



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Biology
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	03/01/2022 until 30/06/2022
Country (exchange)	Norway
City (exchange)	Stavanger
University (exchange)	UiS (Universitetet i Stavanger)
Faculty (exchange)	X

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I figured going on study exchange would help me grow as a person in such a major way. I'd always lived with my mom before going on this exchange, so it would mean a lot would change. Foreign language, foreign country, foreign people. All learning experiences! Obviously doing a study exchange looks nice on a resume, but I mostly wanted to go for personal growth & experience!

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

To be honest, the University of Stavanger was my third choice, after Galway (Ireland) and another university here in Norway. I mostly based my choices on the courses I thought I could be taking here. In the end, it turned out that none of the courses I'd initially wanted to do were available during the semester I was going. Too bad. But obviously that's not the only reason I chose to put this place in my top 3. I was always drawn to Scandinavia, as the quality of life here is really good, the people are kind and speak English well, everything is well-organized and the nature is beautiful. I think I preferred Norway most (over e.g. Sweden or Denmark), because it's a very calm country, which just suits my personality nicely.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I actually got here by car! My mother drove me here in a car packed to the brim, full of my own stuff. We got on the FjordLine ferry from Hirtshals (Northern Denmark), directly to Stavanger, which was really great because it meant I could take a lot of my own things with me. That way I didn't have to buy a lot here (since everything is expensive in Norway...), and I felt at home in my studio apartment right away! It took us about 26 hours to drive from Apeldoorn to my new home in Stavanger 😊

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	BIO200 Biochemistry	10	Exactly what you would expect: dry biochemistry about macromolecules and life processes.	3	If you like biochemistry this surely will not be a very difficult course, however you do need to know a lot of details!
2	BSS295 Digital Culture & Society	10	The course deals with issues raised in sociology by developments in digital culture	4	I kind of chose it because I didn't like many other courses, but it was actually more interesting than I expected!
3					
4					
5					
6					

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

Since I arrived here when COVID-19 was still fully active and threatening lives, most of my classes were online. In fact, I only had one physical lecture on campus in the entire semester. I did have some group work for BSS295 for which I had to meet on campus a few times, but I had hardly any other activities on campus, which was a waste. Hopefully it'll be better the next few semesters! In terms of academic level, I felt like it was not as high as it is in Wageningen, but that may just be the courses I took. Since I'm practically a fourth year biology student and the courses I chose were also available to first year bachelor students, that might have caused some discrepancies. Examination differs a lot per course, and so does lesson material. I do have good experiences with both the lesson material as well as the examination! The workload was not too high, but that might have been amplified by all the online classes that I could practically watch from my bed 😊

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 thought the teachers were all very kind and approachable! Most people here really want their students to do well and will be prepared to help when needed. Engagement with local students was very minimal though! Again, covid probably had a lot to do with this. I met a few of my fellow students from the BSS295 course in a lecture and with group work, but I've not met a single other student from my biochemistry course! I feel like generally Norwegian students like to keep to themselves a lot. I think the BSS295 course is one of the most popular courses with exchange students so if you want to meet other internationals through university I can definitely recommend that course!

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

A lot!!! There are multiple canteens and café's on campus, and the student organizations have fun activities on campus, like waffle days and coffee moments for international students. There is a big sports centre on campus that is cheaper for students, and it offers a lot of fun classes. The library is beautiful and has nice study spots as well.

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?)

As soon as you've been accepted by the university of Stavanger you can apply for housing. SiS (the student organization) has accommodations all throughout the area, both in the city centre as well as on campus. You can apply for studio apartments or shared apartments and prices are very reasonable. I lived in a studio apartment with my own kitchen and bathroom, right next to campus, which was very nice! I paid 5000NOK (about €500) per month for it.

