



# WUR Goes Abroad

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## 1. Student Information

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|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Study programme WUR</b>              | BBI                            |
| <b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>   | 07/09/2023 until 23/01/2024    |
| <b>Exchange destination: University</b> | Universidad Autonoma de Madrid |
| <b>Faculty</b>                          | Faculty of Sciences            |
| <b>Country</b>                          | Spain                          |
| <b>City</b>                             | Madrid                         |

## 2. Motivation for exchange

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

To broaden my horizons and to improve my Spanish.

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

I wanted to go to Spain to improve my Spanish and in the Bachelor Biology there were not that many options with Spanish language lessons. I chose Madrid because it is very central in Spain and is well connected for if I wanted to travel in the weekends, I also wanted to test out if life in a big city would be something I like.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### **Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?**

It is both reachable by car, bus and plane. So, I would say travel green because it is definitely possible. Especially if you know someone else of the WUR that is going to Spain, you can make it a fun roadtrip!

## 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 | Ecología Humana                 | 6    |                                   | 3  | This course is very different from the courses we have in Wageningen, it was not my favourite course. I can see other people liking it though.   |
| 2 | Biología de Poblaciones Humanas | 6    |                                   | 4  | Interesting course!  |
| 3 | Geobotánica                     | 6    |                                   | 5  | Really lovely course. Very educational, great professors.  |
| 4 | Redacción y Ejecución Proyectos | 6    |                                   | 2  | I would really discourage Erasmus students to take this course, it is hard to understand all the Spanish organisations and laws. However, it is educational and different from Biology courses at the WUR. |
| 5 |                                 |      |                                   |  |  |
| 6 |                                 |      |                                   |  |  |

### What is it like to study there?

It is hard to get every form filled and in order, because the Erasmus centre there is understaffed and not super available. Also, information is sometimes very hard to find. Academic level actually surprised me, but it has to be said that the difference between courses can be huge. Some courses were on par with or higher than the level at the WUR others are of lower quality. The examination also ranges between hard and easy. Workload is generally lower, although you have more deadlines and I had some tough weeks there as well. Lesson material is generally pretty good and available to the students!

### What is the culture of the university?

Very approachable, however, the engagement differs between lecturers. I'd say sometimes they seem super familiar when compared with the WUR, as in it happens that they offer you a beer in the cafeteria after a lecture to have interesting conversations.

### What does the university offer students additionally?

There are a lot of options outside of academic life at this University. From tons of sports to a music school and choir linked to the university. A lot of talks on interesting themes and what not. However, I can't say I tried all of it because I lived in the centre and not on campus! The things I went to were fun.

## 5. Housing-travelling-living

### **What are the possibilities for housing?**

I kind of underestimated how much scammers there going to be active on the internet. If you want a room on campus it's no problem. However, the centre is nicer for an Erasmus and it can be a bit tricky to find a room there so keep that in mind. That said, I found a room in a mere 2 days, but I also got very lucky in this compartment. Rent is comparable to Utrecht I think.

### **What is the culture of the country like?**

I love the culture of tapas, everybody going out at night to talk with their friends and have a drink. Tortilla de patatas was my favourite breakfast. The only negative was the bad coffee, and as a vegetarian options can be limited in Spain. In Madrid the latter is not really a problem though. Everybody in Madrid is very open and you can talk to almost anyone. People are really friendly towards people they don't even know! I will miss this the most about Madrid.

### **Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?**

Public transport card is 8 euros a month for bus/metro/cercanias in and around Madrid.

Taxi via **Cabify** is sometimes incredibly low in price for example 6,5 euros for 6km. On busy times and to the airport for example prices are higher. Never book them beforehand, because it's always more expensive that way.

The metro structure in Madrid is fantastic and very easy in use! To go to the Uni most students take the metro to Chamartin or Atocha and then the Cercanía to Cantoblanco Campus.

## 6. Expenses

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

Ticket there: / depends

Visa if applicable: /

Vaccinations if applicable: /

Insurances (extra, if applicable): /

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: €500

Groceries: Slightly cheaper than Wageningen.

Public transport: Very cheap and nice, same goes for taxis!

Restaurant/going out for dinner: Cheaper, but not a lot cheaper depending on which restaurant.

Daytrips/sight-seeing: Depends on where you go, but usually cheaper because the transport is cheaper.

### **Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

Taxi's with cabify were very useful and reasonably priced!

Madrid was not as cheap as I thought prior to my Erasmus, Madrid is way more expensive than the rest of Spain! So, once you leave Madrid everything is way cheaper!

## 7. Free time

### **What are must-sees in the area?**

Toledo is a beautiful town nearby, which you can reach for free with your public transport pass of 8 euros a month. Madrid has tons of corners that are must-see, I can't list all of them. I also loved travelling through all of Spain with the Iryo high speed trains, these are budget friendly, very fast and have a good connection from Madrid. (For example Madrid-Barcelona in 2 hours!) Plan the high speed trains a lot in advance because the prices rise extremely as the date of your trip gets closer!

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

I think if you search well enough everything is in some travel guide, so just go wherever you think you'll like it, usually Spain doesn't disappoint! For me, maybe Córdoba is somewhat of a hidden gem.

### **Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?**

You can find anything whenever in a city like Madrid, just go and explore. (For going out I'd recommend Moncloa as it is the Barrio where the 'Spanish' students go out rather than the tourists.) For food, try it all, food usually is superb in Madrid! Tapas is the word! Go explore the different barrios of Madrid for the most complete experience.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

In the beginning the hardships I had to get my documents in order was incredibly stressful. Finding a balance between travel and school is also hard on Erasmus and took me a while to get right! You just have to push through the first weeks, adjusting to a whole new place is never really easy on your body and mind, especially if you want to explore so much. For the balance, I'd say at some point I realised I just needed to stop travelling each weekend if I wanted to succeed on my Erasmus!

### **What is your best memory of your time abroad?**

The friends I made in Madrid and all the time I shared with them, including the fantastic field excursions are what I'll never forget from this experience! If you are open and loving to the Spanish students in your class you will get an incredible amount of love back!

## 9. 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>                                  | Robin.formesyn@outlook.com              |                             |