



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student information

<b>Study programme WU</b>	Soil, Water, Atmosphere
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	20-09-2023 until 22-03-2024
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	Oregon State University
<b>Faculty</b>	College of Agricultural Sciences
<b>Country</b>	USA
<b>City</b>	Corvallis

## 2. Motivation for exchange

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

To be honest, I don't really know. I think I wanted to have a change of scenery, and see how it all works in another country.

### b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

I came into contact with a student from this university

### c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

I chose OSU because I liked their course selection a lot. Especially because they offer courses for multiple aspects of my study, instead of only one, which often is the case elsewhere. Also the oceanography courses.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

Bring *all* the documents (DS2019), even though you have a visa in your passport. Because I left mine at home, I had to go through an extra round of security checks upon arrival in the States. It's the easiest to take a direct flight to Portland (PDX), and then take a Groome shuttle to Corvallis.

## 4. University and studying

### a. 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

<b>1</b>	Climate data analysis	4	You learn how to work in python to plot climate data.	4	It was nice to finally actually learn how to make those graphs, in a working Jupiter server. I wish they gave more attention to the interpretation part: when are you allowed to draw a conclusion from a graph? And also: that they taught us how to describe the graphs efficiently (which terminology, level of detail, etc.)
<b>2</b>	Principles of physical oceanography	6	You learn the basic processes that happen in the ocean.	6	This is a very nice course to follow if you like atmospheric sciences, there are many overlapping principles, and attention is also paid to how the atmosphere influences the ocean. This course is more descriptive, you don't have to do complicated rewrites of formulas on your exam. The teacher I had was very clear and well-organised.
<b>3</b>	Nutrient cycling in agroecosystems	6	you learn about the nutrient budgets in soils, in regard to the crops you have, and types of fertilizers. Management of agricultural fields.	5	You don't need to know the underlying processes. This course kind of stays at surface level, but it is nice to learn the general processes and also about the crops in the soils
<b>4</b>	Cartography	6	You learn how to design maps, general design principles, history of map making.	6	This course doesn't explain data processing, that's what the GIS courses are for. What I really like about this course, is that it also covers the implications of design choices, and how map making can be used and abused by various people.
<b>5</b>	Biological processes in soil ecosystems	6	You learn about a lot of biological processes that take place in soils, and how they come together.	4	I really wish this course wasn't given that early in the morning. You have to read a paper for every lesson, and give a presentation about one at some point too. I liked learning about the soil biology, but man, I found this course hard to learn for; there are many processes to keep track of. And it is really important to understand how redox works.

6	Climate physics	6	The physics of the atmosphere and climate processes.	2	Apparently the teacher had some personal issues going on, he was apparently quite good with his other courses. This course didn't prioritise well on which topics to give attention too. We didn't reach the parts that were actually new. Very poorly organised this year. We stuck too much to the basics while this was a follow-up course.
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**b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):** Yes, pretty much all courses are taught in English at OSU.

**c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain):** The selection of courses that were offered was nice, but scheduling and registering were a problem.

**d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain):** I'm kind of in the middle, see 4a.

**e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain):** I am, but I do have to say that if you're going to study there for also a second term, that you will not be able to sign up for all the classes you want. Registration is based on how long you have been studying at OSU: the longer, the earlier you are able to register. So some popular upperclassmen courses will be full at the time you're finally allowed to register.

**f. What is it like to study there?**

*E.g. Study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material?*

I'd say that the level isn't higher than the WUR, but the workload definitely is. Your homework and your practicals count for your grades too. One thing I wish I knew before: don't be so perfectionistic, I'd say the teachers are less strict when grading at OSU compared to WUR.

**g. What is the culture of the university?**

*E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with WU?*

The lecturers are very approachable, the teachers and TA's have weekly office hours, where you can choose to go to with your additional questions. I really liked this.

The students are easier to talk to than Dutch students, in my opinion.

One thing that is very different is the grading, at the WUR it is common to have 80-100% of the grade be the final exam, while at OSU, the final exam is only about 30% of your grade. It is more important to keep on performing well, as your homework is graded and counts too.

#### **h. What does the university offer students additionally?**

*E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?*

The OSU offers many other facilities, my favourite being the cultural centres and the arts and craft centre. At the latter you can get an introduction, after which you can use things like sewing machines and those pottery disks. There is also a sports complex, which you don't have to pay additional fees, as it's already covered by tuition.

