



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Bachelor Landscape Architecture and Spatial Planning
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	29/08/22 until 29/01/23
Country (exchange)	Estonia
City (exchange)	Tartu
University (exchange)	Eesti Maaülikool (Estonian University of Life Sciences)
Faculty (exchange)	Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

After I did a minor of Urban Environmental Management at Wageningen University, I wanted to do an extra minor abroad. I found the courses given at Estonian University of Life Sciences interesting so I decided to do an extra minor in Nature Conservation and Sustainable Tourism. Another reason was that I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and experience new cultures and landscapes. On top of that, I realised I wanted to improve my skills in foreign languages like English, German and French. After these months in Estonia, I could say I really improved these skills because I met a lot of new people speaking those languages.

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

I found the courses given at Estonian University of Life Sciences interesting so I decided to go there. Plus, I heard from colleagues from Wageningen that they had a great time at this receiving institution. Tartu is a vibrant student city where lots of activities are organized for students. Also, there are lots of opportunities to travel around in the Baltic States and visit some places in Scandinavia.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Tartu is 2.5 hour away by bus from Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. There is a bus called Luxexpress every hour from Tallinn Airport to Tartu. Luxexpress has very comfortable seats and you have to book them in advance. If you live at the torn dormitory provided by the university, the bus goes directly to bus stop Tartu, Näitused. Another option is to fly to Riga Airport in Latvia and take the daily 18:45 Luxexpress from Riga Coach Station to Tartu Coach Station. This trip will take 4 hours. During summer season, Finnair is flying to Tartu Airport directly from Helsinki on all midweek days. Finnair is also flying to Amsterdam Schiphol so you could start your trip there After arrival, you must take a Bolt to your residence. You could also go more sustainable by train and bus all the way from the Netherlands.

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	Estonian Level 0-A1	4.0	Basic course about Estonian culture and language.	4	Estonian is very hard to learn. That's why the teacher organized a lot of Cultural activities like skiing, going to a football match, movie theatre and a local supermarket where you had to order with your Estonian language skills. The teacher is very enthusiastic but this course is rather a social experience than an educational.
2	Nature Conservation	10.0	Discussing different aspects of nature conservation by giving a lot of group presentations.	4	This course is interesting in learning about the various aspects of nature conservation. You will learn key concepts and theories in a small group. Almost weekly, there is a presentation you have to prepare with your colleagues. The Examination is doable.
3	International Tourism Industry	10.0	Course is focussing on rural tourism.	4	This course was very interactive as the teacher tried to involve all students into the conversation. It teaches all aspects you need to think of when organizing a holiday to rural areas for tourists.
4	Global changes in ecosystems and their impact on the use of natural resources	5.0	Discussing different topics within the scale of global changes in ecosystems.	3	Lectures given by students. Students had to prepare an in depth 30 minute presentation about a certain topic. So you will learn from your colleagues rather than listening to the teacher.

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

During the semester you will follow multiple courses. Each course is assigned to one specific day. Courses for exchange students are in small groups consisting of 10 students on average. The examination is often via presentations but there can also be an (oral) exam. The workload is very low compared to Wageningen University standards. Take part in the introduction week! You will meet so many nice Internationals.

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?)

It differs per institute but most of the time you will follow courses only with some other Erasmus exchange students. The teachers are very approachable and ready to help you. Differences with the WUR are most related to their way of teaching and the amount of students attending classes.

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

If you apply for a room on the campus, you will live in the 'torn dormitory'. There are 5 washing machines and 4 dryers available. On the campus, there is a huge sports building where you could do any kind of sport you're interested in. There is also a gym. There is limited food available so I would strongly advise you to take your own food to university. The library is a quiet place where you can study and it is opened every day.

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 apply for a room on the campus via the university. There are two choices: Either you assign for a room (142 euros per month) with the possibility that someone else will sleep in the same room as you are sleeping in. Or you can apply for a room (284 euros per month) and be certain that you can use the entire room for yourself. Every apartment consist of 2 or 4 rooms and each room consists of 1 or 2 students depending whether they share a room or not.

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

Estonians are a bit shy in the beginning, but once you know them better they open up to you. The Estonian cuisine is mainly based on potatoes and meat.

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

Renting a room is less expensive compared to Wageningen standards. However, when doing groceries, some products are cheaper and some more expensive. I would say in the end you will pay roughly the same as you do in the Netherlands. 50cl beer usually has a price of 4 euros in a bar for example.

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

All Erasmus students live on campus so you don't have to travel to campus by public transport. For Tartu and its surroundings you can be a public transport card (Tartu Bussikaart) for 2 euros at the kiosk. After getting your Estonian ID-code, you can buy a subscription for local public transportation. I bought the for one 3 months of 51 euros. I could use all buses in Tartu at any time plus I could use all shared (electric) bikes. There are other types of subscriptions as well. If you buy this public transport card, you could use all blue free buses from Tartu Coach Station to the rural area. Be aware that there is a sign "TASUTA" on the bus. The centre is about 2 km away from the torn dormitory so when you want to return to your room during night hours you can order a Bolt for around 4 euros back to the torn dormitory. Bolt is very cheap and very reliable. Use Luxexpress for travelling around in Estonia and the Baltic States and add the 26% discount when booking your trip if your age is below 26 years.

6. Free time

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

As I said before: you can use all Go-buses from Tartu Coach Station. Lake Peipsi (lake separating Estonia & Russia), Alatskivi (castle), Viljandi (nice little town), Otepää (winter destination to ski and hike), Elva, Kiidjärve (beautiful hike around a lake). RMK is a platform where you can find hikes and outdoor sites. Estonian nature is basically forest and wetland. Another advice is to rent a car and drive to Lahemaa National Park in the north of Estonia. This national park is very beautiful and a must-go. With Luxexpress you can reach Narva (border town with Russia) and Pärnu for day trips. But don't forget to also travel around in the Baltic States! Visit Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius. Furthermore, Helsinki is a 2.5 hour boat trip away from Tallinn and you will end up in a Scandinavian capital.

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

The hikes near Taevaskoda. If you like hiking, go there.

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

In Tartu, I would strongly recommend to go to Möku and Seik. Those are the best bars to go out. For a coffee, pastries and sweets I recommend Krempel Kohvik, Naiiv or Werner café. There are a lot of good restaurants in Tartu but don't forget to make a reservation on time because it can be full! There are two museums worth a visit in Tartu; the huge Estonian National Museum (culture and history) and the Upside Down House (Illusions). My final recommendation is to explore Tartu and its surroundings yourself! There is way more to see. Enjoy your time and meet other enthusiastic Erasmus students!

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The older generation of Estonians barely speak English so proper communication can be difficult.

What was your best memory abroad?

I literally can't tell which memory was the best. I am thankful for all international Erasmus students who provided me this amazing experience in Estonia. Supporting local football club Tartu Tammeka with drums and blue smoke generators, travelling around in Estonia, the Baltic States and Scandinavia, participating in a lot of activities organized by ESN, swimming in the Baltic Sea in Pärnu in autumn season, hiking in Lahemaa National Park. I can talk for hours about these memories.

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name/e-mail	Laurens Westerhuis laurensvesterhuiss@gmail.com	