



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

**Jonathan Eyken**

<b>Study programme WUR</b>	Bsc. Soil, Water, Atmosphere
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	21/08/2023 until 07/12/2023
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	UNIS, The University Centre in Svalbard
<b>Faculty</b>	Arctic Geophysics
<b>Country</b>	Norway (Svalbard)
<b>City</b>	Longyearbyen

## 2. Motivation for exchange

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

I chose to go on exchange because I was really interested in the courses offered at UNIS and it sounded like a great adventure!

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

The arctic is a very intriguing place. Especially for a BSW student Svalbard is super fascinating, with topics such as climate change, geology and rivers/fjord hydrology being very visible in the surroundings.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

If you plan very carefully and look at different airlines, it might be possible to reach Longyearbyen within one day of travelling. We were able to do this on a Saturday on the way there, but we had to sleep a night at Oslo Airport on the way home. By looking for a day where you can take the earliest flight from Longyearbyen, I think it should be just possible to reach Oslo in time for the last flight to Schiphol.

## 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
<b>1</b>	AGF-213 Polar Meteorology and Climate	15	Meteorology course with focus on processes important on Svalbard, such as stable boundary	5 (high)	Amazing course! Great lectures and the fieldwork was super fun and adventurous. We even encountered a polar bear

			layer, gravity waves, polar lows, wind channeling and weather models in the Arctic. Includes a 5-6 day fieldwork campaign at a research station or hotel in the middle of nowhere. Using the data collected you write and present a report with a small group.		who kept walking circles around the station for 1.5 days forcing us to stay inside with a great view of the bear. The course invited a lot of own initiative. I learned a lot about programming and surface layer meteorology during the project!
2	AGF-214 Polar Ocean Climate	15	Oceanography course with a focus on Arctic fjords and sea ice processes in the Arctic Ocean and around Antarctica. Includes an introduction to fluid mechanics and 7-8 day cruise on a research vessel. Afterwards a large report project using data collected during the cruise.	4.5	A great course, the cruise was an awesome experience. Also the fluid mechanics part was great! For me personally the Meteorology course was slightly more engaging and better organised.

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

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

The projects are a bit larger than I've typically had during the first two years of my bachelor. The lesson materials are digital and sometimes printed and handed out. You do not have to buy books. The academic level is quite similar to WUR, maybe slightly higher due to the large number of Master students following the Bsc. courses (about 8/16 in my courses).

### **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?*

Since the university is very small, having not more than 100 students at any time (of which 16 in my courses), the professors and lecturers are very approachable. You were always welcome for an appointment in their office to discuss some questions or feedback on the project. During fieldwork there was about one teacher for every 3 students. This is great for discussing questions! There are a lot of events organised by the student community and housing organisation. Things like Friday gatherings, hikes, cinema nights and karaoke evenings.

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

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

There is a sports hall in town (Svalbardhallen) with a large for students and a lot of different sport clubs you can join. A bit like the Bongerd in Wageningen, but for all inhabitants of the town. There also a student discount (~10-20%) at most outdoor stores in town.

## 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?*

Elvesletta is the rather expensive, but very modern housing provided on Svalbard. It is the only option. There are options for shared rooms (~250-300€), single rooms with private bathroom and shared kitchen (~500€) and whole appartements (expensive).

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

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

Longyearbyen is very international. You run into people from all over Europe and even a few from the USA or Australia. Svalbard is very safe in terms of crime, even though guns are everywhere. Most doors and cars are left open.

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

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

You easily walk from Elvesletta to UNIS within 10 minutes. Unless it's just rained for the first time after months of freezing and everything is covered in black ice. Then you can walk struggling not to slip.

## 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: ~600€ (retour)

Visa if applicable: none, except for ~50€ for VOG and weapon permit.

Vaccinations if applicable: none

Insurances (extra, if applicable): none

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: ~500€ for single room.

Groceries: ~250-300€ per month

Public transport: 6€ for a one way trip to or from the airport. Otherwise there is no reason to use the bus, you can walk everywhere.

Restaurant/going out for dinner: Too expensive for me, but slightly more expensive than Dutch prices.

Daytrips/sight-seeing: Mostly free (you can organize it yourself or go with the housing organization or student council trips). Tourist trips are very expensive (~100-200€ for a day) and not necessary if you're a student and have a weapon permit yourself.

### **Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

It is Quite expensive to live there in terms of groceries and rent, but if you don't drink like me there are not many other things to spend money on. Plus the Erasmus grant and normal "uitwonende

beurs'' cover a large part of the expenses. Additionally the cost of special clothing and equipment needed for the cold/ harsh conditions is quite high. Think around 1000€ to 1500€ .

## 7. Free time

This depends heavily on the season. In the fall it's mostly hiking (and a little bit of skiing and ice climbing if you're lucky), while in spring snowscooters allow you to travel much further and tour-skiing is much more common.

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

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

The glaciers near town are nice. Sarkofagen, Sukertoppen and Varden are nice views to hike to. For further hikes Trollsteinen and Nordenskioldfjellet are good destinations.

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

Skiing on the Longyearbreen glacier was possible quite early in the season because the snow accumulates and stays in the relatively cold valley. You can borrow skis for free from 'student equipment'. Since the glacier is not too steep avalanches are not a problem and skiing there is not too hard for an inexperienced dutchy like me.

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

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

In the beginning you might feel like all the other students are much more experienced at mountain hiking than you. It's fine if you tell this to your hiking group and take it a bit slower and you'll quickly get used to it! This is something that me and my two Dutch BSW friends all had in the beginning.

## Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Living in the dark for a few months is quite something to get used to in the beginning. For me it helped to try to keep a strict day/night rhythm. Always going to sleep and getting up at the same times, and try to keep going out on hikes or walks around town. I tried to be outside or at the sports hall for some time every day. Still it takes some time to get used to the darkness and you might feel a bit tired or disoriented for a few weeks.

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

The amazing views, the polar bear and the great time we had together! Also the feeling of being somewhere so remote and just walking wherever you want without paths or trails is great!

## 9. Contact details (optional)

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