### **5. Housing-traveling-living**

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

*E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?*

First off: I wouldn't recommend living on campus, it is very expensive, and you're forced to take a meal plan. I lived at the iHouse (international house Corvallis), which is cheaper and, well, a lot of fun. Some people tend to complain it's a bit gross, but it's as clean as your average Dijkgraaf corridor. I lived in a 4 person dorm, for which I paid \$475 a month.

#### **b. What is the culture like?**

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

The biggest difference is that the people are much easier to talk with than in the Netherlands, which is a thing I really liked. This is one of the things I liked the most about the US. You don't have to worry too much about making friends for that reason. People tend to dress more expressively (but that might be an university thing), and it's not uncommon to get compliments from strangers on how you're dressed, when you're walking to class. I love that that Corvallis has way less of an 'act normal' culture compared to the Netherlands.

For the cuisine, there won't be many new things you'll come across, as most American things are available in the Netherlands as well. Mexican foods are easier to get, though. My personal favourites: those toaster waffles, root beer, corn dogs, klass lemonades, Jarritos. I do not like American breads, they are expensive (\$4 or \$5 for a loaf) and just don't taste good. The best ones are the cheapest one, in my opinion. I've heard good things about the sourdough, though.

One thing I did struggle with, is that (nearly) everything contains a lot of meat. Vegetarian options exist, but are not as common as in Wageningen, so it is really recommendable to cook for yourself.

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

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

Within Corvallis, there are free busses you can take, which is nice, and for American standards, it's a very bicycle friendly town. Speaking about bikes: sports bikes are more common for daily use compared to city bikes there.

If you want to go to places, for daytrips, there are sometimes very nice line busses (ex. One that brings you to the ocean, for \$5). If you don't have a car, it can be a struggle to reach the natural parks. If you want to go to different towns, you can use a flibuss or a greyhound, but the flibusses tend to come way to late (think on the scale of 0.5-3 hours). Don't forget about Amtrak (trains), the trains are nice.

## 6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	ca. €1000 (get your tickets on time)
Visa - if applicable	ca. €600
Vaccinations - if applicable	ca. €300
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	\$3000
Daytrips/sight-seeing	depends on trip
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	\$475, quad
Grocery costs per month	???
Public transport costs per month	-
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	\$40

### b. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands:

Supermarkets are more expensive, it stressed me out at times.

### c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

Regarding grocery costs, I'm unsure, because I don't eat very regularly. My costs were pretty low for that reason, and for the fact that I mostly ate canned food and rice. I don't think my cost are representative. The house in which I lived had a cabinet with communal food things as well, which was really nice.

The university, will not accept international health insurances. So you end up taking the university one, which costs \$1500 per term, so like \$500 per month. Hopefully they will change this policy soon. I studied for two terms, so it cost me \$3000 in total.

## 7. Free time

### a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

The redwoods in northern California are a must see. I stayed in Crescent City, and used the line busses from there to get to the Redwoods. This was a 6 day trip (two days of getting to the destination and going back home). I saw the redwoods at Jedediah Smith and Prairie Creek State Park.

Portland, I wish I had gone there more often. It is a good place to go thrifting and there is a lot of street art, which is cool. Go there when the days are longer, because it is not the best place to be alone when it is dark. When you're in Portland, Powell's books is definitely worth visiting.

Newport, a town at the Pacific coast. There is a bus you can take from campus that brings you all the way there, you leave in the morning, and come back in the late afternoon.

**b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?**

Go to an Iron Skillet, this is a road restaurant for truckers, and it is very fun. Nice food, home-style American stuff. The people who eat there are very social, so it is a good place to meet new people. I got there by chance, because I got stranded (didn't read my ticket well enough), and the staff helped me out a lot. Very kind people.

For something nearby: the McDonald-Dunn forest. It is a 45 minute bicycle ride away, so if you don't have a car, it is a lovely place to hike.

Somewhere east of Eugene are hot springs. It is a very interesting experience, it kills all ambition in you, so it is a great place to kick off your vacation.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

**a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?**

The workload, I just kept on studying. Find someone to occasionally look at your work, so you can stop doubting the quality of it, often it is good enough, but the perfectionist in you just goes ham.

**b. Best memory?**

Honestly, just the times where I had fun with people. Those were nice.

## 9. Contact details

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