

Toronto Pearson International



Well, it seems you've done it. You've chosen to spend the next four to twelve months not only in a new country, but a whole new continent. And now you're standing in something that looks like a giant carpeted garage looking over the duller landscape known to mankind. This in no way reflects what your stay in Canada is going to be like. Let me start with those words of comfort. Now get out of there, because if you stay too long, you might just become one of the carpeted benches and carpeted lamps that have the look of starting out as desperate people who waited for too long.

Public transportation to Guelph

There is an (almost) direct route from the airport to Guelph if you want to avoid going to Toronto altogether, and it's definitely the cheapest and fastest option as it will come out between \$10 - 15 and take less than two hours.

Take the **GO Transit** bus, whose stop is on Terminal 1 of the airport:

<http://www.gotransit.com/publicroot/en/travelling/stations.aspx?station=AIRP>

The line is Brampton - Pearson Airport - North York in the 34 Brampton Terminal direction, and you can buy the ticket from the driver. Go to Bramalea Go Station, where you will switch to the Guelph – Bramalea line, direction 39 Guelph Central Go. This will take you to Guelph, where you can get out either at the University Center or downtown.

I *strongly* recommend you tell the driver where you're going, they will tell you where to get out and go next!



(I hope the geese on top are not photoshopped, just adorable)

Public transportation to Toronto

192 Airport Rocket bus will take you to Kipling Station – the last station on the Bloor - Danforth Line (green) of the subway. It costs only \$3 which also covers the subway. This seems like the easiest and definitely the cheapest way to head for the center of Toronto, but for alternative routes with public transportation check out:

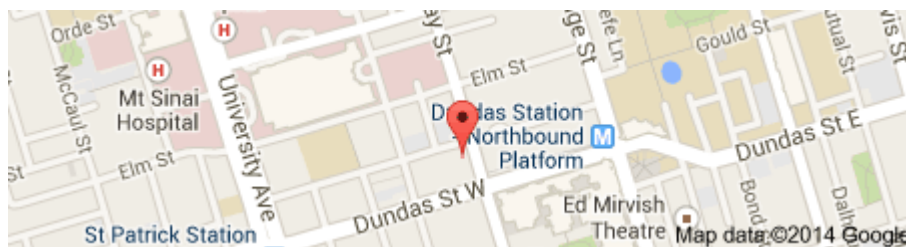
http://www.ttc.ca/Riding_the_TTC/Airport_service.jsp

Once on the subway, if you want to go to Guelph, you can get out on St. George station, then change trains and switch to Yonge - University Spadina Line (yellow), direction Southbound, and get out on St Patrick station:



Once you're out, you will be on University Avenue, and it's best to ask people where the Central Coach Terminal is (4 minutes away). However, if you have Bear Grylls superhuman orientation skills, then head east on Dundas St. until you get to Bay St. – the bus station is on Bay St. between Dundas and Edward St. Here are the visuals:

<https://www.google.hr/maps/place/Toronto+Coach+Terminal/@43.656155,-79.384201,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x0:0xb1be9d65977437ee>



Greyhound bus from downtown Toronto to Guelph

At the Central Coach Terminal, there are only two companies – Greyhound and Megabus. Go to the Greyhound ticket office and buy your ticket to Guelph (see if they will give you a student discount without your Guelph Student ID; I wouldn't bet on it, but it's worth a try!). The ticket without a student discount will cost you (I think!) about \$22, with a student discount about \$15

(again, impossible to check over the Internet), and if you book it online (definitely the best way and it's very easy!!) about \$12 - 13. Here's their site:

<https://www.greyhound.ca/>

If you're booking online, make sure to print out the receipt because you can't get on the bus without it, and be warned that if you're lugging around more than one gianormous bag, they will charge you for it!



And while we're at it, let me warn you about something else important: the prices in Canada are not what they seem!! The price of any item on a shelf of a store, or of a service you're booking online, etc. (unless specified) is always before tax, so be ready for the unpleasant surprise of a few (or a lot of) extra dollars on your bill – depending on how much you're spending!

The bus takes about an hour and a half, and you can get out either at the University Center or downtown.

