



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Communication and Life Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	16/8/2022 until 9/12/2022
Country (exchange)	Finland
City (exchange)	Rovaniemi
University (exchange)	University of Lapland
Faculty (exchange)	Faculty of social sciences

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I had finished my bachelor, but I did not know yet what I wanted to do after. Therefore, I decided to go on study exchange to do courses I was interested in and gain the experience of living abroad.

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

I was interested in the courses that this university offered. I did not want to study in a very big city and the education in Finland is supposed to be very good.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I went by plane with Finnair from Amsterdam to Helsinki and then from there to Rovaniemi. In summer there are less planes that go to Rovaniemi than in the winter, because of tourism in the winter. It is also possible to go by train from Helsinki, either a night train or a normal train. The trains are quite comfortable to travel with. The airport in Rovaniemi is a bit far from the city centre. I arrived late at night in summer, so there were no buses. I used the taxi company Menevä, which has an app and is easy to use. The train station is closer to the city centre, you could probably walk from there.

4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course:	Remarks

				1(low) – 5(high)	
1	Finnish 1	3	The basics of the language; introduction, food, numbers, family, etc.	4	It was useful to know some of the language to find my way in place.
2	Finnish culture	3	Lectures on different topics introducing Finnish culture; music, language, history, etc.	3	It was interesting to listen to, but only some of the topics were useful outside the course.
3	Introduction to the Arctic	5	Broad introduction to the arctic. What the arctic is? The nature, the people, governance and challenges in the area.	4	Good basic course on the arctic, nice to be able to recognize things outside. This course also included an excursion.
4	Arctic Ecosystems and Adaptation of Species to Arctic Environment	5	More in depth information about the species that can be found in the arctic and how they are adapted to their environment.	4	Very interesting. I think you can also do this course without a natural science background.
5	Arctic Governance and Law	5	Covered ways of governance in the arctic, for example the arctic council.	2	It was a bit hard to follow without a background in law. This course was graded based on a presentation and an essay on the presentation. Therefore, you did not have to use a lot of the content of the lectures and the lectures were a lot of text and not much engagement.
6	Chinese culture and history	5	History from ancient times to present were covered and the main schools of thought were covered.	4	Very interesting, but there were only five lectures in which a lot of content had to be covered, so it felt a bit rushed at points.
7	Japanese 1	3	Basics of the language; writing systems, introduction, places, etc.	4	This course was very laid back, there was no exam at the end. So it's nice to do if you want to learn Japanese.

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

The courses I did consisted of lectures and most were graded based on an exam. Some included a presentation, or attendance was part of the grade. For the Finnish Culture course I had to write a lecture journal. This meant writing about each lecture and adding own thoughts and discussion to the content. Other than this, I was familiar with all examination methods. However, the exams I did were a bit different from exams at WUR. An exam can consist of three or four questions, which are more broad topics, that you have to write an essay about of a few pages.

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 lecturers are very approachable, you can approach them before or after class or through an email. The level of engagement depends on the courses you choose. Most of my classes were predominantly with exchange students. In general, I think the university of Lapland is quite similar to WUR. There are mostly differences in how lectures are structured and as I said in exams.

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

At the university you can get lunch for 3,20 euro if you are part of the student union (which is I think 25 for a semester). This lunch is really nice, it includes bread, salad and a meal (they usually have a vegetarian, vegan and meat/fish options and a soup). Through the student union you can get a 'wellness card' which offers sport activities for free or reduced price. This includes also facilities around the city. There is not a sport centre like in Wageningen. Through DAS, the student housing organisation, you can get a key to a gym in one of the apartment buildings. In the DAS buildings there are shared laundry facilities, through their website you book timeslots to use these. Each DAS building also has a sauna on the top floor that you can book. Besides you can borrow games and some sports equipment from the DAS office.

