



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

<b>Study programme WUR</b>	Bachelor International Land and Water Management
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	29/08/2023 until 22/12/2023
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	University of Helsinki
<b>Faculty</b>	Forestry
<b>Country</b>	Finland
<b>City</b>	Helsinki

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to go on exchange to experience living in another country and meet new people. I felt like it would be a great for my personal development and independence. I was also excited to learn about a new country that I knew very little about.

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

Helsinki was not my first choice, but I am still very glad that I went here. The country was not that important to me as I mainly went to study 'abroad'. Finland was not the most obvious choice, but the university is really good.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

I honestly think that the plane is the only viable option. It is nice if you have the time to travel around for a bit at first. I knew some people who drove to Denmark first and then took a boat. But this is more expensive and a lot less convenient of course.

## 4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	EC TS	Short description of the contents	Apprecia tion of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	ME-229, <i>Introduction to Tropical Forestry</i>	5	About tropical forestry. Lectures, some assignments, essay and final exam.	3	This was one of the 2 bachelor courses I took and it was definitely a more basic course. Nothing wrong with that, but the structure was very typical with lectures, an essay assignment and final exam. Not all lectures were very interesting.
2	FOR-281, <i>Tropical Landscape Change</i>	5	Project in teams (2 people) about the analysis of a certain area/country.	4	This course is very focussed on the use of GIS and analysis techniques. I enjoyed using ArcGIS and the project was interesting. However, the actual goal of the project was a bit vague and what was required of us was also not really clear. I liked the teachers of this course, they were very knowledgeable.
3	FOR-228, <i>Forest Ecosystem Biogeochemistry</i>	5	Different cycles in forests (carbon, nutrients, water etc). Lectures, groupwork, individual assignments, final exam.	3	This course is really a collection of researchers giving a 2 hour description on their research. It was quite interesting but I just did not understand this concept. There were few actual 'lectures' with terms and concepts to study. There was a groupwork project that was very interesting and I feel like I learned a lot. The exam at the end was VERY easy.
4	EKM-122, <i>Ecological Economics</i>	5	Lectures on economic systems, ways of perceiving the world. Focus on sustainability goals. You have to write an essay and do a debate. (but the debate is not a big deal)	2	This course was definitely outside of my study field. It is very economical and also a masters course so a bit challenging for me. There was a debate and essay assignment. The teacher was very inspiring.
5	ATM302, <i>Climate.now</i>	5	An online course about climate change. What is climate change, future, management, what to do about climate change. Also some calculation assignments (quite interesting!)	3	This is an online course, which was a bit annoying sometimes because I do not enjoy watching lectures on zoom so much. However, the group project was very fun and you get to really choose something that you found interesting and be creative with it. The weekly assignments took quite some time. The workload was a bit higher than the other course I took I think. A good course if you want to learn more about

					climate change and adaptation/mitigation measures.
6					

### **What is it like to study there?**

*E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material.*

I feel like all the courses just had a lot of small grades/parts that you had to do. (essays, assignments, groupwork, presentation, exam) At first I thought that it would be a lot of work but the workload is somewhat similar to the courses I followed in Wageningen. There is definitely a lot of groupwork (every course) and the classes are very small (around 20 people). The exams are generally quite easy. The grading is on a scale of 1-5. I found it quite easy to get a 4-5.

I usually only had 6/7 lessons in a week and some days free. So a lot less contact hours. But you have to do more self-study.

### **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 easy going and approachable. Their English is good and they are always prepared to help you. They also respond to emails very quickly. I chatted a bit with some of the teachers and they were all very nice. I think that the culture is similar to the WUR.

### **What does the university offer students additionally?**

*E.g. catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?*

One of my favourite things about the university were their lunches! You can get a full meal for 2.85,- which is really cheap in Finland. The food is pretty good and healthy and they always have at least one vegan option. The cafeteria and library were nice.

## **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?*

I found it quite easy. I signed up via the university for UniHome, which is a building complex with other exchange students close to the Viikki campus (environmental sciences campus). I got a room with a shared kitchen which was nice because it was a lot cheaper than studios + I did not need to buy any supplies. However, there are a lot more studios and all of my friends also signed up for a shared kitchen but were only offered a studio.

### **What is the culture of the country like?**

*E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?*

The Finnish lunch very early, at like 11-11.30. So if you want to have lunch at the cafeteria it is best to go around 13.00. They also have dinner a lot earlier (around 17).

The people are very polite and will avoid interactions as much as possible. I only made 1 Finnish friend, who was also my tutor during the introduction week.

The saunas are an important part of Finnish culture. Every building has at least 1 (also all uni accommodations, with some days for men and other days for women). I would also

recommend visiting one of the public saunas (Sompasauna) because that is the peak Finnish experience. You can jump in the sea afterwards.

**Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?**

*E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)*

You can get an AB zone public transport pass with student discount. I payed 87 euros (?) for 2 months. Which is really not expensive. But this is only valid in zone A and B, so only the centre and the 1 zone around it (where Viikki campus also was). I took a train to Tampere which was also quite cheap. The taxis are a bit more expensive.

Some people get a bicycle, but be aware that once there is snow and ice it is quite dangerous. There are no real bicycle paths so everyone cycles on the sidewalks. Not ideal. The busses are quite good and punctual so it is fine to rely on those.

## 6. Expenses

**Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?**

*E.g. you can also indicate price differences (higher/lower/equal) in comparison to the Netherlands.*

Ticket there: 450 euros with luggage retour

Visa if applicable: -

Vaccinations if applicable: -

Insurances (extra, if applicable): -

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: 450 per month at UniHome shared housing (but they calculate it per day so it depends on the length of a month)

Groceries:

Public transport: 87 for 2 months in zone AB (student discount)

Restaurant/going out for dinner: a lot more expensive!! I did not go out for dinner a lot.

Alcohol is very expensive also. I recommend going to Tallinn early during your exchange and stock up. :)

Daytrips/sight-seeing: A lot of things to do and places to visit! You can go to Tallinn for 1 day.

**Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

At parties they always charge you at the door for the cloakroom, even if you do not have a jacket.

## 7. Free time

**What are must-sees in the area?**

*E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?*

Helsinki is a very nice city. You should also visit some of the islands. Tampere is a nice city for 1-2 days.

Porvoo is a bit overrated, but with Christmas there is quite a nice atmosphere (but not much to do other than some shopping and drinking a coffee)

My trip to Lapland with ESN was really the highlight of my exchange experience!  
Definitely recommend.

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

**Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?**

*E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?*

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

**What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?**

The language is really difficult, you can try learning it but I did not get very far.  
Thankfully everyone speaks English very well.

**What is your best memory of your time abroad?**

The (short) trips I made with ESN and with my friends there. Lapland was the highlight of everything 100%. The parties of ESN and the Sitsit (cantus) was also really fun!

## 9. Contact details (optional)

<b>Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?</b>	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Name/e-mail</b>	Jasmijn.mulder@wur.nl	