



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

<b>Field of study in Wageningen</b>	BVG
<b>Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	06/09/2022 until 22/12/2022
<b>Country (exchange)</b>	Canada
<b>City (exchange)</b>	Vancouver
<b>University (exchange)</b>	University of British Columbia
<b>Faculty (exchange)</b>	Faculty of Science

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I have always really liked traveling and experiencing new cultures. Besides, I was growing a bit bored in Wageningen and wanted to see more of the world. Therefore, I decided to go on exchange as this allowed me to get out more, change things up a bit, travel and experience a new culture all at the same time.

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

Canada has the most beautiful nature. Especially in British Columbia. Furthermore, I wanted to go to a place where the native language is English so I could really try to improve my English. In addition, Vancouver is one of the most international cities in the world which really spoke to me. Vancouver however, is relatively small compared to other big cities and I really liked that too since I am not a big city person. I chose UBC because it is one of the top universities of Canada, they offer so many programs and there are a lot of very interesting and fun courses to choose from. UBC is insanely big, which is very different from Wageningen and I really wanted to experience that. I really chose Canada for the nature, the kindness of the people and the university culture.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

It is a bit difficult to reach Canada other than by plane. I flew to Vancouver International Airport (YVR) which is located in Richmond and super close to campus. From the airport it is super easy to get to campus either with a taxi (~20min) or with public transport (<60min). When deciding to go with public transport, you can get a compass card (public transport card) right at the airport and travel first with the SkyTrain and then take a bus to campus. You will need this compass card to travel with public transport anyway so I would highly recommend to just get it at the airport straight away.

## 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	APBI318 Applied Plant Breeding	6	Very basic course about plant breeding. The course is divided in three modules: The first module is about basic biology of plant, the second module is about genetics and the third module is about breeding schemes.	3	This is an online course. I found this course very easy and I was expecting more difficult content for a third year level course. It was very much high school biology and first year genetics. Nevertheless, the professor was very nice and easy-going. You have a lot of different assignments throughout the term that are graded. From creative writing essays to breeding simulations and statistics. There is no final exam but, instead a written final paper.
2	APBI442 – Wine Grape and Berry Biology	6	A very specific course on the biology of grapes. You learn about grapevine genetics, morphology, phenology, industry and wine making. The focus is heavily on grapes and the agricultural work field. There are also a few guest lectures on berry biology.	4	The professor was very funny and the class was incredibly small (only 18 people). During the term we also had three labs and a trip to the greenhouse which was a lot of fun. For someone who had 0 background in plant biology, I was scared that it would be a difficult course for me but I found it very doable. There are two quizzes, a midterm and a final exam that are graded but the quizzes are open book and online.
3	APBI426 – Plant-Microbe Interactions	6	A course in which you learn about beneficial microbes and pathogens that can infect plants. Course material is mainly based on research papers.	4	This was the only course I felt like was up to the level you would expect from a third year university student. The professor was super kind and helpful. There were only 50min lectures which I found nice because short lectures like that really kept my attention. In addition, there were literature discussions in which you had to read research papers and answer questions. Those did take a lot of time to make. I found the course content to

					be super relevant and interesting.
4	BIOL371 – Principles of Neurobiology I	6	In this course you learn the basics of neurobiology. It is high school level material but then you dive a lot deeper into that material. For example, instead of learning what an action potential is, you will learn the research behind how we figured out the principle of an action potential.	2	This course only had lectures and the lectures were super long (two hours) without breaks in between. It was therefore very difficult to keep paying attention. I also didn't really like the teaching style of the professor since he would ask questions during the lectures and would come back to these questions way later in the course. In other words, he was always jumping ahead and I found that annoying. There is lots of literature to read and there are weekly graded quizzes and worksheets. The worksheets however are graded by completion only meaning that you would get 100% just for handing them in on time. Furthermore, you were allowed to choose to not do the midterm and final exam but instead do a replacement assignment which was nice.

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

I found the academic level to be a bit lower than in Wageningen. I took third and fourth year level courses but especially the third year level courses felt like high school to me. In Canada, it is normal to have multiple graded assignments instead of one big final exam which I preferred much better. That sounds like it is more work, but because the number of contact hours isn't that much, you have plenty of time to finish these assignments. Furthermore, things are graded very leniently. It is relatively easy to get 100% for things and to score high in general. Average final grades fall somewhere between 75-90% at least for my classes.

**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?)**

I loved the university culture. Professors are super approachable. Many have scheduled office hours in which you can just go to your professor, have a chat with them, drink coffee with them and ask your questions. In addition, I felt like professors at UBC really wanted you to succeed and coach you in your learning progress. There were always individual accommodations to be made if you had any problems with any assignments. For example, moving a deadline because you are too busy with other things is not a problem as long as you ask nicely and explain your situation. There was also a lot more engagement of students during the lectures. Students asked so many questions and most of the time, the professor was answering those questions more than teaching the actual lecture content. The lecture content that we didn't get to was then dismissed and not tested on the exam. I

experienced the whole atmosphere to be a lot more relaxing, engaging and encouraging than Wageningen. There is also a lot more emphasize on extracurriculars and being active in clubs. University doesn't feel like just university but it is also highly encouraged to have a life outside of studying and having fun.

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

You can find everything you need on campus. There are many places to eat, gyms and clubs that you can join. There is a club for almost everything I think. On campus there are also multiple sport field, two stadiums and an ice rink. The bookstore sells everything you need in your dorm. Kitchen appliances, electronics, furniture, decorations and of course books. There is a drug store on campus and multiple shops to do your groceries. There are laundry facilities in every residence. In addition, there are also many resources available for exchange students. There is the GoGlobal office you can always go to if you have any questions or are struggling.

