



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	BLP Landscape Architecture and Spatial Planning
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	06/09/2021 until 31/01/2022
Country (exchange)	Hungary
City (exchange)	Budapest
University (exchange)	MATE
Faculty (exchange)	Landscape Architecture

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to experience life in a foreign country and get to know it in a different way than you usually would than being a tourist. I also wanted to learn different insights in my field of study than the insights that are offered at WUR.

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

For my whole life I have only been living in relatively small towns. I was curious about what life in a big city like Budapest would be like. Someone told me that it is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It is also a relatively cheap city, as the costs of living aren't so high as in western Europe. Another important reason is that the courses that were offered at the university really appealed to me.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I travelled by airplane because that was the fastest and cheapest option for me. The flight time is two hours from Amsterdam and the costs are dependent on when you book. I spent nearly 300 euro for a return flight, but it can be cheaper if you fly from Eindhoven for example. If you are concerned for the environment, it is also possible to take the train, but that is much more expensive and you will need a full day to travel.

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	Google Earth Landscapes	6	We learned to use Google Earth as a tool for presentations	4	
2	Sustainable Landscapes Design and Planning	6	We learned about sustainable approaches in planning and design by means of lectures, practicals and a design project	5	This course was shared together with master students. The lecturer was very enthusiastic and the design project was one of my favourite assignments so far
3	Sustainable Landscapes	4	We learned about sustainable approaches in landscape architecture by means of lectures and presentations	3	
4	Landscape and Democracy	4	We learned how we could use public participation in landscape architecture	5	During this course we designed a boardgame that was supposed to help with the redevelopment of a schoolyard. We played it with children from elementary schools and high schools and we evaluated the game in the end.
5	Landscape Planning in Budapest Agglomeration	4	We learned about practical examples of landscape planning and design in the metropolitan region of Budapest	5	This course consisted of four day-long excursions to several interesting sites in and around Budapest
6	Landscape Planning and EU Membership	4	We learned about how the EU functions and how that relates to planning policies. Hungary was often a subject during the lectures	3	This course only consisted of lectures. We had to give two major presentations, one of which was a summary of planning systems in our home country.
7	Depiction of Space: Free-hand Drawing	4	We developed our drawing techniques during this course	4	

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

The way that the study is formalized is quite different from what I previously experienced. In Wageningen the semester is divided into three periods with separate courses each period. Here you follow all of your selected courses throughout the entire semester, so you start all of them in the first weeks and finish them at the end of the your exchange period. I finished all of my courses with final presentations, so I had no exams during my exchange. We didn't have to buy any study books. Articles that we had to read were handed out by the lecturers. The study load was much lower than in Wageningen. On some workdays I was the whole day or half of the day free. Otherwise, when I had to work at home I did have to spend quite some time making assignments, but I never felt stressed about finishing them in time for deadlines.

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?)

From what I experienced the lecturers were always excited to meet foreign students and learn about their experiences. The courses that I followed were all from the Erasmus programme so we didn't meet any local students at the university. The campus that our faculty is located on is hard to compare with the one from the WUR. The buildings are much older and appear as if they belong to a high school. There was an obvious lack of maintenance. One thing that I did enjoy about the campus is that it is one big arboretum with plenty of green vegetation.

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

For a small price you can choose from a variety of sports facilities that the university has to offer, but I did not make use of that. I found only one catering facility and it was not necessary to use it because I did not spend a lot of time on campus.

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?)

There is only one dormitory building on the campus that the landscape architecture faculty is in. It seemed quite old and has limited capacity. Everyone whom I met in Budapest found an apartment in the city itself. The university will send you a list of websites where you can find reliable accommodation. I personally lived in an apartment that I shared with two others. It is quite big and convenient for the three of us. It sits at the border of the city centre. I paid 330 euro per month, including service costs. It is possible to find cheaper accommodation closer to the city centre if you find an apartment with more residents, since the service costs are divided over all tenants.

