



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Food Technology
Study period exchange	27/08/2019 until 20/12/2019
Country (exchange)	Finland
City (exchange)	Helsinki
University (exchange)	University of Helsinki
Faculty (exchange)	Faculty of Agriculture & Forestry

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to go abroad for several reasons. First of all, for my personal development. I think being in a different country, far away from home gives you a lot of self-esteem. Secondly, I was very interested in learning about a new country and the corresponding culture. Thirdly, it is good for your resume to have international experience, it shows that you can take care of yourself in another environment and in addition you are able to broaden your international network.

In addition to this, I think it is a very nice opportunity to explore other courses considering food technology than are given in Wageningen with another way of teaching/learning. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to improve your English, as that is important for the future as well. Finally, I think it is great to make trips and make new friends with another social background.

What is the reason you chose for this country/university?

Helsinki is a city which I have visited a few times already, as my aunt (Finnish) and uncle live there with their two children. I fell in love with the city because the city has a good balance between city and nature. Nordic/Scandinavian countries are known for their good education. From what I had read about the University the teaching methods are similar to those in the Netherlands and there are a lot of courses regarding food technology. The relaxedness in how they deal with certain things is really different from the Netherlands. I also think it is cool to experience a 'real' winter sometimes, as in the Netherlands we mostly do not have a very cold winter. Besides that, Helsinki is also a central spot to make trips to other countries.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination? (E.g. bus, train, etc.)

A flight to Helsinki is 2,5 hours, direct with Transavia. This is the cheapest company, although the time your arrival or departure time can be quite annoying.

4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	ME-102 Industrial Marketing in Forest Sector	5	General course with marketing basics (like B2B and B2C) with examples focused on the forest industry.	1	This course was very strange. The lectures were a sort of discussions, which were not very useful. As I do not have an economic background, it was sometimes hard to understand. You could however plan the exam yourself (general examination room) and the exam was very easy to pass.
2	FOOD-701 Food Crop Quality	3	Course about cereal grains, legumes and oilseeds.	4	It was an interesting course with professors that knew a lot about the topics (and did research about it themselves).
3	ECGS-001 Introduction to Sustainability Science	5	General course about sustainability with topics such as global warming.	5	You could give yourself a grade, which was amazing. Every lecture was about another topic and there was a nice (and easy) group work.
4	FOOD-103 Food Additives	5	Everything about food additives. The legislation, safety evaluation, chemical and technological properties etc. A lot of information about the categories: colours, preservatives, antioxidants, emulsifiers & stabilizers, flavour enhancers and sweeteners.	5	Nice course which was very useful for my study. The lectures were clear and studying for the course was also easy. There were 4 nice and easy assignments.
5	FOOD-110 Cereal and Pulse Ingredient Functionality	2	About cereals, legumes and other plant-based ingredients.	5	A bit similar to Food Crop Quality, but more in depth. Good professors that all did research about the topics themselves.
6	MMB-501 Biotechnology- from Inventions to Commercialization	5	Everything you need to know to start up your own entrepreneurship.	5	Very nice course in which you learn a lot of general skills, like pitching. There is one group project and some nice excursions.

7	AGERE-009 Mathematics for Economists III	5	Mathematics course that focuses on the mathematics used in economics. Matrices, differentiation and optimisation problems.	5	Easy course when you are good in mathematics.
8	FINN-114** Finnish Beginner' Course for Exchange Students	3	Language course in which you learn the basics of the Finnish language. Note: credits count for extra courses, not for optional.	3	During the course I did not have a feeling I learned a lot, but in the end, I could understand and distinguish some Finnish words.

How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)

There are two periods, in timing similar to those in Wageningen. I only followed courses with lectures. Most courses had lectures twice a week (courses of 3 or 5 credits) and some only once a week (2 credits). Some courses were for one period, some for two periods long (note: this means you have more exams in period 2).

The academic level and workload were a bit lower than in Wageningen. Lesson material is posted on Moodle (similar to Blackboard/Brightspace). It is also easy to e-mail professors if you have questions (they respond very fast). Some courses have essays, assignments or projects but most of my courses had a general examination at the end of the period. You are also able to retake the exams of period 1 in period 2 (you can improve your grade, even if you had a sufficient). The grading scale is fail or from 1-5.

What is the culture of the university? (E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with the WUR?)

Most of my courses were with many students (at least 50, however this is small compared to Wageningen), therefore it was not very personal. But I also had some courses, where the teacher really wanted you to introduce yourself and they also remembered your name (something that is not very common in Wageningen). Most courses had a majority of Erasmus students, which meant we did not have a lot of engagement with the local students. I only had one group project with a few (very motivated) Finnish students.

What does the university offer the student additionally? (E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?)

There is a student union (membership costs €50) with free healthcare and psychological help. Lunch (and sometimes dinner) is bought at the Unicafé, which serves a good meal for only €2,60. Unisport has a sports membership, around €80 for 4 months. In my Unihome building there was a laundry service, but this is also possible to do at some places (in Viikki at the Prisma they have a laundry service).

