



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Bachelor Communication and Life Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	7-9-2019 until 21-12-2019
Country (exchange)	Spain
City (exchange)	Barcelona
University (exchange)	Universitat de Barcelona
Faculty (exchange)	Faculty of Economics and Business

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to meet new friends from other cultural backgrounds, learn another language and feel more free and independent. I wanted to learn to depend on myself and to solve my own problems.

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

I wanted to study in a Mediterranean country, because the laid-back culture and the warm climate appealed to me. The choice was between Italy and Spain and my parents recommended Barcelona to me, because it's a diverse, alternative and tolerant city. Also, it was one of the only cities in Spain that offered courses for my program.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Although most students choose to fly to Barcelona (I haven't met one other Dutch student who did not fly, and there was no shortage of Dutch students), I chose to go by train for several reasons: flying is extremely bad for the environment and I don't want to support this industry, and because I like travelling by train and gradually reaching my destination. I loved watching out of the window and see the landscape change slowly. A clear disadvantage of travelling by train is of course that it's more expensive, but then again you probably don't want to support cheap plane tickets, just because there's no tax on them. Another thing that could be seen as a disadvantaged is that travelling by train takes longer, but to me this wasn't a problem because I think travelling by train is way more comfortable (more space for your legs, more comfortable seats, no turbulence), and I had all the time of the world to day-dream about my destination, to read, or to watch Netflix. A really big advantage to some people might be that you can take as much luggage as you can carry, without an addition to the price! I carried over 20 kg of luggage, which would have cost a fortune to do by plane. If you have any questions about reaching Barcelona by train (e.g. where to find tickets, how to be updated of delays etc.), you can always contact me.

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	Urban Sociology	6	<p><u>Main objectives of the course:</u> This course is an introduction to the main aspects of the urban sociology. The course focuses on the treatment which classic and contemporary sociology have given to relation between space and society.</p> <p><u>Main concepts:</u> Theoretical concepts of the urban sociology and analysis of the globalisation processes, social ecology, the urban Chicago school, the return of sociology to the urban analysis, the restructuration of the cities in the post-Ford era, the global city: agents and processes, competition and co-operation between cities, urban regimes and mobility: New politics and models of urban government, urban policies and the revitalization of the cities, the Barcelona model: metacity; The development of sustainability of the cities; The ecologic footprint of the cities; Sustainability principles; Green mobility; The energy in the cities; Urban</p>	4	The excursion was especially fun!

			sustainability as a tool to unite cities.		
2	Health and Welfare	6	<p><u>Main objectives of the course:</u> This course applies the concepts, methods and theoretical perspectives of sociology issues of health and wellbeing of the population.</p> <p><u>Main concepts:</u> Health, Wellness and Society; Welfare and lifecycle; Distribution of wealth and welfare; Inequality, poverty and social exclusion, the impact of the distribution of wealth on the welfare and health; The experience of health and disease; Sick role, medicalization stigma of chronic disease and disability, risk and uncertainty, professional-client relationship, quality of life, death, biomedical and social models, technologies and medical advances, active aging, dependency; The organization and health policies</p>	4	One of the most involved and interesting professors I've ever had
3	Culture and Business in Asia	6	<p><u>Main objectives of the course:</u> To get to know Asian main economic features, as well as its markets, institutional frames and economic and business' organizations and cultures</p> <p><u>Main concepts:</u> East Asian Culture and its importance; business structure;</p>	4	Extremely interesting contents of the course, even though the thick Spanish accent of the professor (who taught in English) got on my nerves.

			elements involved in the negotiations; state of bilateral relations between Spain and China and Japan		
4	Spanish Course A2	5		4	I highly recommend taking a language course in your exchange country!
5					
6					

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

All of the courses that I followed existed of attendance to lectures, assignments and 1 or 2 exams. Only one of the courses, Urban Sociology, required additional readings outside of lectures. This course also included a small fieldwork assignment, which was done in one of the neighbourhoods of Barcelona. Other examples of assignments are short essays, a book review for Culture and Business in Asia, and a voluntary presentation to add a point to your grade for Health and Welfare. Students are also given the option to skip the assignments and make the exam 100% of their grade, although this is discouraged by professors.

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?)

All of the lecturers were quite approachable, but it also depended on the specific lecturer. For example, I asked one of my professors up to three times to send me an English course description of their course because I needed to submit this at my home university, and although they told me they would get back to me, they never did. However, another one of my professors was extremely helpful and he would always reply immediately. He also was quite personally involved with students, making sure everyone was comfortable in his class.

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

The university offers elaborate sports facilities with all kinds of sports groups, fitness and a swimming pool. It also offers student housing near to all of the faculties. I personally lived in one of these housing facilities, which offered free membership to the sports facilities, laundry and food.

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 rented a private room with bathroom in one of the university residences, which was ideal for me because they are extremely close to university (only a 5 minute walk) and everything you need is included in the rent. Students in the residence have 3 meals a day in the dining room, where you can choose from a vegetarian, vegan or meat/fish option. It's also no problem if you have allergies. There are laundry facilities as well, but you have to pay every time. There's also a bar and a terrace at the residence, a tv room where they show movies every Friday night, a gym, a library to study, and individual study rooms. They also give you a free gym membership if you want to go to the university gym, which has much more options than the gym at the residence, which is quite small. I personally took a lot of classes at the university gym, for example Zumba.

