



# EXCHANGE REPORT

Humber College, Toronto, Canada  
(Aug 2022 – Dec 2022)

I went on exchange to Humber College during my 5th semester at KEA. With this report, I will try and take you through my journey, and the many experiences I got during my adventure abroad.

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## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Experiences at the host university.....	3
Social and cultural experiences.....	4
Practical experiences .....	9
Conclusion.....	10

## Introduction

Dear reader, welcome to my exchange report – My name is Bertram, I went to Humber College (Toronto, Canada) on exchange during my 5<sup>th</sup> semester at KEA. With this report, I will try and take you through my journey, and the many experiences I got during my adventure abroad.

Happy reading!

So here I'm, filled with excitement to tell you about my journey. So much have happened, that I barely know where to start. But let's rewind a bit, to how I ended up applying and what were my expectations for my exchange.



As mentioned, my name is Bertram, I come from Denmark, living in Copenhagen. I study Architectural Technology and Construction Management at KEA (6<sup>th</sup> semester)

As a person I love to learn and purposely applied for the international line at KEA, as I get inspired by meeting new cultures and saw a chance of improving my English to a more professional level, by being in an environment with inspiring fellow minded people, who just like I, have this *international dream*.

The opportunity for me to take a semester abroad, was not only the opportunity to live out a dream, but to be inspired in a different environment, with different approaches and different ways of thinking. Creating new friendships and connections, that can create amazing results, while finding new ways, that can challenge conventional thinking.

Something I would like to highlight, as this has been a great inspiration to me for applying, is the working-methodology that are emphasized at KEA. Where I, each semester, were encouraged to work with different people, taking on new tasks and developing new skills – Remember, you are here to learn! 😊

## Experiences at the host university

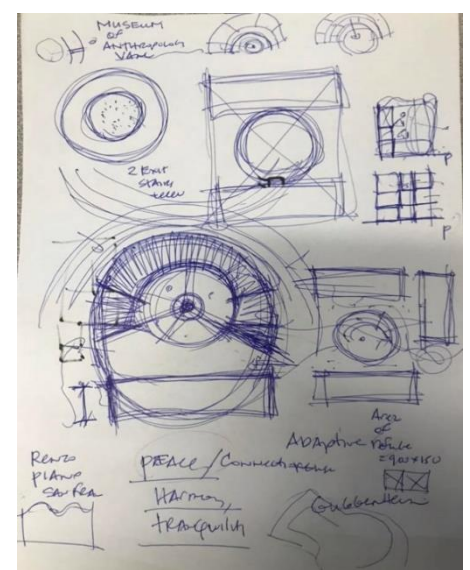
At Humber College, I had the opportunity to more or less tailor my schedule, with a wide variety of different courses available (of course with relevance) This was of great joy, as it did not only differ from the more project-oriented way I was being lectured here in Denmark, but also because I now had the opportunity to specialize and dive more into subjects such as; Mass-timber & sustainable use of wood in modern construction (ARC216) which is something I'm really interested in. The course was mainly based on very informative lectures, with following tests, which at times were though, but none the less a good way to make you remember the answers.

This course also offered some interesting cooperative work, looking into different wood species, with a whole local arboretum to discover, available at campus.

I also had Architectural Site Planning (ARC353) which was a great combination of teaching and field research, where we in groups, had to go visit different landmarks around in Toronto, really analyzing the area, the surroundings and feeling that cant be felt on pictures. This was surely a help to discover the town even more, as I went into buildings, I other wisely wouldn't have.

I would also like to highlight Elizabeth who was the professor for this course. She made an already interesting subject, such a joy attending, by being so passionate, knowledgeable and eager to help her students, If I wasn't to go back to Denmark, I was told about some future options, as she is a great connection to industry.

My third course was Adaptive design & reuse (ARC300) This was another course I was really looking forward to, as I heard this would be similar in learning, to what we were learning back in Denmark on 5<sup>th</sup> semester. I found the adaptive part of great interest, as the site we were doing the project on, had many legislations to look into, due to the respect and homage of the indigenous people – Where designing with this in mind, brought some beautiful ideas to the table.



I attended the classes with big curiosity and signing up for this course, turned out to give even more, than I could have expected!

- I will tell you more about this later.

Overall, the courses provided a very satisfying amount of knowledge, with the option to pick certain courses, that may be of a more personal interest – Something that I really liked!

