



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

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| Field of study in Wageningen | BLP |
| Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy) | 29.08.2022 until 29.01.2023 |
| 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?

Actually, at first I didn't want to go on exchange, but after hearing the good experiences friends had, I decided that I at least had to take a look at the options. Later on, I realised that it would be good for my personal development as well.

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

I chose this university because of a combination of courses I wanted to take. Also, I wanted to visit this part of Europe.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

By far the easiest would be by plane, either to Riga or Tallinn and then by bus. Luxexpress runs long distance services to Tartu from Tallinn Airport and Riga Airport. However, I decided to buy myself an Interrail ticket and go by train and bus. This requires lots of planning and a few in between stops, but it is a fun way to get to your destination. Also, it might be worth to buy separate tickets instead of Interrail. It turned out to be cheaper on my way back to the Netherlands in February 2023.

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 | Very simple course about Estonian language and culture. | 4 | Estonians really appreciate it if you can greet them or say a few words in Estonian. The teacher is a big football fan. |
| 2 | Advanced presentation graphics | 4 | Course about visualisation and poster designing. Very useful, because practice makes perfect. | 5 | I felt like I was not very good when it comes to visualising, but this course is about the progress you make. The teachers are really helpful and take the time. |
| 3 | Technogenic landscapes I | 3 | This course is about restoring an old quarry. You will visit the case site and also visit oil shale mines in North Estonia. Later on, you will develop a concept and make a cardboard maquette. The final product is a group report. | 4 | |
| 4 | Landscape pattern and process | 2 | Short course about how landscape patterns and processes evolve. You will have to write an essay about pattern and processes in a chosen area. | 4 | |
| 5 | Basic course in CAD | 3 | Very useful course. You will learn how to use AutoCAD for 2D-drawings. You have to deliver one CAD project, but this can also be a project for a different course. | 5 | The teacher is really helpful and slowly explains all features that you have to use for 2D AutoCAD. |
| 6 | Outdoor recreation planning and design | 11 | This is the large course that will be the most time consuming. During the course, you will make an analysis, characterize the landscape, make a capacity study and | 4 | Try to engage with the Estonian students. |

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| | | | finally design a recreational site somewhere in the study area. For the first three tasks you will make a report in groups. The design is individual and you will have to make 2 or 3 posters. | | |
| 7 | Remote sensing of nature | 4 | This course is about remote sensing applications. The course mainly consists of practicals, where you will analyse forests using Idrisi. Based on the remotely sensed data you will have to map tree species. Also, you will have to give a presentation about a remote sensing paper and have to pass a written test. | 4 | Rather interesting course if you want to do more with GIS later. For me, it was a bit odd since I was the only student who regularly attended the course, but again, the teacher was really helpful. |
| 8 | The healing of landscape design theory | 3 | A theoretical course about healing landscapes. I had to read a few chapters from a book. The book has a theory part and continues with examples, which makes it easily readable. Finally, I had to design a landscape or garden based on the book. | 3 | Due to the low amount of students (only 3), this was a course that I had to work on from home. |
| 9 | Basics of geoinformatics | 4 | Quite intense course about GIS programs. Besides ArcGIS, this course also covers MapInfo and QGIS, which I never used before. Also a bit of a refresher if you don't use GIS that often. | 3 | For BLP students; this course didn't get approved by the examination board for my electives. It can still be useful however as a refresher. |

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

The workload depends on the timing. At the beginning of the semester, everything is easy to keep up, however, at the end of the semester you will have a lot of deadlines. The academic level is lower than in Wageningen however. Courses at the Landscape Architecture department are either project or essay based. The deliverables are often reports, essays or designs that you will have to present in front of class mostly. At the Forestry department, I had computer practicals, presentations and exams.

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?)

