



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Environmental Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	03/01/2022 until 07/06/2022
Country (exchange)	Finland
City (exchange)	Kuopio
University (exchange)	University of Eastern Finland
Faculty (exchange)	Department of Environmental Science

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I knew I liked winter and snow and that I don't mind both coldness and darkness. Finland is generally known of course as a country where things are very well organized and where the education system was supposedly very good. So for me it was an obvious choice.

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

The UEF (in Kuopio) is generally more specialized in all things related to the environment. It's like the Wageningen of Finland just smaller and with a lot more trees and snow.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

The trains are quite well organized in Finland so I recommend going by train from Helsinki (Air)port to Kuopio, this saves money, you won't have to travel from Kuopio airport to the actual city, the net travel time is shorter also it helps the environment of course. You can buy train tickets using the app of the Finnish train company 'VR' with your credit card or a Nordic bank account, there is a huge student discount but this only works if you have a student card.

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	<i>Chemicals, Environment and Health</i>	5	Deals with different toxicology concepts and communicating about them	4	The teacher is very social unlike her fellow fins. The 'learning diary' she lets you write is a bit of a pain in the ...
2	<i>Combustion, Emissions and Control Technologies</i>	5	Broad course that deals with everything related to combustion	3	I felt the course was a bit unstructured, but useful for people who are aspiring environmental engineers
3	<i>Methods in Soil Ecology</i>	5	Short course with 2 weeks of soil practical's	4	The practical's might be a bit basic for people already familiar in a soil lab.
4	<i>Atmospheric Chemistry</i>	5	A more in depth course about all the chemistry in the air	3	Few people take this course, also taught by a other department.
5	<i>Critical Geography of the European Union</i>	5	Several lectures on different problems the EU faces/faced	2	Course was fully taught online with very little opportunity for interaction
6	<i>Advanced Water Hygiene</i>	5	Course about water safety and	4	The main teacher, really likes the Netherlands, so bonus if you're Dutch.

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

The way the courses are planned is kind of a mess to be honest, they do have online planning tools like we have at WUR however they are less user friendly and somewhat out-dated. Also they don't work with periods nor morning or afternoon courses. So there can be a lot of overlap between courses, in the sense that you have lectures of two different courses at the same time and that one month you only have one course and the next one there are suddenly four. Also the time each course takes varies a lot, some take just two or three weeks and others take two months, so be mindful of that when planning your LA.

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?)

Finnish people are known to be quite introverted and with some exceptions this is reflected in the way they teach. Classes are in general less engaging than what you might be used to here at the WUR. Also the Finnish student don't interact as easily with each other and foreign students, this can be either a blessing or a curse at some times. Anyway be prepared for a lot of socially awkward situations. Not to say that the people at UEF aren't nice, they are, and also very helpful, however, they never come to you, you always have to come to/ask them.

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

The university has more or less the same facilities as we have here at the WUR, only the transport during the winter month is done almost entirely by foot, ski or bus. Later in the year when the snow is gone there are electric steps and bikes available. The food in the cafeteria is quite good and very cheap with the student discount compared to the price of food elsewhere, they also take a lot of dietary wishes into account.

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?)

Kuopio has a special dedicated student housing company called 'Kuopas', getting a room there is fairly easy and straight forward, unlike here in the Netherlands. Also the rent is quite low, at the time I paid something like €283,- per month for a 17 m² room in a shared apartment with 2 students. The houses themselves are a bit old as is the furniture and equipment. One important tip, make sure you get a second mattress asap, the one you get from them is very thin and gave a lot of people a sore back.

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

Like I said before, Finnish people are quite introverted, so they don't easily start a conversation with you. However, they do all speak English and are always willing to help when you ask for it. Saunas are a big thing of course in Finland, however unlike what you might be used to, private changing rooms don't exist there and also often you are not even allowed to wear anything in the sauna itself. So it's not a place for people who don't want to be naked in front of strangers. The clubs and bars are also a bit different for what you may be used to, the dancefloors are rather small relative to the bar size and the sitting area, also I find that the music was often somewhat underwhelming. Also since drinking is very discouraged in Finland, the Fins are either practically sober or totally wasted.

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

I think the average prices there are low, €350 a month is about as crazy as you can go in Kuopio, if I remember correctly. I think most people who have a room in Wageningen will save maybe up to €100,- a month in rent.

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

Like I said before, the trains are nice, just remember to buy a ticket via the VR app. Also there are several bus companies that operate long-distance bus rides. The busses in Kuopio are operated by a company called Vilku (also the name of their app), you can buy a bus card at the municipality for like €40 ish and with that you can take a unlimited number of bus rides for 30 days. If you buy separate tickets they cost around €3,30 and are only valid for one hour, so you already break even in the first

few days by buying the card. Especially in winter you want this card, because there are no other modes of travel available aside from walking. There are also taxi's, but I don't know their pricing.

6. Free time

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

The nature! Luckily that all around you in Finland. In the winter there a lot of places to do cross-country skiing and downhill skiing and ice-skating of course. Also going at least once to a Finnish public sauna and then jumping into a frozen lake, is a typically Finnish experience.

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

I actually didn't check any travel guides, so I don't know.

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

Well restaurants aren't that expensive compared to the food prices in the supermarkets, however the alcohol is prohibitively expensive so keep that in mind when you go drinking. There where some people who actually out drank their credit line. Other than that try to enjoy the snow and ice as much as possible, you will be sorry you didn't try more once everything is gone. In Finland it is normal to go BBQing at these public fireplaces in the snow with temperatures of like -10 degrees, the wood is free by the way.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

Well aside from overcoming the occasional awkwardness from interacting with Finnish people, the most challenging thing for me at least was that at the end of my exchange period, it was very light outside the entire night. Some people actually couldn't sleep for example without a sleeping mask because of the sunlight. However, I think for most people it is actually the darkness during winter that will be more troubling.

What was your best memory abroad?

Going to Lapland during the winter, it was amazing with all the snow and the northern lights etc. A bit expensive for students perhaps but still totally worth it for me.

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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