



Canada, Montréal

McGill University - 08/18 - 05/19

Liberal Arts and Sciences: Life Science (Neuroscience) - Bachelor - CAN-2018-SO123-m

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### Arrival and the first week:

I arrived with my brother, who is staying here for one semester as well. The airport went pretty smooth, having both helpful staff and even a Welcome committee from McGill University. We arrived at his apartment via bus and metro, got welcomed by his roommates and went to bed as soon as possible. We arrived two weeks ahead of Semester-start, so we had two weeks to discover Montréal and travel around its outskirts. But before diving into the University and its welcome- events, I want you to appreciate how hard it might be to leave and, in my case, leave my girlfriend behind.

„My breakfast tasted salty. Must have been due to some tears flowing down my cheek as I ate. Slowly it dawns on me. I am here to stay. And it's awful. So far I didn't realise anything. And I don't think I do yet. It just feels terrifying and disgusting. My stomach turns and cringes. That I'd have the ability to care so much. Although not even 20 hours have passed since we arrived here. I just hope this is normal. I just hope it gets better."

(It does..)



Apart from the ‚Service Point‘, where any questions will be answered, the University has also many Introductory events you will be emailed about. One for first years, one for internationals, one for exchange students. I attended most, although I did not attend the regular ‚first year frosh‘, which is the ‚first year week‘ here with lots of parties, alcohol and time to meet new people. I, on the other hand, signed up for an alternative by McGill called ‚Outdoor frosh‘, where we would get together as a group and canoe some huge lakes in the close by Maurice National Park. Despite doubts, this was the best decision I could have made, as we had awesome three days camping in the woods, canoeing long trips and enjoying Canada's nature. While I got to know some people which I still

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consider my closest friends here. But this trip posed the end of the first week..

### **Formalities:**

#### *Course Selection:*

I registered for courses pre-arrival, where one has to be, however, on the exact moment and time ready to select all courses and register. Otherwise, they will be full already. Accordingly I wasn't able to get into some of my preferences. Yet, after emailing to the faculty coordination with reasons and potential pre-requisites, they were able to put me in a course I did not get into. That being said, I changed a lot about one to two weeks in, as there is an 'add-drop period', where many people will drop courses and register for different ones, hence, possibly making space for you. The exchange advisor at McGill was additionally quite helpful in verifying my courses and schedule.

#### *Accommodation:*

I had already found a flat with two flatmates before my arrival here through facebook and Skype. Thus, this wasn't a concern of mine. I moved in the 1. of September, living in the plateau, which is in backing distance to McGill and one of the most lively and cozy quarters. Yet, I moved to another, bigger, and a little cheaper flat by the change of the semester.

#### *Insurance & Healthcare:*

This is a feature which will be provided and required by McGill, what means, that you unfortunately have to pay for it. In my case, there were some complications as my paid money came back after a month. The McGill website offers two different options to pay for it, while the second one worked for me in the end.

### **Highlights in the first week:**

Although I also travelled to Ottawa and the Niagara Falls in the beginning, my Highlight was clearly the canoe trip. I first planned to sign up for a Climbing 'Outdoor frosh option', which was already full. Yet, The canoe trip was in the end the better option to get to know some awesome people. We were enough to fill a bus, which was then split into smaller groups. Thus, we had an individual campground by the lake for a small group of seven students. We cooked on fire, stole other camp's paddles at night and swam in dark black water at 2 am. One of my best trips into Canada's nature so far.



### **Unfamiliar, strange, different:**

The quebecois culture is quite similar to ours. Yet, there is also a great American influence, which means square- architecture, a lot of plastic and waste, barely recycling options but also my favourite one: Working/ Studying in cafés for hours while consuming just a

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minimum is appreciated and welcome.

Strange was, however, that in Quebec, the taxes are not included in (almost) any prices. These span usually around 10% to 20% on the original price. So when you pay, you will most definitely pay more than expected. I once bought I bike lock, which suddenly costed 20 \$ more than declared...

The last and minor unfamiliar thing, is that people here are prepared for freezing cold winters. Many buildings on campus are connected by tunnels. There is a while ,Underground City of Montreal‘ for shopping in winter. Almost any window is double glassed and Entrances usually span two doors to keep out the cold. I think this is just a cool fact.

### **A normal day:**

So far, a weekday started for me not too early. I'd wake up around 9, shower, have breakfast and head out. Usually first to a Café either alone or with one or two friends to study a couple hours. I'd usually have some Bagels for lunch and courses in the afternoon. Sitting together with a friend in a huge lecture hall together with 500 other students. Around six o'clock, I'd bike home for some dinner. Afterwards, I'd either meet some friends, watch some tv or relax. I definitely studied more than ever before in my life, as the courses and the level of detail we are expected to know is immense. I did, however, have five courses while four is the normal count and enough workload per student.



### **Life style, sports and living**

My Life style had to fit around University, but that worked out quite well. The city is full of interesting places free to discover. My main goal was to find the most interesting and cozy Cafés to study and relax in. But also the Mont Royal, which is the largest park in Montreal, gives, if hiked to the top, a spectacular view over the whole downtown. In many parks, one can also find free volleyball courts or rinks for ice skating during the winter. Additionally, I signed up for an Indoor Volleyball ,Intramural‘ Team, of which I've been the Captain. The social life, groups and clubs are in fact valued a lot at McGill, yet, I wasn't involved as much as I planned to be.

The food might be a little bit more expensive than in Germany, but not a lot. There are indeed smaller supermarkets which are always a bit cheaper. The food itself is quite European, only the cheese, salami or bread is of less or just different quality.

And finally parties. I've been only at a few, which were kinda cool. Yet, I am more inclined



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in Bars or meeting at friends places, which both works quite well, as there are copious bars and different kinds of beers here.

#### **... what I miss most.**

My girlfriend and my friends are what I miss most. Easy question.



#### **Any other aspects..**

My one other, but most important aspect, is that my courses at McGill are extraordinarily interesting and insightful. As an exchange student, one has usually the option to attend any course one prefers if it somehow fits your program. That means a variety of topics, but also that courses by themselves already interest you. Additionally, the professors are usually themselves motivated and competent. Hence, making your University experience rather enjoyable and also a really good reason to come to *Montréal.*