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 main student housing organisation is DAS. There you can sign up for a room. There have buildings in multiple areas, the Rantavitikka area is a five minute walk from the university and a small supermarket. You can indicate your preference for the area and the type of room. Rooms can be furnished or unfurnished, there are studios and shared apartments. Most exchange students get a furnished apartment that is shared by two or three people. This is different from in the Netherlands. You can probably also rent a separate apartment, but I have not heard of any exchange students that do this. Rent for a shared apartment (two people) is currently around 320 a month (this includes furniture and services).

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

I think the culture is quite similar to the Netherlands. However, there are some differences. When walking past people it is unusual to say hi or smile at others, you just walk past each other.

Not so much culture, but the seasons can change quite quickly. One week it is still around 20C and next week it is more towards 10C. The leaves suddenly change colours. At some points the days also get shorter quickly. In the middle of December it is light from 11:00-13:24, but in the summer it is light almost all day. When there is snow, the streets are kept free of deep snow, so you can still easily get around. You can still bike, but it can be slippery.

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

The prices for the apartments are not that different from Wageningen. However, expenses on food and activities tend to be a bit higher. For example, a meal in a normal restaurant can be around 15 euros. Also groceries tend to be a bit more expensive, therefore I think having lunch at the university is a good option. For activities, this really depends on the activity and a lot of these activities are not comparable to things in the Netherlands. There are also quite a lot of things you can borrow or visit for free. Tickets for the trains are also less expensive than in the Netherlands. Many places you can get discounts with your student card, sometimes you need to ask.

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

Bus tickets are 3,20 euro within the city area, but you can get a seasonal card that gives you a discount. The taxi from the airport to the city centre is around 30 euros. If you share the taxi it can be quite a nice way to go to places near the city centre. You can get a student discount on the train tickets and you can travel quite far by train for a relatively low price. A bike is also a good way to travel around Rovaniemi. There are multiple people that sell bikes to exchange students. To travel to the university, you can walk or bike, at least if you are in the Rantavittikka area.

6. Free time

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

Ounasvaara is a forest close to the city, there are trails for summer and winter. It is also nice to go somewhere more north. November could be a good time to do this, since it is not too cold and not too much snow, but this can vary between years. I joined a trip to Vasatokka that was organised by ESN, this way I got to do quite a few activities (husky tour, snow mobile, arctic ocean tour, etc.).

Santa Claus Village is a tourist attraction. It is nice to visit when there is snow. They also have a season opening with some Christmas songs and performances. In Santa Claus Village you can cross the arctic circle, you can visit Santa, see reindeers and there are souvenirs shops.

Rovaniemi also has an ice hockey team, you can visit their matches in the Lappi Arena. Even if you know nothing about ice hockey, it is fun to watch.

The Arktikum museum is a good place to visit if you want to learn more about the arctic and Rovaniemi.

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

There are multiple points where hiking trails start, sometimes they are a bit hard to find, but it is worth looking for them. In summer you can pick berries in the forests. In winter there are ice skating rinks at the sports fields near to Rantavitikka.

It is also worth it to visit other cities. For example, I went to Tampere and Turku in the autumn by train. This way you also get to see the south of the country.

There are often events that you can visit. You can find these on visitrovaniemi.fi. There you can also find a lot more activities organized by tourism companies.

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

I would recommend to keep the changes of the seasons in mind in planning things to do. Somethings can only be done in summer, or they are more accessible.

In the city centre there are good restaurants, some that I liked: Saignon noodle bar, café 21, Massimo, Friends and burgers, Amarillo.

Getting the Wellness pass through the student union can be a good option. You can join exercise classes for free or with a reduced price. You also get a discount for the museum and other things. An app (kide) is used by students to sell and buy tickets for activities. For example for sitsit's.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

At times I found it challenging to balance university work and social activities. Because of the way they schedule their courses, I had periods where I had a very full schedule and periods where I had barely any classes.

Another challenge was at the very beginning getting everything for the apartment. Since I did not have a bike and the buses do not go too often to some areas, I had to walk a lot to the bigger stores (30min to and from). In addition, it was hard to find things at first because there is rarely English on the packaging.

What was your best memory abroad?

My best memories are of the trips and activities with friends.

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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