Exchange report

Partner University: HEC Montreal
Country: Canada
Major: Business
Term of exchange: Spring 2019

Preparation for exchange

In preparing for exchange, it requires a lot of research. Some topics I researched was academics, finance, packing, transportation and accommodations etc.

For school, it is important to look for courses that are transferrable to SFU credits to make the most of the exchange. Most of the academic information regarding courses can be found on the partner institution’s websites. Some important things to note down is the important dates like course enrollment and mid term and finals week. You can find the credit exchange information on the SFU website. Also if you can not find information, there are exchange advisors from the partner university and SFU that are able to help you.

For finances, its important to estimate all the costs of the exchange trip so you can finance it. You have to consider accommodations, travel (flights, local transportation), grocery and daily living expenses, entertainment and vacation expenses. Also the norm tipping culture in Montreal was minimum 15% which you would need to account for as well. The cost of living in Montreal is similar to Vancouver, but rent is definitely cheaper.

For packing, search what the climate and approximate weather and degrees it will be in your host country then pack accordingly. There are a lot of online resources like checklists or like forums that can be helpful. After you establish what you need to pack depending on the climate and activities you will be doing, you might have to buy jackets or boots. Keep in mind to buy something that you will use back in Vancouver too and not just for the duration of the exchange.

For traveling I just used google flights and keep checking the pricing until it was cheap. For transportation in Montreal, they used OPUS card which is similar to U-pass, where you can just load monthly bus pass on the card. They also have Uber which can be an alternative way of getting around.

For accommodations you can either secure it before departure or after departure. I chose to secure it before departure since I felt that it was too risky. There is no residence on campus, but the school website provides websites where you can find listings. Besides the websites listed, you can join Facebook groups for exchange students which posts listings. Also you have to decide if you want to live alone or have flatmates in which there are pros and cons for each. It is easy to find a place in Montreal. If you decide to find a place after arriving there are usually some signs of places for rents around the campus, but you would have to live in Airbnb or like hotel the first few days to look for a place.

During Exchange

Arrival and orientation and accommodations

I recommend arriving one or two days before school or orientation starts so you can start to familiarize yourself with the city as well as buy the necessities for living if you didn’t bring them. HEC has a optional orientation welcome week package for purchase. It is a several day organized events with other exchange student and I highly recommend it because it’s the easiest way to make friends and meet
people since most of the activities are really fun or it a night out. Also there is a mandatory orientation before school starts to show you the school and what to expect during classes.

For accommodations and living like I mentioned before I secured a place before arriving. You have to consider the proximity of your place and the school. I lived near school (Cote de neige area) which was really convenient to get to and from school but the downside is that it is far from downtown.

**Academics**

The education system in HEC Montreal was really similar to SFU; each class was 3 hours and there were no tutorials for the courses that I took and each of the courses were three credits. The professors were all very knowledgable and passionate about what they were teaching which was great. Also the smaller class sizes (40-60 students) encouraged more class participation helped me learn better. They also grade on a curve like SFU.

**Montreal and places to visit**

Montreal is very interesting because it is one of the only provinces that is heavily French influenced. Also some of the building and architecture has a European style to it. I would say the language is primarily French and English is secondary. However if you are in downtown area French and English is more balanced. Also the metro system is very convenient since Montreal is not that big, you can get almost anywhere in Montreal within 30-40 minutes. They also have very interesting cuisines, although the food scene in Vancouver is better in my opinion. The city is not that big, but the people are very friendly it has a cozy vibe to it. With that being said here are a few things to do around the city:

![Mont Royal](image1.png) **Figure 1: Mont Royal gives a nice view of the city.**

![Old Port Ferris Wheel](image2.png) **Figure 2: By the old port there's a nice Ferris wheel**

![Graffiti](image3.png) **Figure 3: There are lots of cool graffiti around the city**

![Winter Sports](image4.png) **Figure 4: There are lots of places and easy to do winter sports.**
Reflection after exchange

I wish I coordinated my courses to either have no mid terms or course that ends early, so I have more time to travel. It depends on what courses what you have to take of course. I learned to live on my own with other people. When you live alone you have to take full responsibility in terms of food, living, staying active and balancing social life.

I would suggest speaking with students that have done exchange there. It will help you know what to expect and insider information that you won’t be able to get from the surface. Also ensure that you have extra funds in case unexpected things turn up.

Just have fun and don’t forget to take many pictures and videos, it will be one of the best experiences you won’t regret.