

Hey there! If you're reading this, you're probably thinking about applying for the University of Alberta. Maybe you've already been offered to study at the U of A. Either way, you'll probably want to read about other people's experiences before you make up your mind. And I'll gladly tell you a few things about my time in Edmonton. Please keep in mind, though, that things might be slightly or significantly different for you than they were for me, so it's probably a good idea to take the information I'm providing with a grain of salt. Now, without further ado, let's get started.

First off, you might ask yourself, "Edmonton? Why would I go there?" I know I asked myself that. The U of A was actually my third choice...out of three. I had found great courses at all three universities, but I wanted to go to Montreal or Vancouver because they were famous, popular cities that I had actually heard of before. But Edmonton? I wasn't too eager to go there. When I got the offer to go to Edmonton, I was really on the fence about going at all. But I can't tell you how glad and grateful I am now that I had the chance to go.

I went to the University of Alberta for one academic term, for the fall term 2019. In total, I took three courses at the U of A, and I think that was the perfect amount for me. Of course, that could be completely different for you, depending on, among other things, what you're studying. Generally speaking, I felt that my courses there were more work-intensive than my courses at Freie Universität. There are midterms, finals, and other assignments that vary from course to course. Attendance and participation may be graded, too. Personally, since I mostly write papers for the courses of my actual program, I liked the University of Alberta approach for a change of pace.

During my time in Edmonton, I stayed in International House, which is located on campus. I could go on for hours about all the great things that happened to me and all the great people that I met because I lived in I-House. It was a truly amazing experience and a lot of fun. If you want to meet and hang out with people from all over the world, this is the place for you. Of course, you can also find peace and quiet there when you want to study, but if that is all you want, you should probably go somewhere else. It's not about sitting in your room all day long, it's about being part of an international community.

There are also other residences on campus, but I don't really know much about them. What I do know is that I found living on campus to be very convenient and relaxing. All of my courses were within walking distance, so I was able to take it easy in the morning and quickly go back to I-House during the breaks between my classes.

Whether you'll live on campus or not, once you're settled in, make sure you pick up your ONEcard. The card is used to access many of the university's facilities, including your residence's. It's also

your student ID and your ticket for public transportation, so it's really important. You can upload your photo in advance. If I remember correctly, I picked up my finished card at HUB Mall on campus.

At the beginning of the semester, there will be many student orientation programs, so try to visit at least some of them. There are general events for all students, some for exchange students, and, most likely, some events for students of your specific department. Additionally, there are lots of student-run clubs, like The Last Alliance: University of Alberta Tolkien Society or the University of Alberta Outdoors Club. There is probably going to be some sort of club fair with members presenting their respective clubs, so consider stopping by. All of these are great opportunities to make new friends!

The club I joined was the Outdoors Club, and it was a ton of fun. They organize affordable trips to the national parks Banff and Jasper, both of which are absolutely stunning. The parks are fantastic places to hike, ski, or simply enjoy nature. You should definitely check out at least either of them. The Outdoors Club even organized a bus trip to California at the end of the term! The trips are very popular, though, so the participants are decided by drawing lots.

But there are definitely many cool things to do in Edmonton itself, too. Whyte Avenue, which is fairly close to campus, is probably the best place to start. You'll find grocery stores, restaurants, bars, and a lot more around there. It is quite entertaining to explore the various stores on Whyte Avenue. If you want to try excellent local products, I can wholeheartedly recommend the Old Strathcona Farmer's Market, which takes place on Saturdays.

Edmonton is also home to the largest shopping mall in North America, West Edmonton Mall. The sheer number of things that WEM has to offer is quite staggering. Unlike Whyte Avenue, the mall is pretty far from campus, but you should definitely check it out at least once while you're in Edmonton. Of course, there's a lot more to do in Edmonton, but it's more fun to explore things yourself, so I'll leave it at that.

Getting around Edmonton is not too difficult; I got by despite not having a driver's license. Public transportation does exist in Edmonton, and even though it can't compare to Berlin, I wouldn't call it bad. It can probably take you to most places you want to go within the city, even though it might take a while to get there, especially in winter.

Speaking of which, I'm sure you know this already, but it can get really, really cold in Canada. While November and December were fairly mild when I was there, there were several days of

around -30°C in January before I left. And even though many of the university's buildings are connected to each other, you'll still have to go outside occasionally, especially if you don't live on campus. The best bit of advice to stay warm is to layer up. Wearing multiple layers of clothing is vital once it gets really cold. I recommend buying winter clothes there since these are really designed to withstand low temperatures. If you don't want to buy brand-new clothes, you can find great secondhand stuff at places like Value Village.

Even if you save some money through places like Value Village, the fact remains that Canada, or at least Edmonton, isn't exactly cheap. But there are ways to mitigate the financial strain. In addition to the generous tuition waiver that we receive by default through the direct exchange program, there are several scholarships that can help you. For instance, I fortunately received funding through PROMOS, which covered my travel expenses. It is absolutely worth applying for these scholarships; you have nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

That's about it from my side. Now, I can't guarantee that you will have as great a time there as I did, but I can assure you that it is very much possible to have a lot of fun in Edmonton while studying successfully at one of Canada's best universities. If you have the opportunity to study at the University of Alberta for one or two terms, go for it!