

Getting ready for Canada's Weather

When I decided to apply to the exchange program, I had the Canadian schools as one of the options I would like to choose. Yet, as I'm originally from a tropical country, I was afraid about Canada's weather. Canada is known for its cold and snowy weather, with temperatures below zero and long winters. Although I was planning to enroll in the fall semester, I knew I will be spending November and December there. Thus, I needed to know how cold could it be. Lucky for me, I had a Canadian classmate who is originally from Toronto. He explained me that the coldest months were January and February, but I needed to prepare clothes for snow, as Toronto's temperature will start dropping from November. He also told me that despite the cold weather, I could keep doing activities and enjoying the city, as Toronto organizes Christmas festivals and promotes outdoor sports such as ice skating. Furthermore, the city has an underground path that connects the subway stations, malls and main streets in downtown. So if it feels too cold to walk outside, you can use the path.

He suggested me that to survive the weather I needed two things a good jacket and a good pair of boots. When I asked him what type of jacket or boots? He said to look for weatherproof products, to protect you against rain, snow and wind. Toronto is a windy city, which makes the temperatures feel colder. For instance, the temperature might be -1°C , but with a windchill of -7°C so it feels colder. He suggested me to buy the coat and boots in Canada -if I didn't have already-, since I could choose from more options specially designed for the local weather.

I followed his advice and bought a pair of weatherproof boots when I arrived in September. There is an outlet mall -Vaughan Mills- close to the University that you can reach by bus and subway. At the outlet, you can find several brands for every budget, both local and international brands -Uniqlo is really popular there-. In addition to the coat and boots, I suggest to buy a hat -or *tuque* as Canadians called it-, gloves and a scarf. I bought mine also in Canada, not only they were cheaper but with the right material. Toronto has a drier winter compared to Taiwan with lower temperatures, so I think is best to buy any winter clothes in Canada. You'll need to wear these on the outdoors, for the rest of the time the buildings have heater and it's pretty warm inside. So it's best to use layers that you can remove to adapt easily.

Is important to get your winter clothes earlier, so you can be ready for rain or the first snow. Some exchange students didn't buy their winter shoes at the beginning, since they thought they could still wear regular sneakers or boots -temperatures were still $5-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ -. The weather change drastically in one weekend and the first snowstorm came at the beginning of November. It snowed all Sunday night and it continue snowing all Monday. We had classes on Monday, so we had to walk while it was snowing. Without the right kind of shoes, it's difficult to walk, as the floor becomes slippery due to the ice and melting snow. One of the exchange students had to go immediately to the outlet mall since his shoes got wet and

he was feeling too cold as the temperature was -5°C and got sick later. Unless it's a heavy snowstorm, classes will continue in the regular schedule. Thus, if you have evening class, you'll end up by 10:00pm. By that time it will feel colder, but you can still walk indoors as the school buildings are connected by paths that you can use to avoid spending too much time in the cold.

In my case, I enjoyed the weather in Canada. I've never experienced a snowstorm before. Watching how the trees and buildings turn into white from my dorm's window was a beautiful experience. I also liked to play with the snow and feel the snowflakes falling. When the first snowstorm came, I didn't have any trouble because I had all my winter clothes. So, walking on the snow was easy and I kept going sightseeing even when the temperatures were -12°C .

