

Unparalleled Canada: SPbPU Postgraduate Student Tells about her Internship Program at the McGill University

Knowledge of and experience in international practices is a valuable obtainment nowadays available to undergraduate and postgraduate students of Polytechnic University. Presently, SPbPU cooperates with more than 340 world leading universities. Besides [international educational programs](#), students can participate in the [academic mobility programs](#) and undertake internships at universities abroad. Postgraduate student of the Department of Applied Mathematics Tatiana POGARSKAYA studies at the Institute of Applied Mathematics and Mechanics (IAMM SPbPU). Just recently she has returned from Canada where she was doing an internship at the McGill University. Upon her return home, Tatyana shared her impressions on the Canadian university and the country as a whole, told about the work she had accomplished and results achieved, and gave some recommendations to other students on overcoming the language barrier; she also gave some advice which places in Canada are a must to visit. Our interview is about this and not only.



- Tatiana, welcome back! Could you please tell what had inspired you to go for an internship to Canada?

- I am the second-year postgraduate student at SPbPU. I have always like mathematics and programming, but I never wanted to do only the coding, and for that reason I chose the applied mathematics as a direction which presumes some extent of creativity. I studied numerical methods, functional analysis, and optimization methods. This is exactly what my activities are connected with: my dissertation will be about optimization of tie-down fittings placement in the assembly of an airplane. A few years ago, my research advisor S.V. LUPULEAC visited the McGill University in Montreal within the frame of his participation in a conference. There he got acquainted with some of the university staff. It turned out that exactly at that university they were working in the same specific sphere of optimization as we were. They got interested in our researches, and in the result of this we had agreed on my internship program. To a big extent it became possible thanks to SPbPU cooperation with the AIRBUS Company which sponsored the trip.

- Did you have any difficulties with processing your documents? What other students should pay their attention to?

- First of all, the time of processing a Canadian visa is no less than 16 days, and in certain cases it might take up to several months. As long as I applied for a business visa, I had to submit quite a few documents alongside. And you should bear in mind the 8-hour time difference which can very well extend the process of specification of details and nuances.

- How many months did your internship last? Please tell in more details about the city it had taken place in.

- My internship had lasted for two months. The McGill University is located in Montreal which is the second biggest city in Canada. It is a city of contrasts: walking along its streets, you can see both ancient mansions and modern skyscrapers. Besides this, the city has numerous picturesque parks.



- Please tell us about your impressions on the university infrastructure.

- This is a very big university; its buildings are located all over the city. I liked it very much that any student has access to the university's electronic library, which provides you with practically unlimited access to all sorts of electronic libraries. The campus has a lot of space where students can take a stand; everything is equipped with sockets, the Internet, and drinking water sources. Departments have their own kitchens and relaxation rooms. Also, the main part of the University is very conveniently located on the breast of a hill with an amazingly picturesque view.

- What was the goal of your internship? In your opinion, did you accomplish it?

- The goal of my internship was to try to solve the optimization problem set for my dissertation using the MADS method. This method allows to solve optimization problems in which very little is known about the target function and which cannot be solved by classic gradient methods. Canadian scholars are actively studying and applying this method, and it was essential for us to compare their results with our own method. We accomplished everything we had planned; in particular, we have found out that the MADS method can be used for optimization of assembling several units despite the method of assembly, be it welding, riveting, screwing, etc.



- Was it easy for you to find the common language with your colleagues? Have you got to overcome the language barrier? What recommendations would you give to other students to make its overcoming easier?

- Montreal is the French capital of Canada and, correspondingly, French is the official language of the province. All street signs and plates inside shops are in French. However, at the university, professors and students speak English. I had no problems because I am quite fluent in both languages. My colleagues proved to be pretty friendly and always ready to offer help. I recommend not being afraid and shy, and actively communicating with other people. Usually, people use so-called international English at such major universities with international staff, so all people are in the same conditions.

- Did you like Canada? Which places would you recommend to visit?

- I loved it so much that I was very sad to leave it. Canada has absolutely unique nature. I came in the very beginning of October, when the temperature was stably between 20 and 25°C, and trees were green; and I was leaving in December, so I got a chance to see a little bit of summer, fall, and winter. First of all, I recommend visiting Montreal itself: it is an interesting and unusual city, with tiny churches and monuments to emperors hiding among skyscrapers. I would also recommend to go and see the Niagara waterfall. The way to get there is quite inconvenient, but it is worth the effort. For me, it became the most extraordinary and interesting eyeful

of everything I saw there.



- Would you recommend other students to go abroad on internship programs? What is the most essential in this sort of experience?

- I sure do! This helps exchange experiences, establish contacts, and spend your time usefully and productively.

- Tatiana, thank you very much for the interesting interview. We wish you all the success in your further scientific activities!

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