

Studienfach: Europäische Ethnologie, Geschichte
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How was the arrival and your first week in your host country? Were there any informational events and did you think them helpful?

Luckily, my flight went very well, and I arrived in Vancouver in the early evening. The airport is very small and therefore easy to navigate, and everyone is really nice. Additionally, they know that many international students arrive at that time of the year and have some infrastructure set up for this in order to make everything easier. Having already managed to find a flat, and using google maps, everything went quite easy after the immigration control. There are good Skytrain and bus connections in Vancouver. My future flatmate met me outside the house and after a brief talk we went out for some dinner.

Upon arrival, I had three days to settle in. I actually planned to arrive at least a month earlier, maybe even more. Sadly, I couldn't do that at the end due to some final papers – if you have the chance, arrive early and travel! It's perfect weather for that and just nice to have some actual holiday and time to get to know the country.

My first day of university was super exciting, interesting, and well organized. Well in advance, UBC sends out lots of e-mails with all necessary information – where to find help, maps, where to meet, time schedules, what to first do after the arrival, what to take care of, reminders of everything, etc. The homepage in general is very well organized, and full of easy accessible information.

On the first day of Uni, Imagine Day, we met in smaller groups, got a tour around campus and then met in a big hall where some teachers and employees of the go global office told us about the most important organizational events, how to add and drop classes, where to find help, where to do sport, where to volunteer, etc. But, to be fair, most of the information I already knew, as UBC sends out so many emails and has such a good website.

Were you able to settle all formalities, such as choice of courses, insurance, bank account, apartment, etc.?

The insurance is covered by the tuition fee you pay to UBC, just as the monthly transport. UBC has a very well-connected network and a good organizational structure, so that everything can be managed easily. Additionally, in the first two weeks you can find information fairs everywhere on campus, with students and representatives of different companies, societies, and clubs explaining everything to you and handing out information sheets. You can find banks, sport clubs, phone companies, and much more. Most of the important institutions you can find on campus – I got my bank and phone account there. The good thing is that most of them already offer packages that suit exchange students.

I did find my apartment already beforehand (I think around six weeks before I left for Vancouver). I did this by researching popular websites (craigslist, kijiji) and by adding Facebook-groups. There are many offers, but a lot is very last-minute.

I got lucky – I did have two skype interviews and two promises. Don't be shocked by the prices, housing in Vancouver is very expensive, especially in good places. Additionally, you can apply for student housing. That's what I did for my second term. Now, I live in Fairview, which I absolutely love. Housing on campus, in Fairview Crescent and Walter Gage, is worth it in terms of money, as the monthly rent is roughly around 900 dollars. Also, most of the exchange students live there, so it is the easier option to get to know people.

Most of my courses I already chose before my flight, as UBC gives clear instructions via email. However, the first two weeks on campus are orientation weeks, which means that you can still add or drop courses. I'd recommend testing out the interesting ones, as some professors can be really amazing, but others might not be suitable for you. There is also a homepage „rate-my-prof“ which gives you the opportunity to see what other peers think of your potential future prof.

Regarding the first weeks, what was your highlight?

I can't really remember one proper highlight anymore. The first two, three weeks were just amazing and full of so many different, amazing impressions. I remember some good events on campus (UBC really offers so many events for exchange students, it's easy to lose track or feel overwhelmed). One amazing event was a barbeque on Wreck Beach, with beautiful weather, and warm water. Another one was the „Day of the Long-Boat“, which is a traditional competition and a lot of fun. As I said, it's hard to keep on track with UBC events, there is so much going on.

Upon your arrival up to now, what did and do you perceive as different?

Personally, for me there weren't too many differences, but I've already lived in New Zealand after high school. What is really different though is just the ongoing small talk, the overly nice people. That's what actually took me the longest to get used to (which, after all, happened quiet quickly too), as for me it sounded very superficial and fake and over the top. But very quickly you get used to all of that and catch yourself chatting in the same easy going manner.

Describe a sequence of a typical week day.

Usually, I get up early, as I like being and studying on Campus – it's beautiful and easier to meet friends. I try to get up at 8am, go to school, study with friends before and/ or after seminars. Then I try to participate in some of the sport programs or do some sightseeing, hang out with friends. During exam period, everyone is just studying everywhere.

Term 1:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
12pm-1pm	Sociology of Criminology		Sociology of Criminology		Sociology of Criminology
2pm-4pm		Principles of Fieldwork		Principles of Fieldwork	
4pm-5:30pm	Citizenship and Identity		Citizenship and Identity		

Term 2:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am-12pm	Urban Sociology				
12:30pm-2pm		Social Inequality		Social Inequality	
1pm-4pm			Museum Studies		

Compared to Germany, the courses are way more intense and require more work. They are usually twice a week for 1,5h/ 3 times for 1h/ 1 time for 3h – I had all combinations so far, and they can all be good, it depends on the course. You need to do at least three courses as a full-time student and a maximum of five courses is recommended. As an exchange student who likes to do many other things and engage in extracurricular work, I would recommend you taking three to four courses. In my second term, I actually started off with four courses, but dropped one as I needed some more time for my bachelor's thesis, which was roughly the workload of one course. Otherwise, four courses are manageable, and you still have enough time to engage into travel events, volunteering, political talks, sports, or work without feeling overwhelmed by the different workload and new impressions. Especially in term one, I think it is important to allow yourself time to process all the new information. UBC has great contact person for all concerns of mental health, it's amazing.

UBC offers amazing courses and that's why I'd recommend using this chance. For my studies, the intense workload is way better, as it keeps you engaged and teaches you way more. Also, there are so many great speakers invited to UBC talks and events, so take the chance (check out the UBC calendar for this).

Fill in:

You absolutely need to try...

All the food in Vancouver! Literally! Both my parents are usually into saving money buy cooking, but both of them gave up on that when being confronted with all the amazing food choices Vancouver offers. Even though food in supermarkets is way more expensive, restaurants offer really good food for fair prices!

Another great experience are of course all the beaches around Vancouver and UBC campus, but also Fly over Canada is a great experience. It's a film animation which makes you feel like flying over all provinces of Canada, and it's really impressive and a nice sightseeing event for the first weeks.

As a newbie, don't ever...

Seat yourself in restaurants, always wait to be seated and tip. If you can seat yourself, it is mentioned somewhere.

The most important word...

Is thank you! All the time, especially when you get off the bus, thank the bus driver! Everyone does that! And for everything else- being polite is very important here and the key to Canadian friends.

I miss... the most

Good pizza and good water!