



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Environmental Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	1/2/2022 until 3/7/2022
Country (exchange)	Latvia
City (exchange)	Riga
University (exchange)	University of Latvia
Faculty (exchange)	Business, Economics and Management

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

Firstly, I wanted to challenge myself on a more personal level by throwing myself in a completely new environment with no familiarities. In terms of study, I wanted to study outside of my study field to orientate for my master program and thought, why not abroad.

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

As I wanted to explore a social discipline, but do not have the background knowledge (on paper). The universities that would take me in as an environmental sciences student in their social faculties were limited. Also, I do not make use of the aeration industry so that also limited my options. Riga, specifically the University of Latvia, caught my attention as it survived the two mentioned benchmarks, and I was curious to learn more about this country. I had not been to the East of Europe before this exchange and that is why I wanted to go to Riga even more.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I only travel by public transport as I mentioned, so my tips are based on this practice. Ecolines is a bus company that has a direct connection from Bonn (Germany) to Riga (Latvia). You can also take part in this trip later than Bonn of course; I travelled by train from Ede-Wageningen to Berlin and from Berlin took this bus directly to Riga. (This was actually cheaper than airplane tickets.) Ecolines allows quite a lot of luggage on this trip, which is nice. If your suitcase is bigger than the allowed measurements, you can request to take it by emailing the company in advance and pay 20 euros in cash to the bus driver (I did this). It will be very difficult to cross the border into the Baltics by train, because the old Soviet rail network does not match with the rest of Europe. That is why I recommend this bus to avoid 10 transfers and taking multiple trains and busses etc. Also, you do not need a stay overnight somewhere as the direct bus drives through the night.

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>Negotiation and argumentation techniques and frameworks</i>	3	The title says it all. a lot of student presentations about various topics related to the course. E.g. manipulation, learning theory, conflict management, communication theories, etc.	2	(online) Too many of the contact hours were dedicated to presentations, as the lecturer was very lenient with procrastination and going over time. I liked the freedom surrounding the essay.
2	<i>Effective Management</i>	3	All related to effective management: theory on process mapping and putting that into practice, theory on management theories, leadership styles, productivity, resources, etc.	4	(online) Fairly interesting content and nice to get to practice with a practical application of theory in a groupwork project.
3	<i>International Economics and Business</i>	6	Theories of international trade, international trade policies, investments, migration, global labour division, etc.	3	(online) Very capitalist perspective that is not questioned. Lectures were very long and boring with little interaction. The separate seminars were very nice.
4	<i>Consumer Psychology and Behavior on International Business</i>	6	Basics on different psychological theories by famous psychologists, tools of influence, theory on perception in relation to marketing and consumer behavior, experience economy, value proposition canvas (theory and application), qualitative research methods, lifestyle theories, etc.	3	(online and in class) The level of difficulty and quality of the lectures varied greatly per topic. I enjoyed the practical applications during the course. The teaching style of the professor of this course does not fit well with my preferences, so I might be biased.
5	<i>Intercultural Business Relations</i>	3	Business etiquette in different countries, a lot of student presentations about various topics related to the course. E.g.	2	(online) Too many of the contact hours were dedicated to presentations, as the lecturer was very lenient with procrastination and going over time. I liked

			diversity management, sustainability in business cultures, etc.		the freedom surrounding the essay.
6	<i>Business ethics and corporate social responsibility</i>	3	Ethical dilemmas (in the business/work environment), basic theory on ethics and CSR	3	(in class) The content provided by the lecturer was very much on an introductory level, I did not learn that many new things. I enjoyed the discussions in class with other students. Most of the lecture time was spend on presentations.
7	<i>Economics and Global Security</i>	6	Very broad, many different topics: global security in relation to; history, environment, international government and politics; cyber world; economy; Ukraine-Russia war; migration, etc.	4	(online and in class) Probably my favourite course, the seminars were very good with lots of discussion. The content was very interesting and broad, but sometimes it was too much info squeezed in too little time.
8	<i>Drawing 1</i>	6	Academic drawing, meaning realistic by applying theories. Linear perspective, composition, perspective, proportion, hatching, light and dark, sketching, etc.	4	(in class) I followed this course just for fun, not for the credits/marks. Even though I did not really like the teaching style of the professor, I learned a lot and really saw progress throughout and at the end of the course.

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

Compared to WUR, the workload is fairly low; I managed to follow roughly 18/20 ECTS in the timespan of 2 months. Examination is really easy, mostly based on repetition of theory. There are lots of presentations, in every course. I followed mostly bachelor courses, while I am a 4th year bachelor student, the academic level was a bit too low for me. One lecture lasts for 1,5 hours without breaks. Often, I have 1,5 h lecture, half an hour break and then another 1,5 hours of the same course. Really ineffective in my opinion, especially online it was almost impossible to stay focused.

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?)

I would say it depends on a bit per lecturer, but generally the lecturers are as approachable as at WUR; very approachable. I addressed most lecturers by their first name.

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

In my faculty building there was no canteen and I did not hear anything from my friends about a cafeteria in their buildings. Sports are very cheap, but the selection is slim/limited. I did make use of it, 2 trainings a week of self-defense.

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?)

The university has some houses with dorms. LU communicates very well on how to do this with deadlines etc. I did not make use of it. On facebook there are some groups in which either students post available rooms in their student houses (very well known as 'hospiteren' in the Netherlands) or landlords themselves post their rooms.

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

People tend to be not very friendly, they do not greet strangers, just minding their own business, just taking what is given because at least it is something, etc. I tried to learn a bit about the history of Latvia and based on that the social culture is not a surprise. It is a pretty religious country. Not everybody speaks English, not even youth and older generations almost never speak English, with Russian you will have a way higher chance. Cuisine is just a lot of potatoes and meat. The spatial planning will be shocking when you travel through the country, there is lots of forest and just unbuild space.

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

The price is like to be either similar to Wageningen or less. I pay between 300-250 per month, in Wageningen 370.

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

Public transport is super affordable, but not necessarily quicker. The fastest way to get around is by bike or taxi. Taxi is also pretty cheap.

6. Free time

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

I prefer the Saulkrasti beach over the Jurmala beach (the latter is the most popular). I take the train most often to go to other cities in Latvia. To cross borders mostly I take busses (luxexpress, ecolines, flibus, etc)

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

Not sure what is in the traveling guide. But I travelled also quite a bit outside of Latvia to neighbouring countries that are easier to reach when you are already in the Baltics.

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

Splendid palace, national opera, Ogre, kayak tour in/around Riga, national library (this is free for students in Latvia! Get a pass in the beginning)

Restaurants/cafes with vegetarian/vegan options: Maza Terapija, Miit café, Banana Leaf, Tblisi, Ezitis Migla, Kozy Eats,

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

What was your best memory abroad?

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name/e-mail	sammy-xie@live.nl	