

It may not be the most exotic destination you can choose from, but Montréal is a fantastic place to do an exchange. One of the reasons for this is the ease and simplicity of setting yourself up there.

As mentioned above, you shouldn't have much difficulty finding an apartment. Most of the exchange students live in Le Plateau: a fun neighbourhood full of great cafés and bars just east of Mont-Royal, 30-40 minutes from campus.

Academically, HÉC is similar to SFU in terms of grading and expectations.

The biggest differences I noticed were:

1. Lectures. Each course has a three-hour lecture once per week.
2. Amount of group work. You can expect *at the very least* one group project per course, but almost certainly more than that.

While HÉC is primarily a French university, they do offer some courses in English that tend to be filled mostly with exchange students. If your French is good enough, I think studying in French is a great idea – alas mine was not.

Culturally, Montréal is a very vibrant city. There is a lot of great theatre (the Centaur is good for English plays), street art, comedy, and fabulous festivals at the end of the summer. Speaking French is an asset, but nearly everyone in Montréal speaks English. That said, some people are annoyed when you don't speak French, but you shouldn't have any problems.

Montréal is quite an old city by North American standards (2016 being its 375th anniversary) and there is a lot of interesting architecture to explore. If you find yourself feeling bored and you don't want to spend mon

My exchange to Montréal was a very gratifying experience. Although it is technically still Canada, Québec is very different culturally—and it’s a culture I deeply appreciate. I also think that doing an exchange, no matter where you go, is a great experience. It gets you out of your usual routines, forces you into new situations, allows you to meet new people from all over the world, and challenges your assumptions of what is “normal” and “right.”

Personally, I feel I have grown a lot because of my exchange. It was the longest period I’d spent without a job since I was 12 years old, and it forced me to reassess how I value myself. It gave me time to reflect on what I had been doing with my life, and to think about what I really want. It reminded me how much I love French, and has inspired me to find ways of maintaining my second language after returning to Vancouver.

I can’t say there’s anything I wish I had known before I left. It was all around a good experience. Montréal is a great city, HEC is a good school, and going on exchange is always a good idea.