*There are two alternative modes of transportation from downtown Toronto to Guelph, one by bus - GO Transit (www.GOTransit.com), and the other by train (www.VIArail.ca). For a first try, I'd recommend Greyhound and then later you can experiment with the others.

Taxis and van service



Considering there is no shortage of public transportation from Pearson, there would seem to be wiser ways to spend that hard-earned cash than using taxis (including an awesome selection of beers from local microbreweries and equally amazing gourmet burgers which are impossible to describe or explain to a thoroughbred European). However, considering the crazy winters in Canada, should you find yourself at the airport in the middle of a January snow storm with little desire to drag people-sized suitcases into the unknown, there are a few cozy options that will stop you from having a panic attack and get you to the safety of your new home for somewhere between \$50 and \$100.

If you are going to Toronto, the price of a ride downtown should be between \$50 and \$60, but you can check the exact prices for different city zones on this site:

<http://www.torontopearson.com/en/toandfrom/taxilimo/#>

If you want to get to Guelph, your best option might be the Red Car Service, whose desks you will find on the Arrivals Level of Terminals 1 and 3. It is a shared van that will take you to your door for a price of about \$80. For more information check out:

<https://www.redcarservice.com/Toronto-Airport/>

When in Guelph...

The great house hunt

If you want to get a head start on the whole „I don't want to be homeless in the middle of the winter in Canada“ situation, then check out the university housing classifieds on The Cannon (<http://www.thecannon.ca/classifieds/housing>) or the general housing classifieds on Kijiji (<http://www.kijiji.ca/h-guelph/1700242>) in the month before coming to town. Kijiji might have a wider selection of rooms on offer, but The Cannon has the advantage of showing you not only

the location of the houses/apartments, but also their exact distance to the university. Another good thing about it is that it caters mostly to students, meaning your roommates are also more likely to be students (rather than middle-aged people with weird pets and strange eating habits), and the landlords will aim at providing you with what students usually look for – proximity to university/bus stop/supermarket/booze outlet/fast food joint of choice.

As for the neighborhoods to consider, anything surrounding the university is great (College Avenue, etc.), and the area around Stone Road Mall (Janefield Ave., Scottsdale Rd, Stone Rd, Chancellors Way...) is pretty good, downtown is awesome, and for the rest, well, depends what you're looking for. The south end is full of student accommodation but for a small town, it's as far as you can get from downtown! Student dorms and official university housing are crazy expensive – avoid at all cost!



The prices are in the range between \$400 (something wrong with the house or tenants), \$450 (usually normal and nice), \$500-550 (also normal and nice), all the way up to \$600 and \$700 (I just don't get it).

Be warned that many or even most rooms come unfurnished but there is always furniture in the kitchen and living room; when looking for a place, make sure to ask if it is or can possibly be furnished. Otherwise, there's IKEA (in Toronto) and stores and websites with used furniture (like Kijiji and The Cannon).

Getting around the place

The best thing about public transportation in Guelph is that it's absolutely free for students! Yaaay! The worst thing is that it's terrible. I mean, the buses are really nice, and so are the drivers and passengers, but it takes forever to get anywhere because they stop for 15min at the Central Station and at the UC (Univ. Center); they drive until midnight and then there are night buses only to certain areas, there are no buses Sundays after 7 pm, etc.

The nice thing, again, is that stops are really close to each other and the whole town is well covered, so you needn't worry about walking long and freezing in the winter. They also tend to be punctual - again, good for not letting you die in the snow.



Here you will find the schedules for all bus routes and the map of the whole system:

<http://guelph.ca/living/getting-around/bus/schedules/>

And here is more useful information for students:

<http://guelph.ca/living/getting-around/bus/schedules/routes-that-service-the-university-of-guelph/>

In order to get a free bus pass, you will go to the graduate student office on the fifth floor of the UC and they'll put a sticker on your Student ID, and that's it, you're set!

Getting around campus



It just occurred to me that in order to get a bus pass or a Student ID, or anything else at the University, it might be a good idea to introduce you to your future campus.

