

I have just recently returned from an amazing two semesters at the Université François Rabelais in Tours, France. I went during Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 and as a member of the French Cohort Program I am doing a major in French with an extended minor in Political Science. At UFR however I took mainly French courses as they do not offer many politics ones and I was therefore in the Lettres et langues faculty while I was there.



also would not split bills so going out with friends would often result in exchanges of cash to reach the total amount. The cost of living in Tours was more than Vancouver in some areas and less in others so it tended to balance out. Rent was definitely cheaper than Vancouver as were many food items and alcohol but clothing and toiletries tended to be more expensive. The cost of living was also dependent on the current exchange rates and I therefore lost quite a bit of money to the poor Canadian dollar.

I arrived in Paris on a Friday morning, as this was the cheapest flight I could get, but I would recommend arriving on an earlier weekday if possible if you want to get into residence right away. The residence administration is only open on weekdays and although I arrived early enough in the day I didn't anticipate the difficulties I would encounter upon arriving at the residence. My residence (Croix Montoire) didn't open until the third week of September so they had placed me in Grandmont residence until then. Because of this, I didn't have to hand in the paperwork for the residence until Croix Montoire opened. However when I arrived at Grandmont (after a lot of trouble finding the residence while dragging along all my stuff) they told me that I needed to have insurance for mhe dn widenc theI wuldn'riv m

small rooms with minimal storage space and is also an older residence, which makes it not as nice as some of the others. However because of the location it was decent enough that I didn't bother moving into Tanneurs between semesters.

Academically, France is quite different to Canada. Classes are often lecture style, except for certain language classes which are more like our tutorials at SFU. Classes tend to have minimal coursework with one or two exams that make up your entire mark. Attendance tends to be mandatory for most classes and they are usually not very forgiving if you miss things. The profs are however normally pretty helpful for international students and will sometimes give you alternate assignments or will take into consideration the fact that you are not a native speaker when they grade you. The grading scale is also quite different to at home, with all marks being a number out of 20 and a 10 being a pass. However they tend to mark on a bell curve that usually results in almost half the class failing. They will usually mark exchange students differently though as the French students don't need to pass every course but we do to get credits for it. It is very difficult to get a mark above a 15 so anything in that range is considered good.

The Val de Loire area is very rich culturally as there are many castles and fortresses close by and I definitely recommend taking advantage of this. The University has an organization called ESN, which puts on trips and activities for exchange students including many castle visits. They are a good option for seeing these castles, as the price is often cheaper than it would be if you went on your own. The area surrounding Tours is also known for its sparkling wine and Vouvray which is 10 km outside Tours offers a very good wine tour for 2€. Another place that is worth checking out if you are there in the summer time is la Guinguette which is an outdoor bar and restaurant right on the banks of the Loire river. It is open from May to late September and often has theme nights, which makes it a great place to interact with the locals.





Place Plumereau in the only snowfall we received all year



The Loire river with the Pont Wilson in the background

Ria (one of my best friends from exchange) and I when we travelled to Passau, Germany.