topic of sustainability, and because that is such a global issue and therefore requires international communication and measures, these connections might be crucial in so many different ways.

While some of the aspects of my time at Acadia, especially the end of it, could have gone much better, I still loved it and thought it brought me so much experience, knowledge and joy. I cannot really talk about Canada a lot because I did not really get to live in it outside of university, but the parts that I experienced were great, and even any rough experiences I might have had were still something that was able to learn from. I learned a lot of different things academically, with the most important probably being the linguistic analysis of corporate ecological discourse, and the one being burned into my brain forever being that three midterms per course each term is an awful idea and probably only meant to make students suffer, but also is a great way to teach time management skills (I still hate them tho). On a personal level, I also received some valuable lessons. Firstly, most people everywhere are really nice and its totally worth it to go to another place to them. Secondly, there are always some people that most certainly are not nice, and that is just a thing you have to prepare for an deal with (and maybe also that is more present in rural areas, but that still shouldn't stop you from going there), and finally, there is no way to prepare to everything that might happen and you just have to roll with the punches and accept that things are the way they are sometimes. I also learned that worrying to much about what might happen during an exchange is pretty much useless. I worried about a lot of things before I left, like not finding new friends, having an administrative nightmare, not being able to keep up with the courses and more and more and more, however, the one thing that I wasn't worried about, a pandemic forcing me to go home early actually happened (I know that this not really going to help anyone else who is anxious about going on their exchange, but that's just how it was for me). What I can say, however, is that there is no reason to be anxious about going to Acadia. There are obviously some things that you should either already be or quickly get used to, like living in a rural area with some people who are not as progressive as most people in Freiburg might be (99.99999% of the people are still amazing there I swear), and having a bit of chaotic time before actually getting there, because the online communication can be quite rough. Once you get there ,however, the landscapes are amazing, there's the option of living in a literal tower (here's a picture of the view from my room),



everybody you'll met on campus, from students over administrative staff to professors will be incredibly nice, the courses (the ones I took at least) are very interesting, there are a lot of great clubs, and the staff at the international centre is incredibly helpful and forthcoming. What I do have to say, unfortunately, is that the university did not handle the whole covid-situation well, with a lot of students complaining about still being charged for rooms and meal hall plans even after being asked to leave residence and similar issues, and while none of that personally affected me, its still something that potential students probably should know about.

As a last bit of advice, and I cannot stress this enough, please inform yourself about dorm possibilities from someone who actually has lived there because I was only able to sleep like 2 hours a night in my first res, and changing rooms might take a bit of time!