If you live at one of the university residences you also get doctor's appointments free of charge, which can be useful, even though I was fortunate enough not to need it. You even have a kitchen to your disposal if you want to store things in the fridge, or you want to cook your own meal. However, meals are always included in the rent so I never cooked my own meal. The rent is €900 per month, which is quite expensive, but it is all inclusive. If you would prefer to live in a shared apartment with other students, there are also some apps where you can easily find a room and the university also provides you with all sorts of useful links where you can find a place to live. This is also how I found my residence.

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

Of course the climate is a very obvious difference with home, because it's much warmer in Barcelona. There's a lot of people on the streets until late at night, which I really liked. The city really has a vibrant social life and you can always find locals outside at terraces or bars. Some stores are closed between 14.00 and 16.00, because of the siesta but it depends on the neighbourhood. In the more touristic places, the stores usually stay open all day until 20.00 or even until 22.00. Also people in Barcelona are extremely polite and helpful. In the Netherlands it's very normal to find people pushing and rushing to get into a train or bus, but in Barcelona this never happened to me. People wait for each other and even let you go first. It's also very easy to talk to strangers in Barcelona. People like to strike up a conversation with you, just for fun. At first this seemed strange to me and I was very suspicious, but later on I found out this was normal and they were just being nice and social 😊 I also received a lot of help from strangers, for example when I was carrying a huge, heavy suitcase down the stairs or when I was all alone in a Spanish Zumba class, where I didn't understand much. Although you might think that it's hard to be vegetarian or vegan in Barcelona, it's actually not! Of course I always got my meals at my residence, but I saw a lot of meat substitutes in the supermarkets and there are many vegan and vegetarian restaurants. Barcelona is an extremely progressive and alternative city, which also goes for their no-meat movement.

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

I have never lived in Wageningen, and the only rent I have paid in Barcelona was all-inclusive, so I don't feel justified to make that comparison. However, I feel like the normal rent in Barcelona for a room would be between 400 and 600 euros, depending on the neighbourhood and the size of the room.

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

The most popular modes of public transport in Barcelona is metro, bus or bike. I personally hate metros because they make me claustrophobic, and I often feel sick in the bus. However, being a true Dutchie, I love taking the bike, so this is how I got around most of the time. I chose to get a Donkey Republic subscription, which is only €9 per month, for unlimited use. In comparison, a public transport card costs over

6. Free time

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

Some of the must-sees are the Costa Brava, a beautiful coastline which is perfect for hikes and the painter's town Sitges. This is a very pretty village that used to be a preferred location for famous painters. It's perfect for a day trip, and it only takes 20 minutes by train from Barcelona Sants. Lastly I would like to recommend Tibidabo, which

is a mountain with a very impressive church on the top. It's close to Barcelona and it can be reached by train and a cable car. There's also a theme park.

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

Sitges usually doesn't appear in travel guides, but it's a very beautiful day trip!

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

I would recommend to go out as much as possible! Get your ESN card and join the activities. Definitely take a language class, because it really enhances your stay if you are able to talk to locals. Additionally, ESN organizes a lot of volunteer activities with elderly care centres where basic understanding of the language is necessary. Also check out the holidays and festivities when you are there, because Spanish people really like their holidays and there are usually a lot of celebrations! I personally went to many holiday celebrations, including a gorgeous fireworks show at the Magic Fountain! Regarding restaurants, I can recommend pizzeria Nanni, where they make the most delicious pizzas for only €5 and it is located in the most popular neighbourhood: Gotíc. The Asian restaurant Healthy Cuisine is also a great place to eat. The food is a bit more expensive than the pizzas at Nanni, but you get a lot and it's absolutely delicious! Another great restaurant is Veggie Garden, a vegan restaurant with a colourful interior and great food and drinks! I really love their strawberry and lemon smoothie. Great cafés to study are Starbucks, BuenasMigas and CostaCoffee, all of them are located near the old university, Plaza Universitat.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The first challenge I experienced was when my phone got stolen on the way to Barcelona. I would recommend to put your phone in a safe location, for example you could carry a small cross-body purse, preferably under your coat. This is what I did since after my phone got stolen. I never went anywhere in Barcelona without this purse with my valuable belongings. Other challenges were feeling lonely/homesick, which I dealt with by calling home, going out with friends or distracting myself by doing something entertaining. My best tip for when you feel homesick is to surround yourself with other people, but of course it depends on the person what you prefer.

What was your best memory abroad?

My best memory abroad is when I was sitting in the night bus from Barcelona to Madrid next to my Chinese friend and we were talking about our lives at home and culture differences. Another very precious memory is when I was talking to the same friend about our future, while looking out over the ocean in Sitges. Lastly, a very positive memory was when my parents came over and to show them around and show them my life, and to see how proud they were. I think the most important and worthwhile thing to do while studying abroad is to make friends and go out and travel as much as possible! Try to have meaningful conversations and don't be afraid to ask questions related to culture. It might feel awkward to us, Dutch people, to discuss religion and cultural differences because we might be afraid to come off as racist, but that's not true! It's actually extremely interesting to discuss this kind of things and I definitely realized that I

have so much more similarities with all of my friends from different nationalities (China, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia), than that we have differences!

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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