



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

<b>Field of study in Wageningen</b>	Forest and nature management
<b>Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	01-09-2019 until 18-12-2019
<b>Country (exchange)</b>	Finland
<b>City (exchange)</b>	Joensuu
<b>University (exchange)</b>	University of Eastern Finland
<b>Faculty (exchange)</b>	Environmental science and forestry

## 2. Motivation for exchange

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

I decided to go on exchange, because I wanted to experience living abroad. The stories from people that had been on exchange were positive. Furthermore, Erasmus is a unique and very accessible opportunity to live in another country for a while and experience a different (student) culture.

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

I chose Finland because it is Europe's most forested country: 78% of Finland consists of forests. Therefore, Finland seemed like an excellent place to study forest sciences. Joensuu is the "Forestry Capital of Europe" and has nature areas both inside and outside of the city. I also chose Joensuu because of its geographic location: it is located close to the Russian border. This has resulted in a lot of forestry experts originating from Russia living close to Joensuu. As a result, I could follow lectures not only from Finnish forestry experts but also from Russian experts. This was interesting to me because Russia contains around ¼ of global wood resources.

Another reason to choose Finland is because this country is known for its high-quality education. Finland has also been ranked as the happiest country in the world. This is funny to me because Finnish people are generally known to be quiet and reserved.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

It is recommended to travel by airplane to Helsinki. From Helsinki, you can choose between going to Joensuu by train, which takes around 4 hours, or by airplane. I went by airplane to Stockholm and then from Stockholm to Helsinki. In Helsinki, my parents rented a car so we could go on a road trip through southern Finland. They left me and my luggage in Joensuu. This was a very easy way to reach Joensuu. However, this took place in August when the weather was good, so if you go in January it might not be recommendable.

## 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	Introduction to biology of environmental change	3	Provided an overview on processes changing the environment, such as rising temperature and chemical pollution.	2	This course was very broad. Sometimes, it was a little bit boring.
2	Current issues in forest conservation and biodiversity	3	Different topics, such as reserve planning, ecosystem services, and carbon storage.	4	Lectures were very interesting. This course promotes "cultural exchange". Includes group work and seminar presentations.
3	Global peatland ecology	3	Ecology, current status, and global significance of peatlands. Included biogeochemistry, climate, hydrology, utilization history, etc.	5	One of my favourite courses. It included a field trip to Patvinsuo National Park. Includes group work and seminar presentations.
4	Forestry in Russia	5	About forests, forestry and forest industry in Russia.	4	Very interesting to learn about not only forestry, but also politics and history of what is currently the Russian Federation. The collapse of the Soviet Union and theories on future development of the forest sector were included in this course. Lectures were given by experts on Russian forestry.
5	Forest health management	3	Independent study: writing a review about a topic related to forest health (I chose soil compaction)	3	Only recommended if you enjoy working independently.
6	Literature report in hydrobiology	2	Writing a literature report about hydrobiology (I chose the transatlantic migration of the European eel)	4	Like the previous course, this is independent study.

7	Boreal lake ecosystems and food webs	2	Main characteristics of the structure and functioning of boreal lake ecosystems + modern research methods.	4	Interesting course but I did not have a lot of pre-knowledge on aquatic ecology. Therefore, it took some extra time to understand everything.
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**How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)**

The workload is similar to the workload of my bachelor programme (forest and nature management) at Wageningen University. The study forms are different, because the courses consist mostly of lectures and self-study. In Wageningen I had more contact hours. The examination is in “essay style”. They give you around 3-5 questions that you have to answer by writing essays of 1-2 pages per question. Some courses did not have an exam. In this cases, your grade was based on group work and reports.

**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?)**

The students in Finland are a little bit more reserved compared to Dutch students. It is a little bit unusual to interrupt a professor just because you want to ask a question. When someone asked a question, 9 out of 10 times this was an exchange student. However, the lecturers are approachable and they even have 15 minutes after each lecture dedicated just to answering questions. Therefore, if you had a question it was no problem to get the answer.

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

The university offers students lunch for 1.97 Euro. This is an “all-you-can-eat” catering system. You can decide for yourself what you want to have (you can choose between sandwiches, salads, pasta, lasagne, soup, lemonade, milk, fruit, etc.). The menu was different every day. The social welfare taxes enable Finland to provide totally free school lunches. For universities, the lunches are not totally free but highly subsidized, so you pay a small price and get a lot of food in return. Sport rights are around 35 Euro per semester. Same system as Wageningen, where you subscribe for the sports you want to join beforehand.

## 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?)**

There is a long waiting list for private rooms, so the exchange students are placed in shared flats. However, this is a good way to meet other people. The rent is very cheap: around 200-250 Euro per month. My room was located around 6 km from campus, but you can rent a bike for only 40 Euro for 4 months at the community resource centre.

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

People in Finland value their personal space. Most of them are very well-behaved. It is not common to interrupt people while they are speaking. The typical Finnish person prefers to wait until he is sure that the other person is finished talking before replying. Furthermore, people in Joensuu exercise multiple times a week and they can be very competitive.

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

The food from the supermarket is more expensive compared to Wageningen, but the difference is not too big. Furthermore, for less than 2 euros you can get the university lunch, which includes vegetables, etc. Clothing is a little bit more expensive, but there are several second-hand shops that are very popular among students.

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

Bus cards are around 56 euros for 1 month. However, the bus that I had to take ended in the city centre. From there on, I still had to walk for 10-15 minutes before reaching the campus. Therefore, I would recommend travelling by bike (if your exchange takes place during autumn). During the spring semester, the bus might be a better option considering all the snow.

## 6. Free time

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

St. Petersburg, Lapland, Stockholm and Helsinki. I prefer to travel by train and airplane. There are student discounts on the tickets if you have a Finnish student card.

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

Depends on what you are interested in. Maybe the sauna because it is a typical Finnish activity.

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

Make sure to wear enough layers when going out. There are not that many restaurants and clubs in Joensuu.

## 7.Challenges & best moment abroad

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

It took more effort than usually to study because the courses I took were all different from each other. Furthermore, I was unfamiliar with some of the topics. But this made the courses more interesting.

**What was your best memory abroad?**

I am going to visit Lapland, Tallinn and St. Petersburg in December so I assume the best memories are still to be made. At this point, I had a lot of fun with my 4 roommates and all their visitors. And two of my friends have visited me during their “autumn holiday”, which was also a lot of fun.