



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	BSc Environmental Sciences
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	15/09/2023 until 02/02/2024
Exchange destination: University	Karl-Franzens Universität
Faculty	Geography, Law, Social Sciences and Philosophy
Country	Austria
City	Graz

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I felt that it was necessary for me to do something out of my comfort zone as I had been in it for quite a while. Besides that I wanted to gain more confidence.

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

The main reason for Austria was the mountains it has but also the language as I know some (very basic) German. Besides that I felt safer with going somewhere that was sort of close to The Netherlands.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

Going with the train is very doable I would say. Sometimes booking via Deutsch Bahn or OBB is cheaper, and make sure to always have at least half an hour transfer time for German trains as they often have delay.

I did not fly to Graz but there is a small airport with a few destinations. You can also fly to Vienna and take a 2.5 hour train ride from there to Graz.

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	Seminar in Human Geography (Feminisms and Environmental Justice)	4	About feminist theory and how that can be applied on environmental injustices	5	This was a really nice course with lots of interesting perspectives and interactiveness. Very smart lecturer as well.
2	Decision Making for Sustainable Development	4	On how decision making processes work in terms of sustainability	3	Sometimes went a bit too slow for me and sort of repetitive. Content was quite interesting though.
3	Mathematics for Social-ecological system sciences	3	Mathematical course on how to create formulas for mainly biological systems	3	I liked the way it was set up but it was a bit too hard and mathematical for me. Teachers were nice
4	International Climate Change Law, Policy and Litigation	5	About Climate Law and how it works and could work	5	Very cool course. Lecturers were very knowledgeable and there were a lot of interactive elements.
5	Climate Ethics: The Global Challenges and the Role of Individuals	5	About ethics applied on climate.	4	(Very) small course with interesting readings but the lecturer was a bit chaotic.
6	Introduction to Sociology	4	About different texts on sociology	3	Do not expect an introduction to sociology, this was just reading texts and discussing them in a sociological way. Interesting discussions happened though

What is it like to study there?

E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material.

I would say that the workload is approximately the same, maybe sometimes even a bit higher. Especially in January, when you have a lot of exams/papers it can be a lot.

There are about three types of courses; lectures, practicums and seminars. The lecture is like a big WUR lecture so with a lot of people and not so much interaction. The practicums is with about 30 people and a bit higher level and a bit more interaction and the seminars are the highest level with very small groups and often lots of discussions. I did some seminars and some practicums and the seminars were quite hard but I would say doable.

I would say in general for me my courses were a lot more interactive on my exchange than at the WUR but that could be due to the type of courses I chose (more social than in the rest of my studies). There were a lot of student-led classes, presentations and discussions, which I really enjoyed.

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 lecturer-student interactions are mostly the same, but sometimes slightly more formal, although it really depended on the person. In general I would call my teachers professor *last name*. In general Austria is a country very focused on rules and you have to follow protocols to get something done. So make sure your paperwork is in order.

What does the university offer students additionally?

E.g. catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?

There are sports classes you can take but you have to make sure to create a sport account for yourself really soon and also subscribe for the classes immediately after the deadline because there is a high demand for them. Besides that there is a Mensa which is kind of a student restaurant where you can get hot meals for lunch. If you get the special "mensa stamp" on your card you can get discount and also if you are there after 13:00.

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 are quite a lot of organizations that offer rooms for student in Graz. OEAD is a really big one but you can look at all of them on the website the uni has for Erasmus students.

What is the culture of the country like?

E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?

The vibe of the people is fairly similar although they can be a bit more strict. The Austrian people often eat warm for lunch which I feel is quite a nice tradition.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

One bus/tram travel costs 3 euros and you can also buy weekend/week/monthly tickets which is often way more beneficial. You can buy all these tickets in the tram itself from a machine or with busses sometimes from the driver. Besides that there is the Top-Ticket Studierende Steiermark, with which you can travel for 180 euros for half a year through the whole region. This is also beneficial if you want to go skiing as there is a nice ski resort (Schladming) in the region. You can use the Graz Mobil app to buy this, but make sure you fill in the exact same information in the app as the uni has of you, otherwise it does not work as it is coupled with your student account there.

You can also cycle quite nicely in Graz, although it is a very different experience than in the Netherlands. There are not a lot of bike lanes so you are basically a car on two wheels, but the Austria drivers are in general quite friendly, so they will go out of the way for you.

6. Expenses

Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

E.g. you can also indicate price differences (higher/lower/equal) in comparison to the Netherlands.

Ticket there:
Visa if applicable:
Vaccinations if applicable:
Insurances (extra, if applicable):
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: 444 per month, had my own room and shared bathroom and kitchen with one other person via OEAD
Groceries: Slightly more expensive than in NL, mainly bread is more expensive.
Public transport: Slightly more expensive
Restaurant/going out for dinner: Same or sometimes cheaper
Daytrips/sight-seeing: Same

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

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7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?

I really liked the mountain Schökl, the "house mountain" of Graz, which is about 40 minutes with the bus from the centre. There is a cable car that goes up and you can hike there very nicely. When it is snowy it is absolutely gorgeous as well. In general there are a lot of nice places to hike in the area and I would say try to do as much as possible. Other capitals are also close by and worth a visit.

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

I did not really look at a travel guide but in general there are a lot of things to do in Graz and you should definitely make use of that. The first weekend I was there there was some crazy festival going on with everyone in traditional clothes which was really cool, called Aufsteiern. If you are there already at that point make sure to go.

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?

There are quite some nice clubs in Graz, mainly in the Uni neighbourhood in one big street. Besides that there is PPC, on the other side of the river, where some fun events also take place.

In terms of restaurants there are many and I can't really recommend a specific one but going to a traditional Austrian restaurant is definitely a lot of fun.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

In the first week I really struggled with having no idea of what would come in the next weeks. I then kind of let that panic happen and responded to a lot of initiatives people send in the big Erasmus groupchat. By going to one thing, you are invited to another thing and then in the end find people you really like and spend more time with.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

One weekend I went with the train to the National Park Gesäuse, hiked up a mountain, stayed there for a night and then hiked down again, which was really awesome. By staying with the locals you get to know them and their traditions better.

9. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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