WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	BES – Bachelor Environmental Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	25/02/2022 until 29/06/2022
Country (exchange)	Italy
City (exchange)	Milan
University (exchange)	Università degli studi di Milano
Faculty (exchange)	SCIENZE E TECNOLOGIE /SCIENZE AGRARIE ED ALIMENTARI

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?
I wanted to experience something completely new in my study exchange and do something I had never done before. I think going on Erasmus is a great opportunity for this, as you get to experience 'normal life' abroad.

What is the reason you chose for this country/university?
I love Wageningen, but if it also wanted to know what it was like to live and study in a 'big' city with lots of people, activities and livelihood. I wanted to go to the South of Europe, because I really like the food and the culture and I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn a new language.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination? (E.g. bus, train, etc.)
I went to Milan by train and can really recommend this. The night train to Zurich leaves Utrecht at 21:00 and you arrive in Zurich the next morning around 8:00. The second train from Zurich to Milan is a direct train of only 4 hours. I liked travelling by train as it is more relaxed than by plane and you arrive in the middle of the city centre already. Also, traveling through the Swiss mountains is beautiful and gives you plenty to look while counting the hours away. Since 2022, the WUR offers extra funding of +-€70 for Green Travel. This is great, as it also compensates the current price difference between plane and train and even makes the train the 'cheaper' option!

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	Economic History	6	History course about the development of economies in different European and other countries starting from about 1500 to post WWII	5	Nice, also if you have never had history courses before. Very nice teacher.
2	Global and climate change economics	6	Economics course about models and theories regarding climate change, scientific research regarding this and political economy	3	Bit harder course, much material to study and some complicated econometrics
3	Sustainability accounting and management	6	Introductory course about accounting and management of companies, focusing on sustainability	4	Interesting! Possible to do if you have no accounting background
4	Social media for environmental communication	3	Project on making a sustainable communication strategy for a city that wants to promote sustainable tourism	5	Very fun course! Only a project/groupwork has to be delivered, so very low-key

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

At this university in Milan there were only two semesters a year. So, I followed the second semester from March-July. I had a lot of lectures, which were around 1.5/2 hours and groupwork outside university hours. Having only one semester is nice, as the exams are only at the end, but also confusing as you follow all courses (in my case 4) at the same time and all the exams are concentrated in the same time. There is no specific 'self-study week', but the courses finish earlier than the exams, so there is plenty of time to study.

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?)

The teachers are very approachable and kind, comparable to the WUR I would say. The teachers I have experienced spoke great English and were very interested in the students. They asked for engagement (class discussion/groupwork/presentation) and were open for questions at any time. I had most of my courses with around 10 people, so the education felt personal as well and the other(Italian) students were very open and engaged.

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

In my opinion this was not that elaborate. My faculty was located in *Citta Studi,* an area were many students live and university buildings are located, but the faculty was quite old and didn't have that many facilities. For catering/coffee we always went to a local bar or the cafeteria of the Politecnico university which was close. There were also not that many sport activities with the university, however ESN did have some. When I was there ESN created groups of people who wanted to come together to play beach volleyball/football and arranged this for us, that was great! Something else I missed in this university was an intraweek (like the AID), or even an intro day, there was nothing organized.

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?)

It is possible to get a room via the residence system of the University, however these spots are limited. I lived in a shared room in one of these residences (so I shared the bedroom and the bathroom with another girl) and paid €300 per month, also the private rooms in these residences have the same price, but placing is random so whether you have a shared/private room is a surprise! There are also groups on Facebook or sites like uniplaces.com and spotahome.com were people have found a room. However, be careful, there are some stories of scammers on these channels (but mostly good stories, so no reason to panic 😊).

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

The culture is quite different to the Dutch culture, but that was something I really liked. The most common differences are of course the cuisine (Italian food is amazing and the prices for food are quite good) and the timing of the meals. Italians eat a simple breakfast, a lunch between 12:00-14:00 and after this the restaurants close. Dinner starts 19:00 at the earliest, but you will find most people eat around 20:30-22:00. Between lunch and dinner there is 'aperitivo'(compared to the Dutch 'borrel'), were you get (free)snacks and bites with your drinks in bars. In my opinion, the people are very passionate, outgoing, friendly, friends/family-oriented laid-back and inviting (even if you don't speak the language they will try their best to understand you). You will find many people (also young people) that don't speak English, but it always works out as they really want to help and understand you.

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

Living in Milan is in the same price range as living in Amsterdam I would say, or even a little more expensive. If you look for a room outside university residences the price range would be anywhere between €600-€1000 for a single room in an 'okay' location. Sharing a room is cheaper and is also offered through private channels. The university offers rooms for €300 a month.

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

As a student in Milan, you can get an unlimited public transport card for the city for only €20/Month. With this card you can travel through the city by metro, bus and tram. Single tickets for each of these transport methods are €2. There is also an office of 'Swapfiets' in Milan, here you can rend a bike for around €13/Month, I could recommend this as everything in the City is withing 20 minutes biking and the traffic is not that dangerous.

6. Free time

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

Definitely go to lake Como (only €5 by train) and all of the cute towns around Milan! Train tickets are not that expensive (and they have great discount codes for the more expensive ones) and its really easy to reach a lot of nice places by train. For going more south of Italy, also Flixbus/Itabus is a great way to travel!

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

The student parties at Piazza Leonardo/Piazza Affari/Parco Sempione! There are organisations (I believe one is called APE, but there are more) who organize free events with music, bars and food trucks every week in the summer! This was great, as a lot of students go here and the vibe is really nice (and its free!). These events are not really advertised, mostly through Instagram or mouth-to-mouth, but definitely worth to go!

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time (E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?)
Pasta: Da Oscar/Volemose Bene/Caico e pepe/Pasta d'autore
Aperitivo: La prosciutteria
'Cheap' drinks: Red café and Spritzeria
Pizza: Pizzium and Marghe
Gelato: Out of the box/OGGI/Mancuso

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

Starting up a new life and feeling at home. As you hear so many great stories from other people's Erasmus, I expected my Erasmus to be great from the beginning onwards. However it is more than normal that moving to a new city, making new friends, meeting new people and feeling at home doesn't all happen on the first day. This made that I was searching a bit in my first week, for 'what this Erasmus was going to be like for me'. Looking back now, I would tell myself to go with the flow a little more and see what would come my way. This, because in the end I still had the best time and I could have never predicted this beforehand!

What was your best memory abroad?

It's so hard to choose one memory. I think what I enjoyed most about being abroad is the freedom you have. Each day is so different from how you spend your days back home and that is definitely something I loved while being abroad.

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes ☒	no ☐
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