



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Biology
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	09/01/2022 until 28/04/2022
Country (exchange)	Canada
City (exchange)	Vancouver
University (exchange)	University of British Columbia
Faculty (exchange)	Faculty of Science

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to experience the academic culture in another country, and wanted to be abroad for an extended period again to travel afterwards.

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

Going to UBC allowed me to follow a few very interesting courses on plants, but the most prominent reasons were the abundance of opportunities for hikes and other outdoor experiences around Vancouver.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I wasn't able to travel before my exchange due to the COVID situation, but I recommend making a stopover to explore New York or Toronto before flying to Vancouver; you're on your way there anyway and its often not that much more expensive.

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	Survey of Algae	8	Complete study of the ecology, species diversity and morphology of algae.	5	Includes a field trip to Victoria, Vancouver Island, which is a lot of fun!
2	Evolution and Morphology of Bryophytes	6	Lectures and labs on the morphology and evolution of bryophytes (=mosses, etc.), and local species diversity	4	You must <i>really</i> like moss if you choose this course, but it has lots of field excursions and passionate instructors.
3	Ecological Restoration	6	Lecture series on several ecological restoration projects.	2	Not very informative, and delivered online even outside COVID times
4	Plant Ecology	8	Lecture and labs on the dynamics of plant ecology, as well as some training in analysing field data.	4	This course does not only focus on plant ecology itself but also has elaborate assignments on promoting gender/race diversity in the field.
5					
6					

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

The main difference with Wageningen is that instead of one big examination at the end of the term, your grade consists mostly of smaller assignments that you do throughout the term. This does make the weekly workload a bit higher though than at the WUR, even though the level of the courses is generally lower.

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 approachability of the lecturers is about similar at the WUR; most courses are completely coordinated by a single professor. Engagement with local students can be hard as most Canadian students already know each other and don't really interact with the internationals. If you choose a course with relatively few exchange students (=any course outside the Business, Psychology or Anthropology departments) you have much better chances.

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

There is a plethora of restaurants, shops and sport facilities on campus. Sport clubs often have open tryouts which you can join. A lot of students and I joined the Board Games Club which convenes every Wednesday to play for some nice old-fashioned "gezelligheid".

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?)

UBC offers on-campus housing for most exchange students, which in my opinion is much better and convenient than living off-campus, as you are closer to all your courses and other things happening in the evening. They are offered preceding your term, but you can also choose off-campus housing, in which case you'll actually live in a 'house' instead of a dorm. Do expect to pay a lot of rent for both though; C\$800-C\$1200 per month is the most common price range. The dorms on campus are not equipped with bed linen and cooking utensils, you'll have to buy them yourself.

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

A lot less people cook for themselves and order food instead, which is somewhat understandable as the food selection in the supermarkets is a little bleak. *Everything* is full of sugar!

You really have to get outside of your dorm for social activities, most students here reported that the majority of their housemates stay in their room when they are home and don't really bond with the other housemates.

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

Expect to pay a little more for food and a lot more for rent. It is all worth it though :). Electronics are the exception; you pay a much less for a new phone or earbuds.

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

Once you're in Vancouver, you have unlimited travel through the UBC UPass in metropolitan area, which is great. The Skytrain unfortunately does not connect to UBC (yet), but it is a great way to travel around quickly while enjoying panoramic views..

6. Free time

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

Definitely visit Vancouver Island. Its beaches, forests and culture are a must-see, and allow some time to explore there.

Most of the mainland is covered by snow during the winter term, but if you're not into winter sports like me there are still plenty of hiking opportunities in North Vancouver and Squamish, 60 km north of there. The VOC is the outdoor club which organizes regular outdoor trips.

Seattle in the USA is only three hours of travel away, so its easy to travel there if you got the chance.

Outside of Vancouver travelling by car is the most convenient. This can be hard as renting options are limited for new drivers or if you don't have a license. Luckily, as someone who can't drive, I was always able to join other people. Within Vancouver the transit network brings you everywhere you need to be.

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

Minnekhada Regional Park. It is close to Vancouver but nobody talks about it, while you find extremely lush forests there. It is a little infested with bears though; up to you if that is a pro or a con.

Lynn Valley Suspension Bridge: everybody talks about the Capilano Suspension Bridge, but it's overpriced and overrated. The Lynn bridge is much more beautiful, and free!

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

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

I lived in Downtown for the first few days, which was very busy and crowded compared to Wageningen (of course). I needed to get out of there ASAP, which took some effort and caused quite a lot of stress.

What was your best memory abroad?

Standing with a group of friends on top of a little hill near on of the beaches closes to Tofino on Vancouver Island, with the sun setting... a beautiful sight.

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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