Sooo... the first step is getting there. Take any bus that goes to the University Center (1A and 1B, 2A and 2B, 3A and 3B, 5, 6, 7, 15) and don't worry, you'll know it when you see it. Once there,

you can ask anyone for the MacKinnon building – that is where the Department of European Studies and the School of Languages and Literatures are. MacKinnon is just 50 meters from the UC, across from the Library, both big modern buildings:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/campus/map/uc/>

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/campus/map/mackinnon/>

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/campus/map/library/>

The trick, however, is not getting to them, but rather dealing with the crazy Hogwarts-like architecture of strange hallways and hidden doors. When you come into MacK, go up the stairs to your left, then turn left again and go through a blue door and through a weird little hallway where people are studying and angry that you're passing through a hallway. There is only one other door which leads to a staircase, use it to go up one floor and there you are, welcome to SOLAL!!



(REDRUM!)

While we're at it, let me give you some info about what to expect here. When it comes to cordiality and hospitality, overall attention and cooperation from the staff and professors – well, it will blow your mind. Nothing you've experienced in Europe will prepare you for this. Seriously, your first thought will be: „It's a trap!“ If, like most European students I've met, you're used to chasing your professors down for information, recommendations, etc. then this will be a very positive experience. Nothing but the best to say about my generation's experiences here!

As for my personal experience, I can tell you that Guelph is the ideal place to be if you are considering continuing your studies after you are finished with Erasmus. The fact that you can get experience as a teaching assistant, and perhaps even pursue research assistantships within the university is invaluable, and so is the opportunity to try out the North American system of education. You will also constantly be encouraged to participate in the university's academic life, as well as advancing your research and gaining experience at conferences outside it. The

courses here are great, the guidance you can expect for your research even better, and the university as well as the department do their very best to support you if you show an interest and determination to develop academically. Take it from me that it's an important factor to consider when choosing your universities.

For anything else you might need on the practical side, here's the campus map where you can check the whole outline and each individual building:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/campus/map/>

The place gets very pretty as soon as it gets warm enough to actually walk around, so take your time and discover different parts for yourself, and while you're at it, make sure you visit the beautiful Arboretum that continues on the north (?) side of the campus:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/arboretum/>



Downtown life





Well, on the one hand, I've yet to find a useful map of downtown Guelph, but on the other hand, it is composed of about five streets, so you don't really need a map. Just for orientation's sake, I will put the Google map location of a downtown bar called Doogie's so that you can see what the main streets are:

<http://www.doogiesguelph.com/public/map.php>

Right there on Wyndham, Quebec and Macdonnell St. you will find the majority of bars, clubs, eateries, etc. Doogie's and Pablo's, Van Gogh's Ear and Vinyl/Jimmy Jazz all have live music on the weekends and a somewhat alternative feel. Get ready for a whole lot of indie music, hippies and vegetarians, you're in Canada now! There's also a bunch of sports bars and some dance clubs around but I have to admit that standing in line with scantily dressed 20-year-olds with frostbites does not appeal to me. Enter at your own peril!



When it comes to food, Van Gogh has a nice salsateria, Cornerstone on the corner of Wyndham and Carden serves a mean breakfast and is always good for a drink and a bite, and then there is the eBar on Quebec St. and Baker Street Station on (you will not believe this) Baker Street. These two are probably the best places to eat in town – great atmosphere, amazing food, great for drinks also. Can be pricey (not in Canadian terms), but then again so is everything else in

Canada! (*another important piece of info – unless you tend to spend your money like a drunken sailor, your salary as a TA *should* cover your accommodation and living expenses)



Actually, if we're talking about food, one of the most important places in town is also nearby – the Farmers' Market. If you continue down from Norfolk St. into Gordon, you will find one of the entrances, and then later check out other ways to get there. The important part is, it's open only on Saturday mornings, and pretty much ends at 12 p.m. so make sure you get there in time, it's worth it. The fruit and veggies tend to be cheaper than in the supermarkets, and then there's cheese, meat, and different kinds of prepared food to reward you for getting up waaaaay too early on a Saturday morning. It's a nice introduction to the town.



