

Tips on Coming to Canada from Algoma University

At Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie Ontario close to 10% of the student body is comprised of international students. With unique program offerings like the Masters of Science in Computer Games Technology degree, Community Economic and Social Development and the Sault Program for English Language Learning (SPELL), it is easy to see why Algoma U is fast becoming a popular destination for students from all over the world.

Algoma U offers a diverse and inclusive environment and Sault Ste. Marie is a friendly and welcoming community; however, new international students should always be prepared to experience a little bit of “culture shock”. For advice on coming to Canada, Algoma U’s International Student Advisor Mark Allard has some time-proven tips that can help newcomers prepare for studying in Canada.

Tip #1: Research Carefully

“International students who are thinking of studying in Canada should be prepared to do a considerable amount of research, both when choosing a university or college and afterwards,” says Allard. “There’s lots of information available from the prospectuses that are published by universities and colleges and also on the internet. Take your time to learn about both the schools themselves and the communities that they are located in to make sure you have found a good match for yourself.”

Tip #2: Give Yourself Ample Time to Prepare

“The application processes for Visas and study permits are long and never have guaranteed results,” says Allard. “Be sure to apply early to avoid disappointment or last minute scrambles.”

Tip #3: Ask Questions!

“Most institutions will have staff members who are dedicated to helping you before and after you arrive in Canada,” Allard says. “Do not be shy about asking questions about classes, language requirements, the campus, or cultural differences. Helping international students learn more about life in Canada is an important part of my job and I am always glad to answer questions.”

Tip #4: Be Prepared for Cultural Differences

“When you first arrive in Canada you will likely feel inundated with cultural differences, new customs and new surroundings,” says Allard. “Try to mentally prepare yourself for this and approach your situation with the expectation that it will take a bit of time to adjust.”

“That being said,” continues Allard, “International Student Services at Algoma U has an orientation program in place to help new international students adjust to life in Canada. We also offer group activities throughout the year, international film nights, conversation partners for students who wish to improve their English-language skills and many other services for international students.”

Tip #5: Bring Food! (Especially Condiments and Spices)

“Food is an important and portable part of your culture,” comments Allard. “Stores in Canada may not carry your favourite food or spice. Being able to cook a meal or taste the flavours you grew up with in your home country every once in a while is a great way to ward off feelings of homesickness.”

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