Teachers are easily approachable. They are also open to extra consultations after class. Level of English differs, within the Landscape Architecture group the level is good, within the Forestry department the level of English is more simple. Engagement with local students is difficult. Estonians are more self-oriented. At the Forestry department, Erasmus students and Estonians are separated. At the Landscape Architecture department, they are mixed. First, the Estonians weren't talkative at all. You had to take initiative. However, after a field trip to Latvia with Outdoor Planning and Design, things changed. The Estonians became more talkative.

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

The sports building is right next to the dormitory. You can use it for free before 3pm. Catering at the campus was non-existent, since they had problems with the vendor, but got fixed at the end of the semester. I haven't used it, but from what I've heard, it's cheap. If you decide to live in Torn dormitory, use of the laundry machines is included in the rent, however there are only 5 machines for the entire building. You have to bring your own laundry detergent.

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 housing via the university (Torn Dormitory). It costs €284,-/month, or half of it if you are willing to share your bedroom with someone else. Utilities, use of the laundry machines and internet are included. You can also indicate that you want to live together with someone (either sharing the same room, or living together in the same apartment). Another option is searching for housing on the private market, however don't expect that landlords are willing to rent out an apartment for only half a year. It's also more expensive.

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

Estonians are not so talkative. You are probably the one who will say 'Hi!', not the bus driver nor your classmates that don't know you. You will have to engage with your classmates. Everything changes however after some drinks ;)

The Estonian cuisine is nothing special. Potatoes, meat, fish and rye bread are the first things that come to my mind.

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

Probably slightly cheaper. Groceries are about the same price. Fish, meat, potatoes and unions are significantly cheaper. Don't expect cheap beers when you go out, €4,- for 0,5L.

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

The dormitory is next to the campus. If you're lucky with the elevators you can be in 5 minutes in the classroom. A bus card costs €2,-, then you need to buy a subscription. The subscription costs €30,- for 3 months or €51,- if you want to use the bike sharing system. First hour of cycling is free, but you need to link your credit card to the system. Bolt is an app that you can use for ordering a cab. If you do this with some friends, it will be cheap.

6. Free time

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

Ignoring the 'nearby' part in this question, because Estonia is not densely populated. Tallinn is by far the most beautiful city of Estonia. The medieval town is well kept. Tallinn is easy to reach by train or bus (€20,- roundtrip). Other cities that you can visit or Pärnu and Narva. Pärnu is the summer capital, so go there on a sunny day. Narva is next to the Russian border. For me, it was fascinating to see a real border. The city is a typical Soviet city however, you either love it or hate it. Alatskivi and Viljandi are closer to Tartu. Alatskivi has a beautiful manor and lake where you can walk around. Viljandi is a small city with beautiful views from the castle ruins. Lake Peipsi is also an hour away from Tartu and is interesting to visit as well. There are also tons of hiking trails throughout Estonia. RMK (Estonian equivalent of Staatsbosbeheer) has an useful app.

If you want to go a little further, you can go to Helsinki, Riga, or even Vilnius or Stockholm. I only went to Riga and Vilnius before and after the semester on my way to Estonia/back to the Netherlands. Finally, ESN organizes a trip to Lapland. GO THERE. It costs a fortune, but it is a once in a lifetime experience.

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

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

Try to do something every weekend. Can be something very simple, just a walk through town. County busses are free of charge. You can use them to get to the most beautiful places. Renting a car is also easy (autolevi.ee). Favorite bars are Möku, Seik and Barlova. The latter one is on the other side of town. For a coffee I would recommend Krempel Kohvik, only €3,- for the largest cup of coffee in Tartu.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

Unable to do any online shopping. A credit-card is a must! Also, the language is difficult, but people appreciate it if you try.

What was your best memory abroad?

The people. You will meet lots of people and spend a lot of time with them. Either drinking at someone's apartment before going out, sledging downhill at 4 am after going out, going on a hike or just chatting about cultural differences.

8. Contact details (optional)

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| Is the reader allowed to contact the writer? | yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | no <input type="checkbox"/> |
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