Another gem is the Flour Barrell on Wyndham St. It's got great prices for everything if you're cooking from scratch and lots of stuff you won't find in supermarkets. (*Free tip – it's invaluable if you like muesli – so much cheaper to pick all the ingredients yourself than buying crap full of sugar at the store)

The last thing is the Bookshelf – eBar is actually a part of it. This is an institution; it's got a pretty decent bookstore, with a cinema and bar/restaurant attached. They have independent movies, a free paper and all sorts of events, definitely check it out:

<http://www.bookshelf.ca/index.html>



As for the rest of it, and as for Guelph in general, what can I say? It's the best a small town can offer – people actually come here from other parts of Canada because they like it so much. It's got a nice vibe – it's full of young people, and for a small town it's got a bunch of cafés, restaurants, bars, bookstores, and events of all sorts. There's at least three festivals going on at any one moment – and granted, one of them is going to be about pottery, the second one about rain dances and the third about indie music – but still, there is always something going on. As I'm sure you have gathered, it's a very (and I cannot stress this enough), very hippie place. Not hip. Hippie. As in: 1969 never ended here. There are poetry slams and open mike nights with 60-year-olds playing folk rock (as my dear Italian colleague said – they don't let them out of the

house at that age in my country), vintage stores and knitting courses, house parties with indie bands, vegan restaurants and vegan furniture and vegan vegetables and vegan water. You get the picture. If you want, you can skip all this and stick to the university and student life instead of town life, but if you want more, this is what is out there.



Last piece of advice, bring warm clothes if you're coming in the winter or use the winter sales in January to buy what you need here – Stone Road Mall should have everything. Be ready for a long winter. I mean it. It never ends. Well, it does. In May. People tend to be sleepy (comatose?) here in the winter, but then lose their minds as soon as it gets warmer – then you can't get them in the house. Autumn should be nice.

When not in Guelph...



As nice as Guelph can be (or as sleepy, depending on your outlook and time of the year), it is good to know that there is a bustling, colorful metropolis just an hour away, where you can find amazing exhibitions, concerts, and other types of events any day of the week.



Toronto's museums are pretty awesome, starting with the AGO (*tip for those planning to stay the year – get a year-long member card for \$50, they have great exhibitions and it will take you five visits to see the permanent collection anyway), and then on to MOCCA, ROM, and other acronyms, not to mention an army of galleries (Power Plant, etc.). If art is your thing, Toronto is the place to be.



The food is amazing, and when in doubt, just get out on Spadina Station (Westbound on Bloor), and walk towards the west. If you go west, you'll find some awesome used book stores (BMV!!) and comic book stores, bars and restaurants (Sushi on Bloor!!!), all studenty and cool, and if you head east, or south on Spadina St. you can walk around the University of Toronto.



The West End is Toronto's answer to New York's Williamsburg and Brooklyn in general – a.k.a. – hipsters' paradise. For shopping go to Queen St., for the scenery to Dundas, College and Ossington (watch the hipster in its natural habitat!), for the sheer Berlin loveliness go to Kensington Market and when it gets warm Trinity Bellwoods Park (start yammering on about gentrification, they'll mistake you for a native and bring you home with them). That's as far as our expeditions have taken us.



(Kensington)

Outside Toronto and Guelph... well, the locals make it sound like Toronto is swimming in an ocean of antimatter, but there are myths about some nice lakes with cabins where people go in the summer, and beautiful resorts where they go in the winter, and also something about national parks. Unfortunately, that's all I can say about that, but look at it this way: you'll be a pioneer!



(Blue Mountain Resort)

Outside Ontario... Quebec is reasonably close and definitely worth the time and money! The buses to Montreal are very cheap (Megabus and Greyhound, depending on how far in advance you book, about \$30-35 one way), and then to Quebec City your only option is the railway which is more pricey (same goes for the even more remote Nova Scotia). There are also always shared rides and couchsurfing for when you're there.



If you were hoping to see Vancouver (sucker!!), prepare to change your plans because it costs more than going to Europe!

I don't want to end this on a negative note, so let me end with this: Canada is a whole new ballgame for anyone coming from Europe – everyone has a job, and if you're good at it, sometimes you get promoted (seriously!); people are more polite than friendly, but if you keep at it and badger them into becoming your friends – they will do it, because most of them are from somewhere else too, and they're looking for friends as well. There are so many opportunities to learn, work and gain experience in anything you want, and it's a brave new world out there in the Americas! Good night, and good luck!