



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	BSc Food Technology
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	30-01-2023 until 14-06-2023
Country (exchange)	Spain
City (exchange)	Madrid
University (exchange)	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
Faculty (exchange)	ETSIAAB: Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería Agronómica, Alimentaria y de Biosistemas

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

Improving my Spanish language skills.

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

Improving my Spanish language skills. I never had been in Madrid before, and therefore chose to do my exchange in this specific city.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I travelled by plane, as it was the fastest and cheapest option. I didn't have enough time to choose an environmental friendly option, as the semester in Madrid started before the semester in Wageningen ended. In addition, the ESN-card that I got in Madrid allowed me to book my return flight with a discount.

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	Plant Molecular Biology	6	Plant Molecular Biology	1	
2	Biomics	4	Research methods for transcriptomics, proteomics and metabolomics	4	
3	Virology	5	Virology	3	
4	New Trends in Plant Crops	3	Characteristics of multiple cultivars and biotechnological ways to improve their cultivation		Taught completely in Spanish
5	English for Professional and Academic Communication	6	Very practical course with many assignments such as giving research presentations, applying for jobs, writing formal letters, etc.	5	Couldn't be approved for my minor
6	Spanish Course Level B1.1	3	Spanish language course	4	Couldn't be approved for my minor

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

There is way less practical work when comparing to Wageningen University, so this was compensated by more theory. I also noticed that during examination way more small details and facts were asked than I was used to in Wageningen. I had to adapt a bit to the different way of examination (ik moest echt flink 'stampen', zoals je dat in het Nederlands zegt..). In addition, the academic year is divided into two semesters, which means that you only have two examination periods in one year (instead of six in Wageningen).

During my exchange I followed the biotechnology courses, so this was a bit of a deviation from my own study: food technology. I had to choose these courses, as it was the only study field which offered some English courses. When comparing the biotechnology workload to other studies within my faculty, the biotechnology was way harder.

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 classes were really small, about thirty/forty students at most, but I also had classes with only ten students. For me, it was more comparable to a Dutch high school than an university. The engagement with local students was therefore a bit harder, as it was a small class that had been following the same programme for the last three years. In addition, there was also a bit of a language barrier. However, one on one, the students were really nice and helpful. It was frequently said (by professors, students, coordinators, etc.) that there was a lot of competition between the biotechnology students, but as an exchange student I didn't really notice this.

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

There is a canteen where you can order the daily menu (€6.40), or other dishes/sandwiches, which most students do. I believe there were some sport facilities, but within my faculty I didn't meet anyone who used them. The sport facilities were shared with other universities in Madrid, but within the technical university it wasn't popular.

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 didn't offer any rooms, there were no rooms on campus. However, multiple sites were available to sign up for a room. The rent rates were about 450, depending on location and facilities.

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

The biggest difference is that lunch is eaten at 14.00 or 14.30, and dinner at around 21.00. Eating meat is more normal in Madrid than Wageningen, it was therefore sometimes difficult to find vegetarian options in supermarkets, restaurants or the university canteen.

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

I paid €490 in Madrid, whereas I pay €375 in Wageningen. The facilities I have in Wageningen are definitely way better than the ones I had in Madrid, but this also depends on luck. I lived in the city centre, therefore the rent I paid was a bit on the higher side.

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

I travelled to the university by either bus or subway, which took me 15 minutes. As a student (below 25 years) you can get a special public transportation card, where you only pay €8,- each month to use the whole transportation network of Madrid (bus, subway, trains).

6. Free time

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

There are some nice parks (El Retiro, Temple de Debod) and squares (Puerta del Sol, Plaza de España). You can also visit the Prado museum, which is really famous. You can get everywhere with public transportation, the subway network is very complete. However, you can also just go by foot and walk through the streets of Madrid.

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

You can go to salsa lessons at the parks, which are really cute. They are usually offered for free or ask a small fee of a few euros.

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

Just avoid the really touristic places. For example all the paella places, as this isn't really eaten by people in Madrid. There are a lot of nice places for tapas, where you can eat jamon, croquetas, tortilla, etc.. The nightlife in Madrid is really nice, there are a lot of clubs available.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The most difficult challenge was finding the right courses, as most of the courses were taught completely in Spanish. Within my faculty there were only 15 ECTS offered in English each semester, therefore I had to choose some Spanish courses. I had some basic Spanish knowledge, but following courses at a university level in Spanish, is definitely hard if you don't speak a language fluently.

What was your best memory abroad?

Meeting a lot of new (international) people and acquiring a lot of new (language) skills. In addition, I visited a lot of places within Spain, which I really loved. The daily sun is also a great advantage.

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name/e-mail	Fee Twilt: fee.twilt@wur.nl	