

WUR Goes Abroad



1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	BSc Tourism
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	14/08/2022 until 20/12/2022
Country (exchange)	Norway
City (exchange)	Bø i Telemark
University (exchange)	University of South-Eastern Norway
Faculty (exchange)	Business and IT

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I have chosen to go on exchange because I wanted to study outside of the Netherlands. I wanted to follow courses in my subject of interest in a different environment and country. Moreover, I wanted to learn more about another culture and lifestyle than the Dutch one.

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

I have chosen the USN because I did not get in my first three choices. Then I got the list with remaining spots of other universities, and I looked which universities had a programme that I was interested in. That is how I found the USN.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Yes, take the plane to Oslo Gardemoen. From Oslo Gardemoen (Oslo International Airport), Campus Bø from the USN is accessible by train. But, you have to switch trains at Oslo S (Oslo Central Station). So first you take a train from Oslo Airport to Oslo S and then from Oslo S you take the F5 to Kristiansand, which stops at Bø station.

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	Sustainability Management	7.5	In this course you learn about the renewable energies, CSR, and Environmental Reporting/Accounting	5	The course was well structured with a clear schedule. Moreover, information of what is expected of you is given at the start of the course and the lectures are easy to follow. The examination consisted of an essay which counted for 20% and an exam.
2	Sustainability Marketing and Circular Economy	7.5	This course is about making economic processes more sustainable and how to promote these sustainable practices/products	2	The course was somewhat vague. The lectures did not give additional information when you have done the course readings in the book. Moreover, the examination was a take-home essay which mostly asked to link concepts from the book in your answer
3	Norwegian Language: Beginning Level	10	Learning the Norwegian language to an A2 level	5	This course was well-structured and clear. It was an intensive course with classes two days a week (Tuesday and Thursday) from 15:15 until 17:00. Even though, you won't get credit from Wageningen for following it, it is still a fun course to follow since you learn the grammar, learn how to speak, write, and listen Norwegian. Moreover, you actively use what you learn in class
4	Innovation Management	7.5	Learning about businesses and different types of innovation	1	This was one of the worst courses that I have ever followed. The teacher was only present for two classes and the rest of the material was taught through Zoom (3 times) but mostly through Asynchronous modules (which means, you everything yourself). This course guide did not give clear instructions and the examination of the material

					was an essay of 4000 words. Moreover, this course required groupwork with groups of 7 to 8 people, and you were not allowed to choose who you were working with. For all these reasons, I would not recommend this course
5	Ecophilosophy	7.5	Learning about the history of outdoor education and the different perspectives of philosophy on nature	3	Slightly vague course that requires a person to be open-minded. The material of the classes is mostly asked through papers you must write. In these papers you also have to do some self-reflection
6	Destination Development	7.5	Learning about attributes and strategies in tourism destinations and how to use them to the destinations advantage	3	If you come from a tourism bachelor, this course is a repetition. In general, the course is not hard to follow and not hard to pass

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

When compared to the Netherlands, the workload in Norway is a bit lower. To clarify, when you are used to the Dutch academic level, the academic level in Norway is a bit more relaxed. The courses were finalized through an on-campus exam of three hours or by a take-home essay. The length and the time that you would get for the essays depended on the course. Some courses gave a month to complete the essay whereas other courses would give 2-3 days to complete them. For most of the courses, the lesson material was the exact same as what was in the books.

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 USN Campus Bø has a very family-like culture. The campus is small but not crowded. Moreover, the lecturers are friendly, approachable, and willing to help. The international community is great and the university hosts special events for internationals such as “Kaffekosen” where all internationals get to mingle, drink coffee & tea, eat cake, and play boardgames. Furthermore, the university has your best interest at heart since they offer financial advice, have open seminars about topics such as exam stress, procrastination, and has a site which offers information and help if you are dealing with depression, self-harm etc. The classes that internationals follow are also electives or mandatory courses for the Norwegian students. Thus, I have had classes with Norwegians but they tend to hang-out more with other Norwegian students than internationals.

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

As previously mentioned, the university hosts Kaffekosen for internationals but apart from this, the USN has a volleyball/handball club, a comedy club and has Kroa. Kroa is a place where the parties, discos and other events take place. It has a stage and a bar, and is located behind the university. However, Kroa is not all parties, it also has multiple private study rooms which you can rent for free. The university itself also has some private rooms which can be booked for free to study in. The USN has a small library and a writing centre that offers help with academic writing. Moreover, the university has a cafeteria which has a daily menu, a pasta/salad bar, soda, coffee, and tea. Outside of the university building are volleyball courts, a basketball court, and a running track. Right next to the university on the front side of the building is the Gullbring Culture Centre which has a swimming pool, a cinema, a gym, and a sports hall. The USN also offers housing through the SSN.

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 housing is provided by SSN. Campus Bø has three different student housing locations namely, Gullbringvegen, Breisas and Grivi. Moreover, there are a variety of options for rooms: you can have a room with your own toilet, shower, and kitchen but you can also have a room in which you share the kitchen with other roommates. The locations depend on what you want and how much you are willing to pay. I had a room in Gullbringvegen with my own toilet and shower, the kitchen I shared with 12 others. Gullbringvegen is 5 minutes walking from the university and around 7 minutes walking to the town centre and the supermarkets. For this room, I paid 450 euros a month.

