

MACABROAD – AN INTERVIEW WITH BHSC EXCHANGE STUDENT RACHELLE SCHEEPERS

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There are numerous ways in which McMaster students can take advantage of studying abroad, one of which is through the McMaster Exchange Program. “Studying abroad is the experience of a lifetime. Push yourself beyond your comfort zone and take advantage of the personal and global learning that comes from a study abroad experience”, <https://iss.mcmaster.ca/learningabroad/outgoing-exchange/>. If you are interested in exploring the possibility of studying abroad, please visit the link above for more information and/or contact the BHSc office for assistance.

So far, what is your favourite memory from exchange?

It is so hard to choose just one day or event! There are so many good memories that pinpointing just one is impossible. Every night I look forward to dinner, because my friends and I cook together in the common room (as eating out is way too expensive). I also enjoy Monday nights when we all go out to Lojo’s Quiz night to play trivia, and on Wednesday evenings we listen to live jazz at our local pub. Another fun memory is jumping into the freezing Baltic Sea, and then warming up in a sauna, just like the Danish people! I also fondly remember my friends banging on my door at 5am, as I had slept through all my alarms and we had a flight to catch to Berlin! These are just a few notable memories, but since I am only half way through my exchange, I know there are so many more to come!

What has been the biggest challenge during exchange?

I find Danish a very confusing and difficult language. I took a pre-semester Danish language course, and boy did I struggle! Nothing is spelled how it is pronounced and no word is pronounced the way it is spelled! For example,

the word “selvfølgelig” means “of course”, and is actually pronounced “seføli”! There are so many more examples like this! Now after about two months of living in this country, I can finally understand some words and phrases, and am adjusting to hearing it everywhere I go. Fortunately, most Danes understand and speak English quite well, which has helped in overcoming the challenge of the Danish language.

What were your expectations before travelling abroad?

I remember packing for my exchange during Christmas, when my friend who was helping me said “Why are you bringing so many summer clothes? You know Denmark is cold till like May!” That was the biggest plot twist, as for some reason I had simply assumed that it was going to be sunny and warm by March. However, it is currently snowing right now! I was so wrong. My expectation of being able to have picnics and walking around everywhere by March was such a miscalculation! I also thought that I would be doing a lot more travelling than I am. I did not realize just how much I would love being here in Copenhagen. There is so much to do and see here that I am never bored.

Why did you decide to participate in the exchange program?

I have always loved to travel! I have been very fortunate that my parents share this passion as well and have taken me to many different cities across the world ever since I was young. I find that you can learn so much about yourself and about those around you when you continually step out of your comfort zone. I challenged myself in my first year, as it was the first time I had been away from my family for more than two weeks! I had to start from scratch. I did not know anyone, or just how much work university was going to be.



I learned more about myself in those first few months than I had throughout my entire time in high school. I thought it would be good to try the process again, and so I signed up for exchange! It was an even bigger adjustment than first year because I am now in a foreign county, surrounded by the sounds of a strange language, and even farther from home. However, I could not image my life without this new and exciting experience. I have made life-long friends and travelled to places I never thought I would go!

Overall would you recommend the exchange program?

Yes! Absolutely! 100%! No hesitation.

What is the most important thing that you took away from this experience?

The main thing I have learned is just how valuable having an open mind can be. Exchange is full of challenges, and things do not always go as planned, but when you are willing to adapt and just be present, it can change your whole attitude towards the situation. I have met so many new people, and

experienced so many different cultures, that being able to adjust to my surroundings has made my experience abroad that much more enjoyable. I wanted to meet people from all over the world and learn about their culture and lifestyle. By not being opposed to trying new things, or not being deterred by the thick accents that make communicating more difficult, it has been a very interesting and eye opening experience.

How did your studies abroad differ from your time at McMaster?

The schooling abroad is very different than back at McMaster. There are no deadlines, tests or assignments. I only have one final paper worth 100% or an oral exam worth the same amount! The use of oral exams is quite novel as there are no right or wrong answers! You are able explain and rationalize your thoughts. You are given a question and you have half an hour to prepare a fifteen minute answer. Another startling difference is that your grade is given a mere five minutes after your oral exam!