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

Budapest is a city of nearly two million inhabitants. It is a globalized city with influences from many cultures. Most people are able to speak at least a little bit English. You can

find all sorts of restaurants and shops along the streets. There are some notable differences, however. Hungary does not have a bread culture like we do in the Netherlands. It is difficult to find good bread. At bakeries and in supermarkets they do have a wide variety of freshly baked things like cheese croissants. Most things (but not all) that you can find in a supermarket in the Netherlands could you also find in supermarkets in Hungary. The biggest supermarket chain is the Spar. Some of them even have self-scan checkouts. It is possible to pay with bank card virtually everywhere, but it is always useful to have a little bit of cash with you, in case you need to make use of a public toilet for example. One more thing that I have to note is that poverty is a much bigger issue in Budapest than in any other city in the Netherlands that I have seen so far. I came across beggars or homeless people sleeping on the streets quite often. I was warned that scammers and pickpockets were an issue in Budapest as well, but I'm glad that I didn't run into any of them.

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

Life in Hungary is generally much cheaper than life in the Netherlands. I didn't cook a lot while I was in Budapest because going out for dinner was really affordable. Very often did I eat out somewhere. A main course at an average restaurant costs around 10 euro, but I only went to such a place on special occasions. Because Budapest is such a big city, there are plenty of places where you can get dinner fast and cheap. For a reasonable portion I often spent between four and six euro.

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

Public transport in Budapest is well-developed and very reliable. There are many tram lines, bus lines and four metro lines. My apartment was located right next to a big metro station that connected to another station close to the university. For as little as fifty euro you can purchase a semester card at any of the metro stations. You can use that card to travel within the official borders of Budapest as much as you like. Never did I have to make use of a taxi. If you like you can rent or buy a bicycle, but the bicycle infrastructure in Budapest is very limited and much more dangerous than what we are used to in the Netherlands.

6. Free time

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

Trains in Hungary are surprisingly cheap. For only six euro you have a return trip to lake Balaton, which is certainly worth a visit if the weather allows. Outside of tourist season you can visit the 'beaches' for free. The lake is very shallow and because of that reason it gets relatively warm after several days of sunshine. International train tickets are also very cheap. I purchased a return trip to Bratislava for 15 euro and to Zagreb for 20 euro. I have also been to Ljubljana, which is a nice city to visit if you have the opportunity. However, we visited that place by car because someone whom I met owned one. We had plans to go to Romania as well, but that had to be cancelled because of covid.

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

There are many places within Hungary that are less-known to foreigners, but certainly worth a visit. Around lake Balaton there are great spots to hike, such as the hill named Badacsony. There is also a peninsula on the lake called Tihany that is worth a visit, especially in summer when the lavender fields are blooming. Otherwise the hills northwest of Budapest are great for hiking as well. There is one trail that I can really recommend, which takes a full day to follow and leads you to a lookout tower, from where you can view a full horseshoe bend of the Danube river. Several other (but more popular) things that I did was visiting historic towns like Esztergom, Eger, Győr, Sopron and descending down in one of the caves beneath the Buda hills.

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

If you meet other foreign students in Budapest they will certainly be able to tell you some good places to go out. If you want to know about restaurants you can always ask me. There is a wide variety of dining places, even those that are specialized in vegan dishes.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The Hungarian language was sometimes a barrier. I spent half a year learning it in Duolingo and I still wasn't able to have a good conversation because the language verges so much time to learn. While I was in Hungary I did learn some more useful things for everyday life. Another challenge that I experienced was living together with one of my housemates. I didn't have the option to choose whom I wanted to live with so it could be any type of person. I built a good relationship with one of my housemates, but the other one was a pain to live with. Although he rarely left his room, he consumed all the dishes, didn't clean after himself, made noise until deep in the night and never took the initiative to buy something for the public interest. We tried to talk to him, but nothing changed in the end. I guess that it is just a matter of bad luck to end up in an apartment with someone like him.

What was your best memory abroad?

When I look back at all my pictures I only see good memories. During the exchange period you will likely make friends that can last for a long time. If you don't travel too far away you can invite friends or family from the Netherlands to come visit you and guide them around the city. One particular memory always puts a smile on my face when I think about it. For the 'sustainable landscape design and planning' course we had to visit a town north of Budapest. There we were tasked to design a sustainable work of land-art. It turned out that we had to go back to the town to present our work. We had to do that in the town hall in front of half of the town's government. They were so excited for our ideas that even a camera from the local news was filming us. We were told that the local government may even decide to realize one of our designs! Soon they will hold an exhibition of our designs in the town hall and let the townspeople vote as well, so who knows what may happen.

8. Contact details (optional)

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