



# WUR Goes Abroad

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## 1. Student Information

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<b>Field of study in Wageningen</b>	Geo-Information Sciences
<b>Study period exchange</b>	27-08-2019 until 20/12/2019
<b>Country (exchange)</b>	Finland
<b>City (exchange)</b>	Helsinki
<b>University (exchange)</b>	University of Helsinki
<b>Faculty (exchange)</b>	Faculty of Science

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### **Why did you choose to go on study exchange?**

I wanted to do an exchange for a longer period, in my bachelors this was not possible. Now was the perfect time to do so. I love the Nordic countries so I tried to look around there, I love going there on holiday but now I wanted to experience living in the country as well.

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

I initially wanted to go to Sweden, but that did not work out. I looked at other universities offering Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology as a programme and Helsinki was the other good option in the Nordics offering this programme. The finish lifestyle applies to what I seek as well: lots of nature, saunas, relaxing atmosphere and not a warm climate.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

There are many methods to get to Helsinki: cheap planes leave daily, you can take the train to Travemunde and then the ferry, or go all the way by train/bus around the baltics to Talinn and then take the ferry over there.

## 4. University and studying

### Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

I chose several courses all related to meteorology and atmospheric sciences, which would contribute to the joint thesis I am doing with MAQ/MGI.

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
<b>1</b>	ATM318 – Aerosol Measurement Techniques	5	The student will get basic information on the current techniques to measure atmospheric aerosol particles. Particular interest is placed on measurements of physical, chemical and optical properties, as well as aerosol hygroscopicity and volatility. The student learns the scientific basis of the instrument components.	4	Good course to learn how aerosols and other particles are being measured in the atmosphere. Includes lab visits and highly detailed descriptions of instruments.
<b>2</b>	ATM322 – Meteorological Observation Systems	5	At the end of the course, students should have an overall knowledge of the main components of the atmospheric observing systems, basic understanding of the observables and measuring principles these systems provide, basic understanding how these systems are used in operational weather service, and in atmospheric and climate research and understanding of the applications of satellite remote sensing instruments in meteorology and climate research	4	First half of the course is all about theory of systems used for meteorological observations, latter half more about organisations and doing two small research; one to present and one for a paper. First half was interesting, second part a bit less.
<b>3</b>	ATM352 – Synoptic Meteorology I	5	At the end of the course, students should be able to describe the current weather situation and explain how it will evolve, understand the typical evolution of synoptic-scale weather systems, determine how large-scale weather patterns	5	One of the best courses, a lot of information especially if you don't have the required background. Makes it easier with Victoria being such a good teacher. Loved this course and would highly recommend.

			differ from climatological means Apply theories to real weather situations, fully understand the limitations and assumptions of theories and interpret a wide range of charts including satellite images, model output, surface observations (synop) charts and radiosonde soundings.		
<b>4</b>	ATM301 – Atmospheric and Earth Sciences Today	5	Introductory course to all meteorology students. Learn about structure and composition of atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and anthroposphere. Circulation patterns in oceans, energy cycles and interaction between earth-atmosphere are taught. Modelling tools and methods for atmosphere are presented.	5	Beginner course of the master programme and good for this as well. Includes a two day visit to Hyytiälä, a highly advanced weather station where you will spend the night. University offers three meals, plus sauna and drinks in the evening. Great way to start the semester.
<b>5</b>	ATM315 – Numerical Meteorology I	5	At end of the course, students should know the principles of the numerical methods used in weather and climate models, and can at practical level write a computer program to numerically solve a shallow-water model, make numerical experiments with the model, and visualize and interpret the results.	4	Difficult at first if you don't have experience in translating physics equations to code. Mostly self-study which I do not do very well. So I had to work a bit harder for this course.
<b>6</b>	ATM357 – Atmospheric Radiation	5	Learning how radiation works, both theoretically and descriptive. Conceptual and mathematical foundation is laid. Radiative transfer equation is described in detail. Furthermore, atmospheric optical characteristics such as scattering, absorption, radiative transfer, effect of clouds and aerosols are all described.	5	Gives a highly detailed introduction to the physical background of atmospheric radiation and goes in-depth in some subjects as well. A lot of information but is a great course to get to know a lot about radiation properties.

