

Report about my time in Canada

On the day when I got the letter that I was accepted, I was overwhelmed by so many different feelings. On the one hand, I was happy to be part of the program on the other hand I was a little bit scared because I did not know what to expect. Furthermore everything seemed to be very unrealistic. Since then I have got more excited from day to day and have started writing messages and skyping with my exchange partner. We built a good relationship even before I have seen him for the first time. After the summer break there had been two weeks left before I flew to Canada so I was able to get used to the new system in grade 10 and had the chance to get to know the teachers and students, I have classes with. The day of the departure came closer and closer but there was no time to think and worry about the upcoming stay in a foreign country and family because the every day life had already started in Germany.

The day of leaving home came so quickly and I had never been so far away from home for such a long time. Of course I was nervous, but there was no point to be scared. At the airport my family, some friends and I met the other German students who went to Canada as well. I already knew them from two information and culture training meetings that we had. We instantly got along with everyone and soon we were friends. Saying goodbye at the airport to my friends and family was not that hard as I had expected. On the airplane I could not sleep since I was so excited. I watched movies, read a book, listened to music, talked with my new friends and had a beautiful view while we were flying over Greenland. Arriving at Calgary Airport was weird. It was hard to realize that the time I had been waiting for so long just started. It was an unknown but a really good feeling. From then on only a one hour flight separated me and my host family. Two students left us in Calgary and the rest of us flew to Edmonton. Then I saw my host family for the first time. It was a little bit strange and I did not really know how to react and feel which was probably caused by the tiredness and all the new impressions.



My family let me feel at home since we left the airport and drove home. After we arrived at their house, my exchange partner showed me my room and all the important things which I had to know. We did not do anything else on that day because I was too tired. My family's goal was to make my stay as comfortable as possible for me. They integrated and treated me like another son and showed me a lot about my "new home country". I really appreciated this. Soon I got to know the older brother and his girlfriend. They also wanted me to have a great stay so we did some activities together. Overall I think that the matching was perfect.

The first week in Canada was very relaxed. The Canadian students still had one week left of their summer break. That is why my exchange partner used this time to show me the neighborhood, to visit Edmonton Downtown and to introduce me to some of his friends who soon were mine, too. My exchange partner's friend who lived only ten minutes away was also part of the same exchange program. Because of that, we did lots of different things together. Furthermore I always felt welcome at my exchange partner's friend's house. To have something like a second home, helped me to integrate myself in the new environment very quickly. On Wednesday we had a meeting at the High School to select our courses and talk to the German teacher if everything went well so far. Moreover the Canadians showed us all the different places in their high school but it was hard to remember everything because my High School was the biggest school in Western Canada and all the hallways looked very similar. On Friday I had to go back to school in order to write an English test to evaluate which English class would be suitable for me.

The trip to Banff National Park on the last weekend of the summer break had been awesome. It was always one of my dreams to drive to the National Parks in the Rockies and this dream came true just after one week. My family and I visited beautiful places like Lake Louise, did some hikes, went shopping in Banff Town, watched the famous RCMP musical ride and rent a canoe to experience the beautiful lakes with clear blue water in an unforgettable way. This trip was breathtaking and I am so thankful that I got the chance to do this.



Going to High School in North America was a wonderful experience and expanded my horizon. During this time I was able to take the courses I was interested in. That is why I took Physical Education, Mechanics, Marketing & Management, Spanish and English. Especially Mechanics and Marketing & Management are classes which we do not have in Germany and I gained a lot of life experiences there for the future. Other than that all students are very friendly and interested in foreign students and it was easy to find some friends at school. In my opinion it is important to have own friends, too. Furthermore I experienced different High School events like a volleyball tournament, Halloween, etc. In addition to that I joined the Cross Country team and felt the huge High School spirit. Now I really miss going to school in Canada and especially all my friends there. It was a wonderful time!

At the Adventure Camp I met the other German students again even those from Calgary area. It was great because everyone had to tell so much about his experiences at home, at school, etc. That is why the almost five hour drive in a yellow school bus to the camp never got boring. After we arrived it rained a little bit and in the night the rain turned to snow - the first snow of the year. The next days the weather was awesome and we did team building games, hiked around the lake right next to the camp, drove to a beautiful waterfall (the setting of "The Revenant"), sat on the edge and took some nice photos, did an archery competition, climbed on a wall, hiked to a different waterfall with a beautiful canyon, cooked our own dinner at a lake, told us stories while we were sitting around a campfire, ... Overall it was a wonderful weekend with so many impressions, very friendly guides and a great group. I highly recommend this Camp to everyone and would join it ever again.



