



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Soil, Water, Atmosphere
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	16/08/2021 until 21/12/2021
Country (exchange)	Norway
City (exchange)	Sogndal
University (exchange)	Høgskulen på Vestlandet
Faculty (exchange)	Education, arts and sports

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I knew I wanted to go on exchange quite early in my studies. At that point just to experience studying and living somewhere else. I was looking for a country with a lot of nature and beautiful landscapes, so that it was possible to actually live in such surroundings instead of only going on holidays. I also wanted to develop myself.

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

Norway, especially the western part of Norway is so beautiful. With all the fjords and mountains there are endless opportunities to go out into nature. I always had the urge to go to Norway and going on exchange there looked like the perfect opportunity. After a cancellation (due to covid) of an exchange to Oslo 1 semester before, I had to start looking again. The courses in Oslo were not so nice in the first semester as they were in the second semester. However I still really wanted to go to Norway, but not too far north (due to the shortage of light). This exchange was extra for my bachelor's and therefore I decided to do something completely different. I applied for a university of applied sciences and choose to study something sport related, more precisely nature related. And this was the best decision I could make. Also the location of Sogndal is perfect, next to the biggest fjord in Norway. It is not too big, what I like, and surrounded by stunning nature.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Sogndal is quite hard to reach. Or at least it takes some time to get there. There is an airport, but than you have to transfer on Oslo I think. You can also fly on Bergen and take the boat to Sogndal, or fly to Oslo and take the bus to Sogndal. The boat takes 5 hours and the bus takes around 7 hours. I recommend taking the boat at least once (in summer is better, because than it is light during travelling), because than you can just enjoy going over the fjord for 5 hours. You can also take the flibus from Groningen to Oslo and than the bus to Sogndal. On my way back I took the bus to Oslo, than the flibus to Copenhagen and transferred there to the train. So there are quite a lot of options, but it takes time. The bus, flibus, train travel took me 30 hours. If you want to travel in 1 day, flying to Bergen and taking the boat from there is the best.

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	Friluftsliv, nature and culture	15 (awarded 10 by WUR)	You learn everything about the relation between nature and culture. Also you get more insight in the history of friluftsliv and the way Norwegians go into nature. We got a lot of excursions where we learned about orientation and experienced friluftsliv ourselves.	5	
2	Outdoor leadership	15 (awarded 10 by WUR)	We learned everything about trip planning and being the outdoor leader. Think about safety and risk management, getting the best experience for the participants and steps to take by planning a trip.	4	We also had excursions for this course, but the lectures were in a really short amount of time.
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How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)

The workload is pretty low. Before autumn holidays, the rhythm was: 1 week of excursion, 1 week on campus. In the campus weeks we got some theory and had to evaluate from previous and prepare for next excursion. It was also getting some breath in between the excursions. I have had 7 excursions from 2 days till 5 days. The excursions were the most important part of the first half of the semester. These were really cool and you learned a lot, but also exhausting. After autumn holiday we only had one excursion left. So mostly we had lectures on campus, I think we had 3 days a week lectures. This was mostly a lecture of 2 hours. During the lectures also a lot of group work/discussions were held, which was different for me. But interesting to see. I had two exams, one was a 6 hour exam where we had to write an assignment about one question. For the other exam I had to submit to papers.

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 teachers are really approachable. You could literally ask them everything. Maybe because this minor is only for international students, our main teacher was really involved with us. Furthermore the teachers join us on the excursions, so this also gives a different bound. For example, we went on a mountain excursions with 10 students + 1 teacher. Then you are just with 11 people for 4 days and we only saw 1 other woman. Of course the teacher takes some distance sometimes and prepares own dinner etc., but you eat dinner at the same time, enjoy the view together with the whole group etc. This makes the teachers easy approachable.

Because this minor is only for internationals, I didn't have that much contact with local students. We went on one excursions with Norwegians, which is a nice way to get in touch with them.

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

There is a canteen on the university, but everything is quite expensive (as everything is in Norway). Sometimes they had good deals, e.g. breakfast for 1 euro during exam week. Laundry can be done in the student housing. There are enough machines.

The sports facilities are amazing. There is a large climbing and bouldering hall. Also the gym is really big and you can follow a lot of lessons. You can also borrow climbing shoes and squash rackets if you don't have them yourself. The swimming pool is only opened twice a week I think, that is not so much. But during the summer you can also swim in the fjord.