However, the different courses, was with different teams, which could be found as a limitation, to socialize and get to know your colleagues better – As the classrooms changed quickly, once the lectures were over.

## Social and cultural experiences

In the initial process of applying for a semester abroad, I found out I had a couple of fellow students from my neighboring class, who also wanted to go to Toronto. I didn't hesitate to contact the girls that I found out was going as well, which was also a great help, in terms of questions, practical stuff and such – that we were able to discuss with each other.

Ultimately this led us to find a nice Airbnb house together the 5 of us, which worked as my “social-base” with other like-minded people, where you could close the door to your room, but also enjoy the social area together – In this case, we ranged from 21-28 years old, so we of course had a lot in common, to not even mention everything each of us had going on at the school, introducing each other to new friends.

We had a great time together the 5 of us, where we were also able to share expenses for common goods used during our everyday in the house. Another good aspect to the social, was also the fact that the house we ended up living in, was rather far away from my college. I ended up underestimating the distance a bit, but had 1 of the housemates to travel along with. The decision living in a house together, was held up against living at the dormitory at campus, something I will give a little thought on.

I actually signed up for a room at the dormitory and went there to see it upon arrival, as I did get to know some international students who were resided at the dorm.

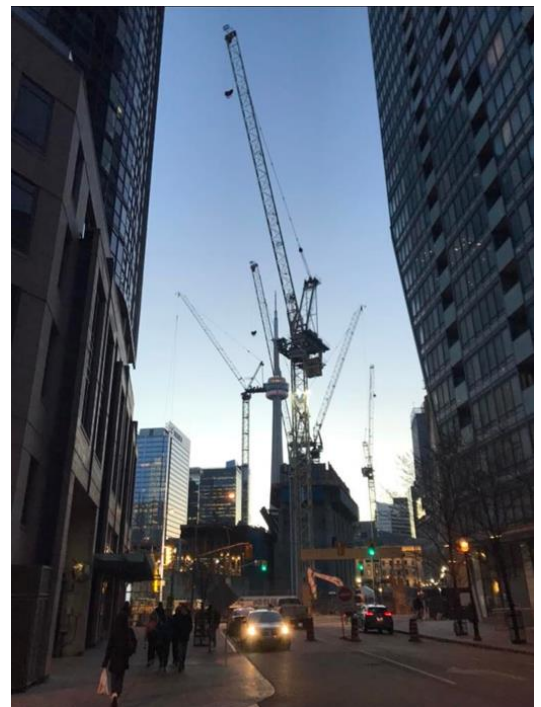
*“I believe you get to experience the social aspect of being at college on a whole other level, by living at the dorm, rather than living in your own rental. However, the house we lived in was closer to downtown, with better options for transportation and the difference of the rooms was like night and day in comparison, all in all for a more reasonable price.”*

But even though I did live some distance from my school, I had a great time socially – It felt slightly refreshing, to be in a whole new country, not knowing anyone (yet) so where to start?

As I mentioned I had my “social-base” in the house I were living in, but of course it also helped being a student, at a college, with hundreds of different people around your age at campus, which I think is as a great foundation to meeting new people.

During my first classes, I didn’t really get any kind of introduction, but just by smiling and greeting people, I landed in some good conversations and this is where I met a guy (ARC300) who I would later call friend and who I ended up travelling wide and far with! 😊

During my time in Canada, I had a goal to travel a lot and experience the culture. I had an idea of all the things I wanted to see while being there, but nothing decided yet, as this is where I believe the adventure starts - and never had I imagined the beauty of what I were to see.



Toronto has a lot to offer and due to its multi-ethnicity, you can find areas such as; Greek town, Korea town, China town, Jamaica town etc. That has some amazing vibes and almost every variety of different food that you could imagine, everything from amazing street food vendors to fine dining in the heights.