5. Housing-travelling-living

What are the possibilities for housing? (E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?)

Through the application module of the university (Mobility online) you could apply for HOAS (mostly shared apartments, around €450) or Unihome (big studio's (28 m²), €550-€612). I applied for Unihome, as I had heard most people would select this and, in the end,, it was true that indeed almost all Erasmus students lived there. I also had some friends who lived in Latokartano, which they applied through via another site, this was way cheaper but you have more roommates.

What is the culture of the country like? (E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?)

Finns don't like small talk, but my tutors were very social. Local cuisine consists of cinnamon buns, reindeer, fish etc., but supermarkets are very big and have almost everything they have in NL as well (I only missed good crisps and some vegetables). If they eat bread they eat a sort of dark rye bread. During lunch you often eat a warm lunch in the Unicafé, which is a student restaurant on the campus. Ofcourse Finns love the sauna, which results in a sauna everywhere (also in the Unihome and HOAS buildings).

Could you give a general price indication of the place of residence compared to living in Wageningen?

Life in general is somewhat more expensive. My rent was higher and also for groceries you pay a little extra, especially alcohol is way more expensive. I think in general it just costs more because you make more trips, eat out more and pay for entrance tickets for musea/castles etc.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure? (E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

From my building it was 1,5 km to the campus, which was walkable. I only know one person who bought a bike, but from April-October there is a system called Citybikes, which is quite cheap to use (€30 for whole period). We mostly walked or travelled by bus/tram/metro/train. In Helsinki itself there are 4 zones. City centre is A, where I lived was B, airport is C and further is D. An unlimited ticket for 4 months zone AB was around €120 (which is very little as you get around €95/month travel allowance from DUO). A trip to the other zones costs €2,50. Outside the city you can use VR for trains and Onnibus for bus trips (to Turku, Tampere etc.). Perille.fi was a useful site which compares all options and it was easy to book online.

6. Free time

What are must-sees in the area? (E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?)

There are 2 national parks, which are very close: Nuuksio (very good with public transport) and Sipoonkorpi (quite bad with public transport). Cities like Tampere, Turku, Hämeenlinna, Kotka and the lake region (lake Saimaa) are very nice to visit. We rented a cottage through Airbnb twice to see some more nature of Finland, but camping in the

wild is also an option. You can go to Tallinn by boat (2 hours) with Viking line or Eckerö, which can be as cheap as €8 for a return ticket. You can also go to Stockholm with Viking line (15 hours). You can do a cruise, which is very cheap (around €25 for 4 people), but this means you are only in Stockholm for around 6 hours. You can also book a normal return ticket, which often leaves at the end of the afternoon and then arrives next morning in Stockholm.

Timetravels is a company that cooperates with the ESN Uni Helsinki and has many nice trips. I did the Grand Russia trip (8 days), which visits St. Petersburg, Novgorod and Moscow and a trip to Lapland (Vasatokka). There are also possibilities to visit Stockholm with a Baltic cruise and there is a trip that visits the Baltic countries.

What does not appear in the travel guide, but is worth a visit?

In the southern part of the city, there are many islands you can visit. Suomenlinna is one of them, but there are many more (note: some are only reachable in summer). The sunsets in this part of the city are beautiful. I recommend looking up some tips on Pinterest, in this way you can find fancy libraries/restaurants/café/buildings etc. Another tip is to visit a rooftop bar (like Ateljee) which gives a nice view of the city.

Some other tips:

Musea

- Amos Rex
- Kiasma
- HAM
- EMMA
- Kunsthalle
- National Museum of Finland
- City museum
- Museum of Technology

Other

- Allas sea pool
- Botanical gardens
- Karaoke bar, a must do in Finland (many in Kallio area, and bar Ralli close to the Unihome building)
- Korkeasaari zoo (on an island)
- Seurasaari (an island)
- Ice hockey game in Hartwall arena
- Sibelius monument + café Regatta
- Temppeliaukion kirkko (rock church)
- Linnanmäki (amusement park)
- Oodi library
- National library
- Helsinki University library
- Yrjönkatu swimming hall (very old and beautiful)

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time (E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?)

There are many days when musea are for free (check this site:

<https://www.myhelsinki.fi/en/see-and-do/sights/free-admission-days-at-museums-in-helsinki>). I visited many museums because of this. Fazer café is a café of the famous

Finnish brand. Finlayson, Iittala and Marimekko are typical Finnish brands, of which the shops are worth a visit. Parties are often given by ESN or the International Club at the venues Maxine, Skohan, Heidi's Bier Bar (my favourite) and Apollo.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

I did not really face a lot of challenges. I kept a lot of contact with my friends and family at home and wrote on the app Polarsteps to keep them updated about my Erasmus life. I did not really experience a lot of culture differences and did not feel the Finns were anti-social.

What was your best memory abroad?

I can't choose one thing. But I think I valued my friend group of Erasmus people the most. We were close from the first day of the introduction week and did almost everything together. I loved all the trips we made and I loved walking in the Eira area, where there is a beautiful sunset (which is around 15:00 in November).

8. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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