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

Academic level is high. Helsinki is even more relaxed with grading than the WUR. For most courses you need about 45/50% of the possible marks to pass. This includes both exercises and exam. You still need to do a lot, but you can pass everything easily if you just put some work in.

**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?)**

Same as the WUR. A bit more relaxed, but that's mostly the Finnish vs Dutch culture. Main differences was that all the courses I was doing were in small groups, sometimes I had a course with only 4 people signed up. This makes the interaction with professors much better.

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

Food is much better than at the WUR. For €2,60 you can get a lunch meal (buffet type) and take as much as you want. Salad bar is free, plus standard bread as well. Coming back here an university student meal is just too expensive. Sport facilities are about the same, somewhat expensive: 20 Euro per month. They offer more events for the students it seems, but often at a smaller scale. In general the students had more input on what to put somewhere in the University, such as hangout places all over the place designed by the students.

## 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?)**

If you sign up directly through the university, they will put you on a list. After a while they give you one housing offer, up to you to take it or find something on your own. In Helsinki there are mostly studios or small apartments, not as much shared houses. I really disliked this in the beginning, sitting in your own studio without any common hangout place. After a while when you find a group of people this does not matter much.

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

Finns are much more relaxed, and generally nicer than Dutch people. With the amount of space they have, they utilize it well. It's not as cramped as in the Netherlands and there is much more nature around. The cuisine is not as good as here, even though our food is not that extremely high class. Everyone is more respectful and generally accepting everyone. Their student life is somewhat the same. They don't really go out or drink something daily or casually but plan it more ahead. When they do drink though they go for cheap vodka from Tallinn or their weird chocolate mint liquor.

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

I got an apartment in the centre near Kamppi of about 30m<sup>2</sup>. This includes a kitchen and bathroom. I had to pay €580 a month, which was high above my actual price range but with the limited offers I had to take it. The location was amazing however, and included in the building were 2 large saunas open for everyone and great washing facilities.

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

Helsinki has 4 zones (ABCD) and the type of zone ticket you get affects the price. Students get a discount ticket. An AB ticket will suffice, you have to a monthly fee of €32,20 to get unlimited travelling in the AB zone.

## 6. Free time

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

Definitely check out the nature parks around Helsinki, enjoy the summer on the beaches, go outside and rent a cabin somewhere in the woods. Take the ferry to Tallinn and stay there for a weekend or so, it's much cheaper and the night culture is amazing. Take a trip to St. Petersburg for at least a couple of days, visas are easy to get and the city is beautiful with again a very lively nightlife. Rent a cabin way up north in Lapland with some friends and get out in nature; go ski or hike around. Kallio is a great district in Helsinki to go out.

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

Sompasauna is a must see. An open, free sauna next to the sea. Takes a while to get there, but worth it. I went there quite often. There are nice clubs such as Kaiku or Post Bar, but they are a bit commercial if you're more into the underground stuff.

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

Don't go out, it's too expensive. Almost all faculties have some sort of student hangout place where they sell their own drinks for about 5x as cheap as you can get in a bar or club. Look at some nice festivals in the summer.

## 7.Challenges & best moment abroad

**What was a challenge you have experienced?**

Being on your own and starting from scratch. The group I often went out with all lived somewhere else (1hr away) which made it kind of difficult to do something often each evening. It was a bit boring in the beginning and as my building only had studios you hardly ever saw someone. They organised some get to know even a bit later and from there on I did meet people in my building and around which made it all fine.

**What was your best memory abroad?**

The last night walking around in the city, hanging out with people I have met and saying goodbye, made me realize even more what a nice period it was.

**8. Contact details**

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