

# Experiences from Abroad

## An All Canadian Greeting

Written by: Amin Yassin and Igor Groshkin  
Students from the Faculty of Architecture

After months of planning, filling-out and producing all of the appropriate documents for the 24 hour flight, we found ourselves at the Ottawa airport in Canada one day in early January.

***The temperatures:*** minus 20 degrees

***Time:*** 10:00 PM

We took a cab with a Lebanese driver to “Little Italy,” the neighborhood where we’d rented an apartment – a place we had never seen before since we closed the deal in Israel. The cab plowed its way through the snow. The cold was more than we could have ever imagined, even inside the heated cab.

Fatigue mixed with anticipation clung to us as we made our way to “Little Italy” to meet our new landlady Angela for the first time. We were a little nervous, and weary that we’d meet a swindler who takes advantage of overseas students. We imagined a scenario that she won’t even show and we’d have to spend the night on the streets, in the snow, or at a hotel in the city, or that we’d have to find a new apartment to rent (and spend more money). Fortunately, Angela appeared a few minutes after we arrived, holding the rental agreement, and her casual Canadian mannerism caught us off guard. A few moments later we signed the agreement and spent the night in this foreign and remote country (without locking our front door as is Canadian tradition).

The months that followed brought with them exceptional encounters, friendships, special events, and trips that now seem as if they belong to another lifetime. A few days after our arrival we were told that within the framework of study at Carleton University’s architectural program it was customary to tour the world’s largest cities (London, Paris, and New York), to “expand horizons.” The coordinator of the course said that since we were international students from “Europe,” it has been decided that this year’s tour will only take place in New York, in order to save us the price of the flight back. Naturally we were very excited about being thought of as “Europeans” for a few months and didn’t bother correcting him. But more than anything, we were excited about the prospects of travelling to the Big Apple on an architectural tour. New York is only an eight hour bus ride from Ottawa (and we had already made all the necessary arrangements for entry visas to the US prior to our arrival here!).

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We were also delighted to discover over the course of time that the studies at Technion were more intensive and that the study workload was greater in comparison with the Canadian program. Nevertheless, we chose not to take any elective courses beyond the required course load so that we'd have more free time to explore the country. It was important for us to strike a balance between our leisure time and studying so that at the end of the term we'd have a great sense of satisfaction. We took advantage of the Easter holidays (at the end of February) to travel to Washington, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Montreal in a Toyota we rented in Manhattan (we could have continued to Chicago if we hadn't had to return to our studies). Despite the vast distances between these cities, if you looked at the map of North America you'd find that we hardly changed our location on the Eastern shore way. Breathtaking scenery and extravagant cities passed before our eyes, leaving a collection of memories that we hold onto until today.

During this trip we had the opportunity to make lasting professional relationships with Canadian architects and succeeded in getting their recommendations and support for our chosen professional paths. For us this yielded future prospects such as acceptance for an internship position at the prestigious SOM offices in San Francisco three months after we returned from Canada!

Making friendships with the Canadian locals and drinking beer with two of our Spanish buddies are especially memorable. There was some real comfort in the Canadian snowy and cold climate, which accompanied us for the majority of our trip, until spring arrived and all the snow melted. And then we knew that it was time to pack up and head for home.