

## Belinda Tam – Civil engineering at the University of Waterloo – Fall term 2010

Spending four months on exchange at the University of Waterloo was no doubt a highlight of my university experience. Waterloo is a small town in southern Ontario and has a very strong student atmosphere. Choosing to live off-campus with my landlords and three other students allowed me to gain an insight to the town from local, out-of-town, and international perspectives. Accents aside, every conversation I had with my housemates seemed to reveal cultural/vocabulary differences!

Since most of the students at UW are not actually residents of Waterloo, they could relate to adjusting to life in a different city; at the same time, I found that people were generally very open and welcoming. I also had friends patiently explain everything from the rules of (ice) hockey, to the political system, to what the translucent blue-green crystals were doing on the sidewalk one snowy morning...

The teaching style and assessment at UW is very similar to that of UQ. I joined my classmates in their 3B term, enrolling in three civil engineering courses plus two electives. With smaller, more personal class sizes and everyone living within walking distance to campus, I was able to spend more time with my classmates and other people I met outside of lectures. Various places on campus offered cheap food and coffee – Tim Horton's in the SLC is open 24hours – or we could just hop on a bus (unlimited rides with a student card) to local cafes, restaurants and pubs.

Being in Canada from September to December meant I was able to witness all the spectacular colours of fall and have my first white Christmas! Exchange wouldn't have been complete without travel either; spontaneous weekend trips to other Canadian cities were possible thanks to Greyhound and Megabus services, which also took me to New York following the (first of many) snow storms. With the soaring Australian Dollar, cheap domestic transport, and last-minute bookings the go, I was fortunate enough to conclude my exchange with a four weeks along the west coast of North America.

The application process may have been tedious, but in the end it was well worth. I had a short but amazing experience overseas, and would definitely encourage everyone to apply!



*Anti-clockwise from left: Niagara SkyWheel, Clifton Hill (with a Tim Horton's iced-cap); the colours of fall displayed in Ottawa; the streets of Quebec; sampling a giant pretzel on the streets of Manhattan*