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

The culture of Norway is comparable to that in the Netherlands, I think. People are kind and well-mannered but reserved, I feel like Norwegians like to be with Norwegians, and they are not that open towards foreigners. Alcohol is expensive, but if you find the right people you sure can party over here! Since Stavanger is a relatively big city (for Norwegian circumstances), and the university is pretty big as well, there are a lot of foreign students with whom you can hang out. I think the spring semester is the best time to be in Norway, as there are a lot of public holidays (especially May 17th!) and the weather gets progressively better 😊

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

I've never lived in Wageningen, so I cannot compare much. However, I will say that living in Norway is more expensive than I initially expected. My rent was around €500 and it was very common for me to spend around €100 per week on groceries and just cost of living. When you cannot really work since not many companies hire people who don't speak Norwegian, it can be hard to come by in terms of money. Especially when you want to go out and do fun stuff, and treat yourself once in a while, the expenses can add up quickly.

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

There are a lot of bus lines around here. Especially from campus to the centre, there are at least 3 bus routes that come by every 15 minutes each. Public transport is cheaper for students as well. Since I lived on campus and did not go to the city centre that often, I paid for day tickets (€2-3) but most students get a monthly ticket (around €30). Taxis are way more expensive so it is advisable to take the bus whenever you can. There are also A LOT of electrical scooters around here, most from the company Ryde but also from Voi.

They're cheap and effective and fun to go around on. And they're everywhere, literally. On campus there are also city bikes you can rent from the same company as the bus lines (Kolumbus). Overall, public transport is well organized and affordable! Even plane tickets to Oslo are inexpensive 😊

6. Free time

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

In the city itself there is Gamle Stavanger, the old town, which is really cute and very representative of Scandinavian little houses. I also went to the little beach by Sverd I Fjell twice, which is a pretty cool monument and definitely a landmark for Stavanger. I also would absolutely recommend the hike up to Preikestolen (the preacher's chair), which is a beautiful rock formation looking out over the Lysefjord. I'm pretty sure you can take a bus to the parking lot from where the hike starts. It's a pretty tough little walk (it took us 5 hours and there's a 500m height ascend), but the views are spectacular. Domestic plane flights are also not expensive at all, and Stavanger has its own airport that is usually very calm and quiet, so I'd definitely recommend going to Tromsø for the northern lights in winter, or Oslo for a city trip!

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

When my dad visited me we went on a trip to/with Flor og Fjaere (<https://florogfjare.no/en/>) which offers this arrangement of a boat trip to their island where they've planted 12 gardens, and you can have dinner there. I know it doesn't sound that impressive, but it was possibly the most amazing thing I've seen here in Norway. I absolutely loved it, the food was incredible and the gardens are spectacular!

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

I did not go out clubbing or anything, so I can't tell you anything about that. What I will say is that the food delivery is great over here so you can enjoy restaurant food anytime! Obviously it is quite expensive, so don't do it too often like I did... In Pedersgata in the city centre there are some really good restaurants that also do delivery. My personal favorites were Aladdin, Yips and The Shack! There are also some good Asian groceries stores in the area, if you like that kind of stuff. I found Greenpeas in Stavanger centre has a good offer but is more expensive than some other stores in e.g. Sandnes. Speaking of which, both Sandnes and Sola (adjacent villages) have a good offer of stores and places to go, so don't just focus on Stavanger centre! I personally got two new tattoos at Tanken og Minner in Sola (can recommend!) and I went to the IKEA in Forus twice. Everything is easy to reach by bus and a little bit of walking.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

I think the hardest thing for me was that I got a little bit lonely at some point. I'm not that good at making friends and because of COVID-19 there weren't a lot of opportunities for me to meet other people in the middle of the winter at the start of my exchange

semester. Though I'm sure from now on it will all get a lot better, since most courses moved back to campus and the student organizations will have a lot more activities now that restrictions are gone! It was a challenge for me, also because I'm autistic and I lived on my own, but I saw a lot of other people who had a much easier time making friends, so I wouldn't worry about it too much!! 😊

What was your best memory abroad?

I made 3 really good friends here, and celebrated the 17th of May (Norway's national holiday) with some housemates which was really great. The hike to Preikestolen and the trip to Flor og Fjaere were also very memorable!

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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