Another trip my family and I went on, was Calgary. There we spend the entire weekend and did activities like visiting the zoo, going to the military museum, walking along the river, etc. I was happy that my family showed me another City than Edmonton to see more of the province Alberta.

A very spontaneous day trip to Jasper was another highlight. The host mother of another German exchange student invited me to join them on their trip to Jasper for exploring the great nature. Near Jasper we hiked on a mountain through 50 cm of snow in the middle of October. That was crazy. Besides we saw some beautiful lakes and waterfalls.

On the weekends my host family tried to show me as much as possible but still gave me time on my own for relaxing, doing something with friends or for finishing some homework. It was the perfect balance and I am very happy how everything was managed. Some things I did on the weekends were: going to a movie theatre, sleeping in my family's trailer on a campground, doing an escape room, watching a football and hockey game, visiting elk island to see some wild bisons, going to the biggest mall in North America with some friends and many more activities.

Skiing in Jasper National Park was awesome. On my last weekend in Canada my host dad, my exchange partner and I drove to Jasper. Already the 4 hour drive was a highlight because we saw right next to the road a lot of wildlife like elk, sheep and deer. The next day we rented our equipment and were skiing the whole day. We had so much fun! On our last day in Jasper we drove to Columbia Icefield - a huge glacier. After that we stopped at a waterfall that we had seen from the road, to take really great photos of the frozen canyon and falls. In the evening we bought some souvenirs in town and drove to the border of Alberta and British Columbia. Then the trip was already over and the farewell came closer and closer.

The farewell was hard because I knew that I would probably see most of my new friends never again. My exchange partner organized a party with all the friends on the evening before I left. It was nice to have them all together for the last time but also I was sad leaving them. Despite the sorrow of leave-taking, I was looking forward to see my friends and family in Germany again. I think this made saying goodbye a little bit easier, but only a little bit. When I was at the airport with my host family, the stay did not feel as long as it was - not even close. The time passed by so fast and it was a strange feeling to leave everything behind, but I think that this is the signal for a successful exchange.

Back in Germany I felt that I had never left Germany. Surrounded by all my friends and family I instantly felt home again. Sometimes I think about the time in Canada and all my new friendships, but school and the every day life in Germany kept me away from missing anyone. To catch up with everything at school was easier as I had expected. I think grade 10 is probably the best time for doing an exchange without missing too much. Moreover, I was lucky that my school in Germany made the beginning very comfortable for me after I had returned from Canada. I did not have to write any exams and I did not get a report as well. This really helped me to integrated myself very quickly and easily again.

When my exchange partner came to Germany, already three months have passed since my arrival. I was looking forward to see him again and to have the chance to show him the place where I live. Even if his German was still in the working process, my family and I spoke all the time in German. During his three months he went through a huge improvement of his language skills and he got better from day to day. At school he had his one schedule which was adapted to his interests and language level. Apart from school my exchange partner and I did most of the activities together but I had still enough time for myself and friends. On the weekends and during spring break we travelled to other places in Germany like Hamburg and München. Now I am really sad that he has to leave because we know each other so well and I do not know when we will see us again. Hopefully very soon...



My overall impression about the exchange can be seen in this paragraph. First of all I cannot really express all my experiences, recommendations and conclusions in words, but I will try my best. Those three months in Canada was probably the most exciting time in my life. I learned, saw, experienced so much during the stay in a foreign country and culture in so many different ways. It is a great chance to discover another culture at first hand, to improve the English language, to build some new friendships and to appreciate some things at home I had never thought about. In my opinion it is an advantage that the German students usually go to Canada first. The time of the stay is perfect. I experienced the Canadian summer, fall and even winter and I could get to know my partner better before he came to my house in Germany. What I really like about this program is that the exchange is not one-sided. It was great to live first in my exchange partners family and then to have him here and to be able to show him my way of life in Germany. Now my advice: Even if you are struggling with the decision if you want to apply for the program or not, I give you the advice to do it. I highly recommend it and it is maybe the unique chance to do something like this. At first you might be scared but from my point of view it is normal and okay because you do not know what is going to happen. As a conclusion, I can say that the decision to take part in the exchange has been the biggest and toughest one for me, but also the best one so far and I am still happy that I have done it!