

Deutsch-Kanadischer Schüleraustausch: Hessen-Alberta 2024/2025

When I got the news that I could go to Canada I was very happy and very excited on the one hand but also a little sad on the other hand because it meant that I had to say goodbye to my friends and family here in Germany. I wasn't scared about losing my friends here but it was just a weird thing to know that you're not going to be home for three months. It was also weird to just "skip" the German school because I was so lucky that I didn't need to do anything from the German school while I was in Canada. That's why I was a bit scared that it might be hard to get back into the German school.

I was scared that my English might not be good enough, that the people need to repeat everything to me or need to speak slower. I was very excited to finally meet my exchange partner and my host family because it actually seemed like it was a good match. And I was very excited and confident to find new friends there on the other side of the world. Canada was always just a dream in my head the people and of course the incredible nature.

My host family was a blessing for me! They included me from the moment we met at the airport in Edmonton. They introduced me to everyone and I felt very accepted and loved by them. The family life was a completely new experience for me because in Germany I'm an only child but here in Canada I had three wonderful siblings. My exchange partner, her younger sister and their older brother directly felt like my own siblings. We spent lots of time with the grandparents too and they all were so kind and loving.

It was new for me that there were people home all day because at my home in Germany most of the time I'm home alone and that we ate breakfast and supper together every day which I liked very much. I would say that was our family "quality time" where we all talked about our day or discussed some interesting topics.

We also had a family dog who looked hilarious with her large and protruding ears. I took her on walks with my family and we had so much fun together! Of course I helped in the family life. I always helped setting and clearing the table, loading and unloading the dishwasher and as I said walking the dog.

I really liked that everybody was so open and accepted me in their family directly. It felt like I would have known them for years and I liked that we spent so much time together every day at home. Many people were interested in learning about the German culture and my life in German which was very nice of them and made me happy. When I had a hard day or something made me sad or angry I could always go and talk to

them all. Particularly my host parents were always there for me and I knew I could come with anything and they would listen and try to help me. I am very thankful for that because I know it's not a given. They accepted me and treated me like their own child and that made me feel very comfortable. There never was a situation where I felt comfortable because I was just included in the family and when there was a problem or a little fight it was just like a normal family life - my normal family life.



I couldn't say who I got along with the best because every relationship I had to each person was different in their one way and I love all of them so much! If I need to pick someone, I would say my exchange partner just because we spent so much time together. Our relationship was so special right from the beginning we felt like we knew each other for so long and she got one of my best friends and of course my sister.

As I said before we spent lots of time together as family. In my first week we went on an art walk downtown which was a good opportunity to get to know them all a little better. We went to the church together every Sunday morning and once a month to a service on Saturday nights. We went to the Edmonton Corn Maze, an Oilers game (ice hockey) and the rodeo at Rodger's place. We also went fishing and hunting, went on walks many together and we



went camping in Kananaskis which is near Banff. Of course, we spent one day in Banff but we also did a super hard but also great hike with a breathtaking view. The big high light we did together was our trip to Vancouver and Vancouver Island. It was such a fun time and so exciting to go on vacation together. We spent one day in the city and took the ferry to Nanaimo where we stayed at their aunt's house.

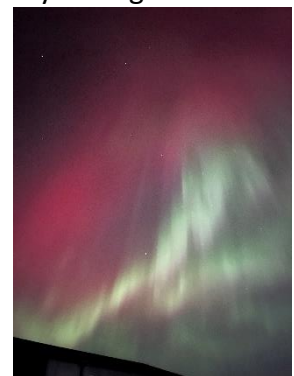
We also drove to Victoria and my exchange partner and I went whale watching and it was incredible to

see the humpback whales in their natural environment.



I really liked my free time! After school we came home and went on a walk with the dog many times, did some homework, played a game, watched Netflix or just talked about anything.

On Friday nights we went to the youth from our church where I was able to sing on stage during my exchange. After youth the whole friend group (20 people) of my siblings came to our house and stayed very long. The first night I was very overwhelmed because I didn't know any one of them and I was too scared to go downstairs to meet them all. So I just stayed in the main floor with my host mom and my little sister until some of them left. After that I went downstairs and they included me directly and made me feel very comfortable. After that night all of them were my friends and during my time in Canada we grew very close. We spent many long nights in our basement together, went on a youth retreat together (3-day trip), went on many late-night walks, celebrated birthdays, went sledding and ice skating and watched the northern lights together which were amazing! We also met up with only the girls and for example watched Moana 2 in the movie theater. I really miss them all because they really felt like family and although I'm going to be so far away from them they'll always stay in my heart!



School was the only place where I had contact with the other exchange students because two of them were in the same high school as I. But I've only seen them at lunch and we tried to talk in English and not in German. I liked to have my own classes without them because it made it easier to focus and really try to speak English.

Our school was one of the biggest in Edmonton but after a short time I could easily find the way around the school building. The teacher who was there for us was very nice and polite and he always helped us when we had a problem. My classes were Comm Tech (Photography and Photoshop), Business (Marketing and Management), English and Social studies. At first I wasn't in business class, I was in physical education but I got injured that's why I changed it again. I actually liked all of my classes and my teachers also were very nice and welcoming. Social studies was a bit hard for me because I didn't really understand the topic and the tasks because our teacher was sick. As soon as he was back he helped me and social was my favorite class in the end even though it were hard tasks. It took me some time to find friends in school because we're having different people in each class and there is not much time to connect with them. I would say I found the most friends after fire drills because it just gave me more opportunities to talk to new people and get to know them a bit. After I found new friend in school I really liked to go to my classes and to do my work with my friends.

My expectations were definitely more than fulfilled! Everything was so great so I loved my exchange to Canada! My worries that my English wouldn't be good enough were completely unnecessary and I was able to communicate really well and understand everything. I almost never felt homesick and because I found new friends here I didn't really miss my "old" friends from Germany. And because we did so much the three months flew by so fast. Through this exchange I found a second home and a second family on the other side of the world and I am very grateful for that! I would really recommend an exchange to anyone who has the dream of exploring the world! In my opinion you should not have such high expectations and be open to trying out lots of new things. This exchange was one of the best decisions of my life and I would do it again anytime!