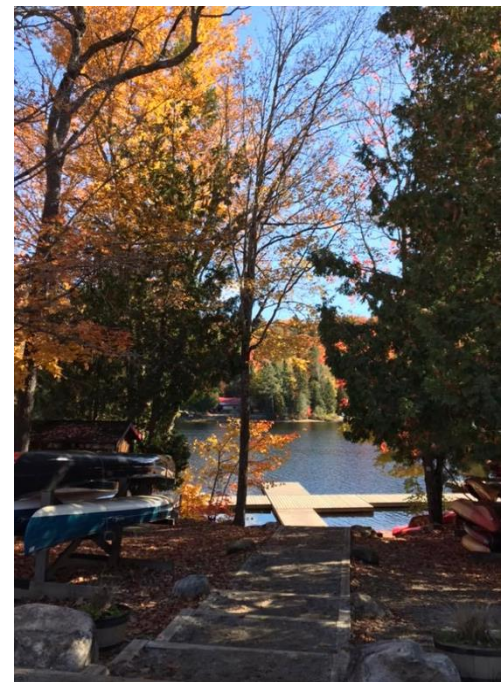
Before landing in Toronto, I could see from the plane, that the city system was built on grids, (separated into squares) something that I found really interesting, while there are also a lot of detached houses around downtown, that takes up a lot of space – Which is resulting in the house/rental prices skyrocketing. I noticed this have led to many different kinds of creative constructions, such as backfills and renovation, as an alternative way of dealing with the high prices.

I was also really keen on biking around in Toronto, which definitely is an option, however, the bike lane conditions are far from what you see in Denmark, which would sometimes lead you to drive around between the cars, which can maybe be compared to places in Copenhagen, but can still be a bit sketchy in a town you don't know that well yet! You can of course also find a lot of similar transportation options to take you around town, like rental bikes, electric scooters etc.

Maybe it is just me, but when I hear of Canada, I can't stop thinking of ice hockey, so that was also something very high on my list. I went to the Scotia Bank arena with a friend to watch a hockey game with Toronto Maple Leaf's, which are probably one of the biggest hockey teams in Canada – What's also worth mentioning about this trip, is the arena itself, can serve both as an ice hockey rink, but can also be transformed into a basketball court in a matter of hours, depending on the event of the night – something I from a logistically perspective find incredible.



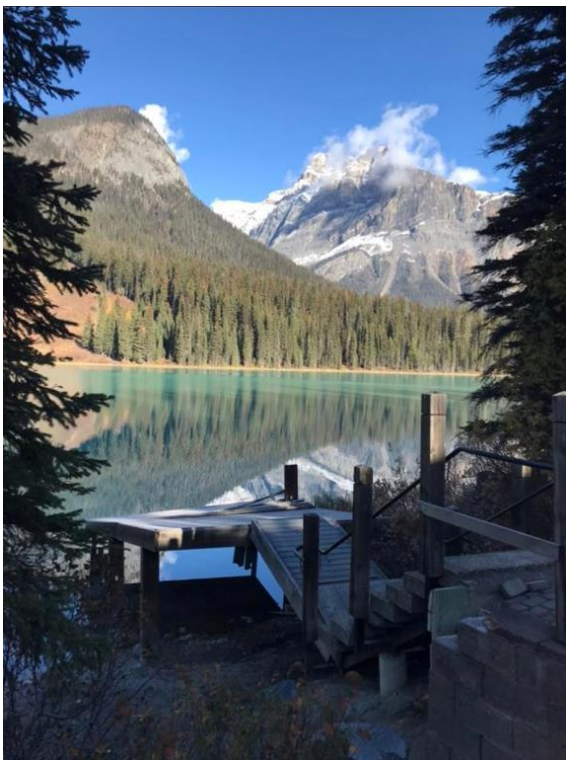
Toronto is an amazing city, with endless opportunities to explore – but high on my list was to see the nature and the wildlife Canada has to offer, which I would have to look further away from town to find. One of the very first trips I went on, was with one of the guys I met at my first day at school – We packed his car with some snacks and drinks – and even invited some of my housemates along – The destination was Algonquin national park – which during the fall, is something special that would be hard to describe here.





We also went to the US together, to visit Buffalo for a bit of shopping and see some historical architecture from Frank Lloyd Wright. This was also amazing to experience, for someone who have never visited the US, you definitely have the option to go there on a shorter trip. Not to mention that you most likely drive by Niagara Falls when going there!

However, I saved this one trip for last 😊 This was the road trip I had with the 3 of my housemates, where we went a little further and flew to Alberta a few provinces over west. Upon arriving, each of us had rented a place for the 4 nights, and had a nice spacious car we had rented in advance, waiting for us at the airport. This road trip was more than I could have ever imagined, where every turn we took, was with another view a postcard worthy. Being with good company, surrounded by snowy mountains and emerald-colored lakes, I felt really lucky.



