



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Environmental Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	07/09/2021 until 25/12/2021
Country (exchange)	Canada
City (exchange)	Vancouver
University (exchange)	University of British Columbia
Faculty (exchange)	Arts

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to experience studying somewhere else than Wageningen. After three years of studying at the WUR it was time to go somewhere else, and go out of my comfort zone.

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

I chose for Canada and specifically Vancouver because the city is surrounded by mountains, forests and the ocean. You can see the mountains from almost anywhere in the city. The university of British Columbia is a university where you can study anything. Coming from the WUR, which is quite specialized, I was curious to study in a place where you can find people that study things from filmmaking to physics etc.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

From Europe you can only get here by plane.

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	Queer and Trans of Color Theorizing	6	The intellectual and political interventions of queer of colour theorizing in the gender and sexual politics of racial and imperial projects, including its engagements with women of colour feminisms, settler colonial and indigenous studies, and immigration and diaspora studies.	5	Best course I did during my entire bachelor. This course challenged the ways in which I look at and am part of this world. Very interesting, great professor (Rosanne Sia)!
2	Intersectional approaches to thinking gender	6	Interdisciplinary exploration of the multiple intersections between gender and (neo)colonialism, racism, poverty, ableism, and heterosexism in a globalized world; historical and cross-cultural aspects, and the social construction of sex and gender, masculinity and femininity.	5	Similar to the course above, but with a larger focus on intersectionality and gender (feminism). I finally feel like I can think with and use an intersectional framework, which can be used in any field of study, also environmental sciences.
3	The just city in a divided world	6	Considers the city as a terrain for the manifestation and mediation of social justice. Explores how the allocation of land, goods, and services in cities (re)produces social stratification, and how institutions and civil society negotiate just and unjust outcomes.	4	Very interesting course! It was very broad and drew upon many forms of justice that are present in the urban arena. Incredibly knowledgeable professor, who also is a professor in the gender, race, sexuality and social justice department (the two courses above are from that department). This course is from the urban planning department.

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

I only did three courses, which is 18 ECTS in total. Normally a student takes 5 courses in one term, which would make the workload quite a bit higher than in Wageningen. The courses are not harder, you just got more to do, all the time. Many midterms, assignments and papers. But I liked that I constantly had something to do, instead of only one exam at the end. My courses were mostly based on papers that you had to read for the lectures and powerpoints.

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?)

My courses were rather small, so the lecturers were very approachable. They all knew my name and you could easily have a chat with them after class or during their office hours. They also had a lot of understanding for the struggles that you can face being far away from home during a pandemic and things like that, I felt very understood. The student culture is quite different from the one in the Netherlands. People study very hard, and there is not really a culture of having a chat or going for a coffee after class. Students either go home to study, go to the library to study, have a job, another class or a meeting they have to go to. But focus on finding friends outside of class, via clubs or so and soon enough you'll have people to hang out with. There is also lots of stuff organized for international and exchange students.

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

This university is huge! The entire campus is kind of a neighbourhood of Vancouver. There is literally anything you need 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?)

I was not eligible for a room on campus since many students were returning to Vancouver after the pandemic and others were prioritized. If you are eligible you can sign up via the university. Housing is organized by the UBC, there are no other parties involved like in Wageningen. I know of some one-term exchange students that still found a room on campus after they arrived. I myself started looking for a room via Facebook, there are many Vancouver housing groups, and found a room in East Vancouver.

The rooms on campus are single rooms, so you don't share your room with others, but you have corridor mates I think. Everything is a bit more expensive here, so also rent. I paid 850CAD, which is around 550€. If you cannot find a room on campus I can recommend looking for a room around Commercial Drive, where I live. It's the cosiest neighbourhood of Vancouver, and reminds me the most of a city at home. The only drawback is that the university is a 40 minute bus drive away, but you get used to that.

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

I would say that the biggest difference is that the culture is very North American. One of the biggest surprises for me is that there are not many differences between the US and Canada, Canada just has a better image in Europe (or at least for me haha). Besides, a cultural difference is that there is not really a dominant culture here. In Vancouver people from every corner of the earth can be found. What is a bit more universal is how big everything is and the focus on the individual I'd say.

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

For me rent was almost double the one I paid in Wageningen. When you go on exchange outside of Europe you cannot get money via Erasmus, but look around for other scholarships, there are quite some available for exchange to Canada.

Also, daily groceries are a bit more expensive here, but it also feels more expensive because of the different currency. Vancouver is one of the most expensive cities in North America and I'd say you can notice that.

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

I had to take the bus every day, which is something I grew to enjoy a lot. It's mandatory from the university to get a Translink Compass card on which you can load your monthly subscription for which you already paid before coming here. I think it was about 175CAD for the entire term, which is about 100 euros for 4 months of unlimited public transport in the entire Vancouver metropolitan area, which is amazing! You can travel quite a bit around the city with it. The bus and skytrain will get you anywhere you need to go. For a North American city, the public transport is great, compared to Europe it could be better.

6. Free time

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

- Squamish just north of Vancouver is a place you should have visited. You drive the Sea to Sky highway to get there, one of the most beautiful roads I've ever seen!
- Vancouver Island or one of the smaller islands in between Vancouver and Vancouver Island are beautiful! Especially when the weather is a bit warmer, because it is true, Vancouver is THE raincity. In autumn, winter and spring it rains A LOT.
- In Vancouver itself there is the Vancouver Art Gallery, Stanley Park, the Museum of anthropology, the VanDusen botanical garden and the UBC botanical garden, English Bay, False Creek, Granville Island, Canada Place, Kitsilano beach, Wreck beach, Pacific spirit park, the mountains on the North shore (Cypress, Seymour, Grouse) that are definitely worth a visit. Also, taking the bus or skytrain to a random neighbourhood to look around is fun Grandview-Woodland and Kitsilano are definitely places to have seen.

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

Sofar sounds concerts, small concerts in unconventional places are great! 'Jokes please!' is a fun weekly comedy show in Little Mountain theatre. In summer there is lots to do in and around Trout Lake. And lastly the Rio theatre, a historic cinema.

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

The first thing I got here was a bike and it was the best purchase of my stay here. You can bike quite safely in Vancouver, there are many set out bike routes and you can get practically anywhere by bike. I really enjoyed biking around to places to get more of a sense of the city than what you would get going to places by bus. For the rest, Vancouver is not the wildest place at night. Downtown there is always stuff to do, but it's not like the Netherlands that you can always bike home after a night out, the city is big and you'll need a nightbus or a taxi or so.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The biggest challenge was getting used to being in a new place, 9 hours away from home on my own. Probably this is very cliché but it's just all the changes that can be a bit overwhelming. Best advice I can give is to take it easy and allow yourself to not get everything sorted out right when you get there. Everything takes time and for the first few weeks I thought I was not going to find any friends. Now I'm almost leaving, and I am sure I'll miss this place and the people I've met. Last advice, try to connect to some Canadians! Many exchange students I know travelled together with people from their own country, or live with people from their home country. It is a bit unsettling to be 'on your own' and have nothing or no one from home around, but it's a great experience to disconnect a bit and see home from a bit of a distance. Now I couldn't be looking more forward to being home again.

What was your best memory abroad?

I went to a mountain hut in the mountains north of Pemberton with the VOC outdoor club and it was the most beautiful weekend of this exchange. So much snow, sunshine, great people and the most stars I've ever seen at night. Enjoy the outdoors when you're here!

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name/e-mail	livia.franssen1810@gmail.com	