

Deutsch-Kanadischer Schüleraustausch Hessen - Alberta 2022/23

Winter Wonderland Canada

Woah...there's a lot to say about Canada. I was there for three months and I absolutely loved it. Even though not every second of my stay there was joyful, it was a hundred percent worth it. All of it. I didn't regret my decision to do this exchange for even one second.

It all started with me wanting to go to Canada. It was my dream for a very long time and then I decided why not? So I did it, I found this exchange program and submitted my application. To be frankly honest with you, I did not even believe I would get in, but then I did get in. I was so excited to go and I just knew that this was an opportunity you only get once in a lifetime. When it was time to leave Germany behind, I was scared. I was scared of Canada not living up to my expectations because we all know there is always something that could go wrong. On the flight to Canada, I was doubting whether I would end up happy during this time, what my host family would be like, whether I would make friends...and let me tell you this: These three months were a dream come true! I got off that plane, saw my host family, and then the first thing I did was hug my exchange partner. She hugged me so tightly, even though we'd never met, that I just knew I was going to feel safe and happy here in Canada. My host family was quite big. Four children and their parents. Three of them were younger than me and within the age range of nine to thirteen and Lara was my age. Something remarkable about this family is that they treated me like family from the very beginning. I feel like having those younger siblings makes it a lot easier. You have more people you can rely on, more people to talk to and there is always someone who's up to doing something. One thing that really surprised me was the temperature in September and some parts of October, it was so warm. You could wear a t-shirt outside and not be cold, you might even sweat. There was no rain and it was basically like late summer, by the way at the same time it was cold and rainy in Germany.

School started at 8:30 am with the first block. We had four blocks per day, so we only had four subjects throughout all three months. We always had two blocks then about half an hour of lunch break and then the remaining two blocks. After that, there was something called a seminar, which means that you stay in school for another 30 minutes and go to whichever classroom you want, to study there and have time to catch up on your projects. My school had a huge variety of subjects: design technology, communication technology, trades (construction technology, fabrication, mechanics), cosmetology, foods, sports medicine, Japanese, German, anthropology and world religions, psychology, French immersion, band, drama, sciences, and the basic subjects. I had anthropology, trades, English, and psychology, which was very interesting and a good choice for me, hence I actually enjoyed going to school. They have many school things online, for example, there is an app where you can see your marks, absence, and schedule. They also have a lot of quizzes, essays and exams that are usually multiple-choice. Do not worry about school, it is easier than in Germany. School ended at 3:07 pm and then I would either go home by bus or car. They have the bus system with the cool yellow buses there. Those buses pick you

up at home and bring you to school and after school it's the same, just the other way around. It was good to be picked up from home, but the downside was that it took ages to get to school and back. For example, one bus ride took one and a half hours, whereas with the car you would be there within 20 minutes. In general, the public transport was very bad and you needed a car for everything. Everyone drives, even fourteen-year-old teenagers can drive with a parent and when you're sixteen years old you can drive alone, which is a bit scary in my opinion.

I lived close to a little town, called Stony Plain, which is close to Edmonton. My home was basically a farm, we had horses, mini-horses, chickens, cats and a dog. We were surrounded by nature and even had quite a big sloo. A sloo something in between a pond and a lake. I loved living there because it was very quiet, the sunsets were gorgeous and I was able to go on long walks with the dog. I read a lot of books while being there. I just had more time because there was not that much school stress, so reading books and playing games with my siblings was always a great thing to do. We also went to the Rocky Mountains twice. We were in Banff and Jasper and let me tell you the rocky mountains are beautiful. There are so many lakes and those are not just normal lakes, no, they are huge lakes with light blue water because of all the minerals, absolutely astonishing. We also saw a moose and many other wild animals. Overall, I just love the Rockies.

On the first day of November, it snowed for the very first time. I was thrilled because I knew I would not get this much snow in Germany. The snow stayed because it was so cold. From October to November there was a major temperature drop and the whole of November was in the negative temperature range. It got so cold, you would not believe it. On my last day of school, we did not have school because it was a 'snow day' and the buses were not even coming. It was -35 C° that day. Yes, I know it is insane, but when it's that cold you just don't go outside and enjoy the coziness inside. During November me and my youngest sibling went sledding behind the house a lot. I loved spending time with him out there in the snow, we also had a snowball fight and built a snowman and it was simply the best. One day during the fall break (in November) we went skiing. There was a skiing resort nearby, which was open until like 10 pm meaning that you could go skiing in the dark. That was truly awesome because I love skiing and I got to spend even more quality time with my exchange partner. I also loved going on walks in the snow, even though it was very cold, I could always hear the crunch of the snow under my feet and breathe in the fresh winter air. There is no other way to describe it than as a true winter wonderland.

I am so incredibly thankful that I got to do this, I made so many friends, experiences, and memories lasting a lifetime. That is why it was very hard for me to leave. During those three months, my host family became my real (second) family and Canada my second home.

If you are interested in Canada, the people, the culture, the landscape and the English language: Please do this. I promise it will change your life for the better. I highly recommend this exchange to everyone out there. Don't worry you will have the best time of your life :)