There are also 2 outdoor/student associations. It is really cheap to join them and I would really recommend to do so. Even if you are not planning on joining one of their trips, you can borrow kayaks, climbing gear, snow shoes, tents, hammocks. Literally everything for going out into nature.

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?)

You can sign up for private rooms, but I didn't do that as Saman (the student welfare and housing organization) provided rooms for every international student. As an exchange student we had to share a room with another person. This might sound not so nice, but I think almost everyone

managed to do well and therefore everyone is also more connected to each other. I had a room in Studentheimen with an own bathroom and kitchen and paid around 300 euros per month. This is not too expensive, but remember that it is a shared room. I would say Elvatunet and Stedjæsen are nicer accommodations than studentheimen. However Studentheimen is close to the city centre and also close to university. Although everything is max. a 15 minutes walk.

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

Norwegians are quite closed people. It is difficult to get in contact with them, but of course I also met some more open Norwegians. On a party they are more open. Parties were mostly held during the weekend, as in Norway travel distances are so big, that almost no one is going home to their parents during the weekend. There were a lot of people that liked doing outdoor stuff. You can generally find a lot of those people in Sogndal, as it is well known for the nature around it and the skiing opportunities.

There is less choice in food. The vegetarian options are minimal, or very expensive and I would say Norwegians eat quite a lot of meat and fish and less vegetables than we do.

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

The room rent was the same as in Wageningen. Groceries are more expensive.

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

There is no public transport in the city. You can just walk everywhere. If you want to go to the mountains a little bit further away you can take the bus. This is quite cheap. I think around 3 euros for a 15 minutes bus drive. The buses are going quite often. You can download the app Entur to check travel times. Be careful that if you go by the VYbuss (a more fancy bus) that you order tickets beforehand on www.vy.no. If you buy tickets in the bus it is way more expensive than online. The other busses it is fine to just pay your tickets in the bus.

6. Free time

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

Around Sogndal there are 4 mountains, which is all nice to visit as it is so close and you look to those mountains every day. Storehaugen (mountain with the radar) gives a really nice view on also the bigger fjord, you can go there by bus. Stedjæsen is a very steep, but short walk and you can be on top in 1,5 hours from anywhere in the city. That is really cool. Make the hikes preferably in summer, but I also did some in winter. The conditions are just a little bit more harsh than.

Go kayaking on the fjord, in October this is also really nice, as there might be some snow on the top of the mountains.

A little further away, there is Jostedalsglacier. It is really word to go to a glacier and see the landscape. Børsteinen is a beautiful viewpoint (and also not so well-known). A lot of things are just 1 hour or more away, but this is normal travel time in Norway. We have been there sometimes by car and sometimes by bus.

Also Jotunheimen (national park with high mountains) is really nice. I have been there the end of October and did the famous Beseggen hike. The conditions were harsh, but it was doable. Because of the time of the year there were not a lot of other people, which was nice.

Download the apps: UT and Norgeskart to see hikes and cabins.

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

Just go anywhere and it will be nice. I have been on one trip to Longevasshytta, which was quite intense and harsh conditions, but it was so cool and beautiful. Just be sure that you think good about your plan, take a satellite telephone if there is no service, have a good look at the map. Just be sure to plan your trips very well, especially in winter.

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

You can go to the club in Meieriet or to a pre/after party. But the parties in the Netherlands are just way better. You should really go to Sogndal if you like the outdoors and spending time in nature. It is quite small, so take that into account. But the options for going into nature are endless.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

Some gear of my broke and than it is really difficult to get it fixed, because I bought it in the Netherlands.

Also it is sometimes difficult to choose what to do and that you only have half a year to do cool stuff, this might be intense sometimes.

What was your best memory abroad?

The trip to Longevasshytta, a DNT cabin. With 10 fellow students we wanted to go there for 3 days, but decided to return one day early because of possible snow storm. It was a little bit dangerous and therefore difficult decision making and we needed to discuss a lot during our trip there. But when we arrived it was such a nice and cosy cabin with nice people. After this crazy hike through deep snow and a beautiful landscape it was really nice to be in this cabin. And we also learned a lot and could use everything we had learned during our courses.

8. Contact details (optional)

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