We drove all the way from Alberta to British Columbia, in terms of wildlife we were so privileged to see both bears, moose, racoons, beavers and you name it! There was a certain tranquility and calmness in this scenery, that you have to experience for yourself – But I will let this picture try and do it justice.

- Emerald Lake, Alberta

**In terms of finding friends and networking you should of course do, what works best for you!**

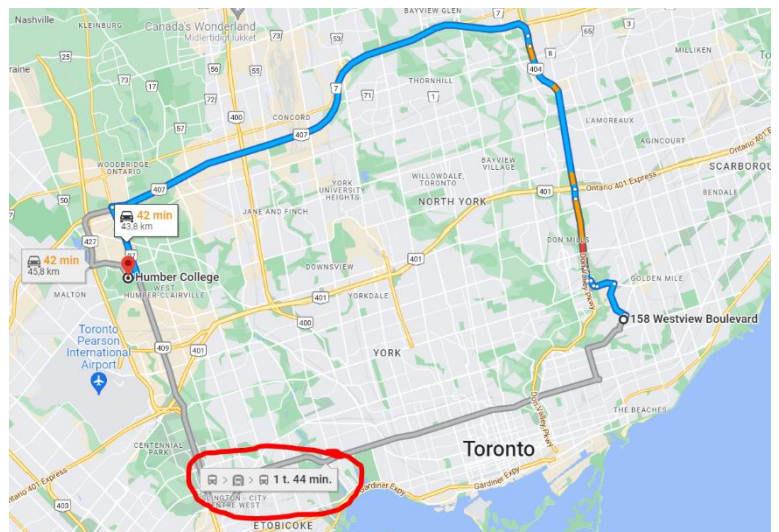
However, I would say it's really a matter of attending and being interested from the very start, so you can be a part of the group. As mentioned, I had an amazing time at school, but I would also say it really depends on your approach.

– as we did not really get an introduction to the other classmates – other than a shorter introduction to the international students, and occasionally receiving invitations to network events, arranged by the host school.

Be yourself, be open – I found many interesting people from this, you could always start of saying that you are from another country on exchange 😊

## Practical experiences

Don't underestimate the distances, like I did – It may seem closer than it actually is when looking on a map. I also do not highly recommend the public transportation (TTC) however, I find the prices very fair and the way it works much better than in Denmark, where once checked in, you can travel for 2 hours for around 3\$ or a monthly pass for 108\$. My route to school was with 2 busses and the subway almost from the very end to the other – It was time consuming, but as they say over there; "It is what it is" So I read a few books, listened to my favorite music and had some great conversations, with a few of my fellow passengers.



In terms of banking, I had many concerns, but it turned out to be easier than expected. I managed to talk with my bank advisor in Denmark before leaving, and it turned out I could just pay with my Mastercard, as it is an international card with limited fees (as long as you pay in local currency)

There were also times where I was in need of cash, for instance when I found out my local barber had 2 kinds of prices 😊 cash could easily be withdrawn from an ATM with fees on around 5\$ no matter the size of the amount.

I did cook some food for myself in between and also did some grocery shopping, where I tried to have something in stock for a couple of days, however, I also tried to find space in my budget to be able to eat out more often, to get a part of that culinary experience. Which in a lot of cases, would have been more or less the same if I were to buy the ingredients etc. In terms of pricing, I would consider it very similar to what we have in Denmark, of course with a few items being cheaper and vice versa.

## Conclusion

I will round off this report, by saying you can get very far on a dream – I ended up applying with no money at hand and an apartment I needed to rent out etc. something that I later managed to deal with and gather through scholarships etc., Don't let the minor things be an obstacle for you, the world is yours!

I'm left here with a smile, as this report once again had me thinking back on some of those memories I have gotten on my journey as an exchange student, memories that I will never forget.

I went to the other side of the globe to study, because I dared to take a step out of my comfort zone, I took the chance I was offered at KEA and if there is something I have learned now, is that you should never let such an opportunity slip, because I truly believe that the great life, awaits out there in the unknown.

On my journey I Experienced more than I could have ever imagined – And got friends for a lifetime, one who I will already see again in a few weeks. 😊

If you managed to get this far – Thanks for reading and all the best on your adventure!