



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	BSc Soil, Water, Atmosphere
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	21/08/2023 until 08/12/2023
Exchange destination: University	University Centre of Svalbard UNIS
Faculty	Geophysics
Country	Norway
City	Longyearbyen

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I knew I wanted to try to live and study abroad from when I started my study program at the WUR. I've always had the curiosity about how studying abroad would be and the places I'd go to. Plus it is a good way to get some life-experience.

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

I wanted to learn more about the middle and upper atmosphere and I did not yet get the opportunity to learn about this in Wageningen. The location offered me to fill the gap in my knowledge about the atmosphere. It's a very unique place and there were many excursions to different research stations. And it is the only accessible location on the world to see the red dayside aurora. These things motivated me to go on exchange to that location.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

Take the train to Oslo if you care enough for the environment, it can even be cheaper than flying if you plan correctly.

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	AGF-210 the middle polar atmosphere	15	Learning about the dynamics, chemistry	5	Nice excursion to Ny Ålesund

			and instrumentation methods in the stratosphere, mesosphere and ionosphere, including space physics		
2	AGF-223 Upper Atmospheric and Space Physics: Observational techniques and instrumentation	15	This course covers instrumentation and techniques for studying near-Earth space, including ground-based tools like radars, magnetometers, and optics, as well as space-based instruments on satellites, drones, and rockets.	4	You make your own satellite
3					
4					
5					
6					

What is it like to study there?

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

The level of teaching is comparable to WUR, examination is on your laptop and exams are in general easier. The workload near the end of the courses increased a lot. All the course material was found on a website that's just like Brightspace.

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 was very laid back in general. There were many guest lectures from people all over Europe. I had a sort of mentor that was present in every lecture which took notes and talked with you during breaks. The students mingled well with each other. The most interesting thing was that there were no tutorials, this is different from WUR.

What does the university offer students additionally?

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

Housing and laundry was very well taken care of, the student housing was very new and had laundry facilities present. You can choose to live in a corridor with shared kitchen facilities or on in your own apartment. There is a sports facility in the town where you can do fitness, swimming and many other different sports.

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?

Anyone who applies for housing gets accepted, there is only one supplier for student housing in Svalbard. My rent was 5750NOK each month which can roughly be translated to a bit more than 500 EUR.

What is the culture of the country like?

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

The Norwegians are something else sometimes. They are quite hard to open up to other people and take some time to show their personalities. A rule in Svalbard is that in most buildings (like the campus) you have to take your shoes off. There is not much local cuisine since nothing really grows in Svalbard. There is reindeer soup but I'm a vegetarian so I didn't try it. oh and you need to carry a rifle with you if you go out of town since there is always a risk of a polar bear encounter.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

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

There is a bus that can take you to and from the airport for 70 NOK. I don't know taxi rates; they do have taxis in Longyearbyen. You usually just walk everywhere because all the facilities you need in town are no more than a 15-minute walk away from you. You can rent a bike for cheap, but it is not a necessity. Everyone just walks to campus.

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: 350 EUR (but can be cheaper)

Visa if applicable: n.a

Vaccinations if applicable: n.a

Insurances (extra, if applicable): n.a

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: bit more than 500EUR each month (higher but depends ofcourse)

Groceries: 300-400 EUR each month (higher)

Public transport: not really present in longyearbyen

Restaurant/going out for dinner: just a regular meal price when eating out is anything above 200NOK (higher)

Daytrips/sight-seeing: for free, just bring friends and explore nature's wonders nearby. There are also guided hikes for free.

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

if you want to get a rifle permit you need the necessary documents which cost me around 60EUR in total

7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

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

The mountains nearby and the fjord are very beautiful locations to visit. You can do hikes up all these mountains. You can climb glaciers near the town (there are two reachable by foot) and in the winter you can do ice-cave exploring and an array of winter sports.

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

There really is not that much information about the mountains nearby, the travel guides only advertise the paid excursions.

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?

There are some bars you can visit and bring your student ID card with you for some discounts, since some offer them. Visit Café Huskies somewhere during your stay since that is a really good place to relax and pet some cute dogs.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

A big challenge was the complete lack of sunlight during the last 2 months of my exchange. During the last month there was no difference between day and night. You can't really overcome this problem, you just need to accept the darkness in your life haha. I recommend to take your vitamin-D pills.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

My girlfriend also went on exchange to Svalbard during the same period as me. We got engaged there :).

9. Contact details (optional)

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