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

The culture of Norway is different than the culture in the Netherlands. Norway is not as internationally oriented, and the people are a bit more self-reserved. The Norwegian cuisine is like the Dutch cuisine, they do AVG (potatoes, meat, vegetables) for dinner. Moreover, the Norwegians eat early like the Dutch people, so around 17:00 – 18:30. As for manners and habits, the Norwegians are not direct and do not tend to speak up when they are uncomfortable or have a different opinion. They rather sit by or say something to please you rather than saying something that might be controversial. The Norwegians have a big Christmas culture that starts on the last Sunday of November. Around November, the supermarkets start to sell Julebrus (a Norwegian Christmas soda) and Christmas foods like pinnekjøtt, ribbe and lutevisk. Moreover, there are a lot of Christmas celebrations like lighting up the Christmas tree, dancing, singing, church choirs that sing Christmas songs, Christmas markets etc. The other two big things which Norwegian culture is about is the 17th of May, which is their Independence Day, and Russefeiring, which is a big party they throw once they graduate from high school/secondary school.

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

The place of residence in Norway was definitely nicer when compared to Wageningen. This because I had my own room of 16m² with my own shower and toilet. The room was furnished with a bed, a desk, a chair, a big closet, and two overhead cupboards. I only had to share the kitchen, but in the kitchen I had my own fridge with a mini freezer, an overhead cupboard, a drawer and a cupboard under the drawer. The best part of the room was that the university was close by; It was a five-minute walk from my room to the university. For this room I paid 450 euros a month. In Ede, I have to share the shower, toilet and kitchen with my room mates and get the room unfurnished, and pay more for the room than in Norway.

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

I walked to the university every day since I lived close by. The taxis in Norway are very expensive so I have never taken one. The public transport is more expensive than in the Netherlands. To go from the Oslo Gardemoen to Bø Stasjon cost around 40 euros and from Bø Stasjon to Oslo S (the city) costs around 30 euros.

6. Free time

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

The must-sees in Norway are definitely Oslo and Stavanger. If you like art and museums, Oslo is the place to be since it has the national gallery, the Munch Museum, Akerhus (the castle), the Norwegian Folk Museum and many more. I visited the Munch Museum, Akerhus and the Norwegian Folk Museum, and all three were very nice. My personal favourite is the Norwegian Folk Museum because they have traditional Norwegian folk dance demonstrations, artifacts and paintings, and the buildings of the museum are a representation of the houses of a specific time in history, dating all the way to the Viking times up to the present. As for Stavanger, it's a nice city where you can shop but the most impressive attraction there is the hike to Preikestolen, also known as Pulpit Rock. From Stavanger you can take a bus to the starting point of the hike. The hike lasts around six hours and once you get to the top, you have a beautiful view of the fjords, the mountains and the sea.

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

There is this restaurant chain in Norway called Egon, it has tasty food and is definitely worth the visit. It's a bit on the pricy side though. Another restaurant chain which is worth the visit is Max. Max is the Norwegian alternative to McDonalds. The chain serves, chicken, meat and vegetarian burgers, chicken nuggets, wraps and salads for around the same price as the McDonalds and Burger King in Norway, but the quality of the food is better and is less greasy.

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

Leisure in Norway, especially in the town (Bø) I was in, is going on a hike in the woods/mountains, camping, doing exercise, going for a walk, or going to the gym. Going to a restaurant or ordering take out is not something that is very common for students to do in Norway because it is expensive. In Bø, there was a party almost every weekend at the student houses or at Kroa. Furthermore, the Kroa kept an activity calendar for every week, resulting in a lot of parties, open-mike nights, stand-up comedy shows, quiz nights, movie nights and sport events. However, apart from the student organized parties and a few parties organized by Kroa, in the weekend there was not a lot of things to do in Bø. This because everything (shops, the theatre, supermarkets) is closed on Sunday. So, leisure on Sunday, was either doing some sort of exercise or indoor activities such as Netflix, reading, cleaning, gaming, etc. What I also did a few times was going to Oslo for the day, to go to the stores and eat Burger King, because in the bigger cities, some stores are open on Sunday.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

A challenge that I have experienced is that at times I felt lonely. This was because my Norwegian roommates would go back to their parents' house on the weekend or book random trips during the year, which caused for my floor to be almost empty. In addition, with everything being closed on Sunday and not much leisure options aside from doing sports, watching Netflix, studying, or cleaning, all this contributed to the feeling of loneliness. Moreover, you're in this new environment on your own and that can be overwhelming. So, it was a challenge for me to embrace this new type of weekend and to be satisfied with doing different activities in the weekend then I would normally do in the Netherlands. Another challenge for me was adjusting to the dark days. Around the end of October, there would only be five to six hours of light. The sun would come up at 09:00 - 10:00 and go down at 15:30, at 16:00 it was pitch-black outside. That was also a challenge that I have had to face.

What was your best memory abroad?

My best memory abroad is of doing the hike in Preikestolen. The hike was totally outside of my comfort-zone, and I pushed my limits when doing the hike. In the end, the six-hour hike was worth it since I got to see the beautiful landscape and the mesmerizing view at the top. Not to forget, I did this hike with my roommate and another friend, and they made this experience unforgettable for me.

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name/e-mail	Karen Fiolet / karen.fiolet@wur.nl	