

My exchange year

Canada, August 2025-June 2026



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Introduction: why, where, when?



Why?

My main motivation for going to Canada was improving my English skills, as it is the universal language.

I also wanted to discover and experience a new culture.

I finally wanted to be independent, and force myself out of my comfort zone.

Where?

I lived in Komoka, ON, a small town near London, ON where I attended Medway High School.

London is a city located between the Great Lakes (lake Ontario, lake Huron, and lake Erie), and right between Toronto, ON and Detroit. London has ~383 822 inhabitants.

Fun fact: Ryan Gosling was born there!

When?

We got there on August 27, and arrived in Geneva on June 29, after a three days weekend in Toronto with the other exchange students to take our C1 exam.

Overall, we spent 10 months in Canada.

School in Canada

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We start the day by listening to the national anthem. A school day is divided into 5 periods, four for classes and one for lunch. Each period is usually 75 mins long, and school is from 8:15 AM to 2:15 PM, and the rest of the day is for extracurricular activities.

The school spirit is amazing! It is so much fun, and I was so lucky to experience school in Canada. School is not as academic as it is here in Switzerland. This year does not count for your scholarship back home so you might as well pick classes that you can't take there (you can change your classes by asking your guidance counselor).

For example, some of my classes were Fashion, Food and culture, Health and fitness, and Construction.



Some Canadian traditions

September: **Back to school** is a big thing in Canada. There is a lot of fun and excitement, it is not only the start of the year but also the start of the high school sports season! Wear your spirit wear and go cheer your team on!

National day for Truth and Reconciliation is celebrated at school. You will learn a lot about Indigenous history at that occasion.

October: **Happy Halloween!** whether you want to party or go “treat or trick” (Canadians are really generous, just so you know...) you will surely have a lot of fun.

Happy Thanksgiving! Earlier than in the US, Thanksgiving was probably one of my favourite traditions... be prepared to eat very well, and a lot!

December: Nothing compares the North American **Christmas** spirit. Decorations, movies, food... it was definitely my favourite part of the year.

February: It is **Superbowl** time! A fun way to wrap the football season! Gather with friends and family, and cheer your team on!

March: Opening day of the **MLB season!** I will miss baseball culture a lot. Let's go Blue Jays!

April: **Happy Easter!** Share a delicious lunch with the extended family, and be prepared to eat lots of sweets.

May-June: It is **Prom** time! Promposal, getting ready with your friends, drive in a limo... You will have so much fun! As an exchange student, you can attend prom even if you are not in grade 12!

Tips for future exchange students

- At the beginning of your exchange you may feel tired, and overwhelmed, but you need to spend as much time as possible with your host family. First impression matters, and you will create the base for a long lasting relationship the first couple of months
- Practice your English! It is tiring to talk all day long in another language, but it is crucial that you keep exposing yourself to an English speaking environment.
- Do not say no to a new experience. You can be tired, anxious, feeling homesick, but you only have ten months here, so make the most of it. Be curious.
- Communicate with your host family. If there is something that is bothering you tell them, there are here for you, and they want everything to go well. Remember that it is as scary for them to welcome a stranger as it is for you to move in with them.
- If your host family does not suit you, do not be scared to ask to change families. You cannot spend 10 months regretting to have left your home. If the situation is not enjoyable, ask for a change as soon as possible.
- Get out of your comfort zone, be independent, prove to yourself what you are capable of. This experience will not only make you stronger in English, but it will make you grow as a person.