## 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?)**

The university offers on-campus housing in residence. Unfortunately, not everyone is able to get a room on campus so if you didn't get housing on campus you should look somewhere off campus. Facebook is your best friends when looking for housing off-campus from what I have heard. I was very fortunate to get a room on campus. Exchange students get assigned either Fairview or Walter Gage. Fairview is further away from campus (~15min walk from the main street). In Fairview you live in a house with a total of four people. Everyone has their own room and you only share the living room, kitchen and two bathrooms with each other. I lived in Walter gage which is a student flat. You share the living room, kitchen and one bathroom with six people in total while having your own bedroom. I liked Gage because it was super close to everything, the gym is opposite the building, the bus stop is a 2min walk away and the main street is within 5min walking distance. Gage also has a beautiful view over the ocean, mountains and downtown Vancouver if you're lucky.

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

The majority of the population in Vancouver is Asian and you will therefore find a lot of Asian restaurants. Canadian people are known to be very kind and polite and I certainly experienced that too. It is very common to make small talk with the barista, waitress or just some stranger you meet on the street. Canadian people are also always happy to help if you for example need to find your way somewhere. Moreover, it is customary to tip at least 12% in a restaurant or similar services. It is also considered polite to always thank the bus driver when you get out a your destination and ask "how are you?" when greeting anyone. Yes, this also means strangers.

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

Vancouver, is a very expensive city and thus the rent is also a lot more expensive than in Wageningen. I paid a total of 3700 CAD which is roughly 2500 EU. That comes down to around 625 EU/month which is very cheap for Vancouver. The average rent for housing off-campus is closer to 800-1000 EU/month I think.

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

North-America in general is a very car focused country. Luckily, in Vancouver public transport is decent. When you want to go to places outside of Vancouver though, or when you are more in the suburbs, public transport is pretty much non-existent and you will really need a car. Vancouver is known to be one of the best cities in terms of public transport in North-America. Getting to and from Downtown and the campus is really easy and takes less than an hour. Also traveling to the and from the airport is really easy. UBC offers a compass card subscription to all students. You pay a 175 CAD fee at the beginning of term and then you can travel freely all throughout the Vancouver area. Just remember to load your subscription on your card every month. Public transport in general is a lot cheaper in Vancouver than in the Netherlands. A bus ticket usually costs around 3 euros and you will be able to travel to any bus stop in the Vancouver area.

## 6. Free time

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

British Columbia is known for its beautiful nature and hikes. I highly recommend renting a car during the weekends and travel around to do these hikes because the views are incredible! It is also a very fun bonding activity to walk a mountain for 30km so you will instantly get a very close friend group.

#### *Hikes/mountains*

- Grouse Grind
- Lynn Canyon
- St. Mark's summit
- Garibaldi Lake
- Cyprus mountain
- Eagle Bluffs
- Dog mountain
- Mount Seymour
- Stawamus Chief
- Lynn peak
- Lynn loop
- Joffre lakes
- Lindeman lake

#### *Places to visit/weekend/ multiple-day trips*

- Vancouver island
  - Victoria
  - Tofino
- Whistler
- Banff
- Whitehorse (Yukon, for the Northern lights)

#### *Places to visit close to campus/in Vancouver*

- English Bay
- Kitsilano
- Kitsilano beach
- Stanley park
- Vancouver Art Gallery

- Vancouver Public Library
- North-Vancouver
- Granville Island
- Robson's street (the free ice rink during the winter)

#### *Places on campus*

- Wreck beach
- Tower beach
- Cecile's Green Park House
- The Rose Garden
- Museum of Anthropology

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

The travel guides recommend Capilano's suspension bridge. Capilano is a lot of fun but very expensive and touristy. A free alternative is going to Lynn canyon and do the free suspension bridge there. At Lynn canyon there is also a loop trail and you can go cliff jumping when the weather conditions are favorable.

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

#### *Restaurants*

- The Eatery
- Banana Leaf
- Haidilao
- Mary's on Davie
- Oeb Breakfast
- Yolks

#### *Cafés*

- Sophie's Cosmic Café
- Jam café
- 49th Parallel
- Blue Fox Café (Victoria)

#### *Concerts*

- Rickshaw Theatre

- Commodore Ballroom
- Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

#### *Other food places*

- Rain or Shine

## 7.Challenges & best moment abroad

### What was a challenge you have experienced?

Vancouver is very expensive. I definitely struggled with financial control. Costs of living in general is a lot more in Canada than in the Netherlands. Student volunteers however, offer multiple programs and solutions to help beat food insecurity and I used those initiatives to cut down on costs. Cooking dinner every day in general is not very common and most people get takeout or ready-to-go meals which I found challenging too because that also makes eating a lot more expensive.

### What was your best memory abroad?

There are too many to name. Definitely doing all the hikes! Grouse grind was so much fun because it was really tough and we really did die but it was the best bonding activity ever. Garibaldi lake was so worth it because the view is absolutely amazing and after that we also swam in the glacier water which was an unforgettable experience. The drive to Garibaldi lake was also so much fun. Getting up very early with a group of friends and just being in the car driving through one of the most scenic highways of BC while music blasting hard in the car... So many fun memories! Last but not least of course I have to say our trip to Whitehorse, Yukon which is in the North of Canada. We went there during reading break and got to see the Northern lights which just.... Wow. Unforgettable experience. Being together in -20 degrees, staying all night in the middle of nowhere in a small cabin with a campfire trying to stay warm waiting for the lights.... And when they finally appeared and danced in front of us in the night sky, that feeling is hard to describe but it is just amazing.

## 8. Contact details (optional)

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