WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	Bachelor Landschapsarchitectuur
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	11/09/2023 until 02/02/2024
Exchange destination: University	University of Porto
Faculty	Faculty of Science
Country	Portugal
City	Porto

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to improve my English and meet people from other countries/cultures. Besides, I love travelling so living in another country sounded really cool to me.

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

Honestly, I mostly chose the city because of the weather. I hate Dutch winters and the weather in Portugal was much better. For Landscape Architecture, there are not that many options in the South of Europe so that's why I chose Porto. But also Porto seemed like a really nice & beautiful city to me.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

I went by plane from Eindhoven, but I think there are also options to go by train and by bus, but that's a really long journey I think. That's why I didn't go by bus. From the airport in Porto, there's a metro that brings you to the city centre.

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	Técnicas de Construção Aplicadas ao Projeto / Construction Techniques applied to (Landscape Arquiteture) Project*	6	Construction of Landscape elements like garden stairs, section of paths & grass.	3	Lectures were in English, practicals in Portuguese but the teacher was always happy to translate it to English. Practical classes we mostly just had to work on the assignments and when you had a question, you could go up to the teacher. Assignments were a bit unclear since you kind of had to figure it out yourself, you had to use examples from the internet to make the construction details. The guidance was not the best. Despite this, it was not a lot of work and easy to pass.
2	Projeto de Aplicação de Vegetação I / Studio:Planting Design I	6	Learning different types of shrubs & trees, drawing planting compositions and learning about vegetation.	4	Useful course, lectures in Portuguese but teachers gave a short summary in English. Practicals were partially in English, but it was understandable.
3	Tecnologias de Representação da Paisagem / Landscape Representation Technologies*	6	Learning how to work with AutoCAD, Photoshop, Civil3D & SketchUp	2	Everything was in English so that made it easier. Practicals were hard to follow, since they explained the programmes in class (instead of the videos that we get on WUR) so if you didn't hear anything, it was hard to follow. I didn't pass this course because I just didn't understand what to do in SketchUp. They didn't explain the assignments, they only explained how to work with the programmes.
4	Gestão de Espaços Exteriores / Studio: Management of Parks and Gardens	6	Learning how to make a management plan using the Green Flag Award.	4	Useful course, group work with a group of 6 or 7 people. You have to make a report & do a small exam. Interesting course to follow. Lectures in Portuguese, but also for this one they offered a summary to the Erasmus students in English.
5	Projeto de Espaços Exteriores I / Studio: Landscape Design Project I	6	Making a plan for an urban neighbourhood in Porto.	4	Group work with a group of 3 to 4 students. This was different for me since I'm used to doing studios alone. Overall, kind of the same idea as a studio course at the WUR.
6					*For these courses we had to use a garden design of someone else, that

					the Portuguese made in the first year. That made it sometimes a bit harder to work on the assignments.

What is it like to study there?
E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material.

The study load is much lower than it is in Wageningen. To me it was quite easy to follow the courses, even though a lot of things were in Portuguese. We had 4 hours a week per course until Christmas break. I had a lot more free time than I have in Wageningen because the work load was lower in Porto.

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 teachers were always present and happy to help, which was also important since a lot of things were in Portuguese. Local students are not that good in English so the only reason why we talked with some of them, was because we had group work with them for 2 courses. Sometimes it was a bit hard to communicate because their English was not the best, but overall this was not that big of a problem. The university building was less modern than the WUR, so kind of old buildings with old furniture. The building looked more like high school to me, so this was an interesting experience.

What does the university offer students additionally?
E.g. catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?

As far as I know, a lot of the buildings have a cafeteria. You could get sandwiches and coffee and stuff like that and it was really cheap.

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?

I booked my room with Spotahome, but I checked the residence on Google Maps and they also had their own website so I was almost sure it was not a scam. You can also use Uniplaces to find a room, but with both of these sites, you have to be careful to net get scammed. Most of the time, the site will say if it is a verified landlord. With most people it is safe but I saw some people on the ESN group chat that got scammed with some of these sites so you have to be careful with that. There are also buildings like LIV student and Xior, you can check that on their website but you have to be on time because I was quite late with booking my room so there were not that many things available anymore.

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

Portuguese people are really friendly and almost always happy to help, most of them also speak (a bit/enough) English, which makes it easy to communicate in stores and stuff. The local cuisine is mostly fish and meat, which was interesting. They have vegetarian options in the supermarket as a replacement of meat, but the options are not that broad as in Wageningen and it is quite expensive. Most restaurants offer vegetarian meals. Lastly, Portuguese people are really chill and relaxed, so not like the Dutch people that are really stressed. For example, in supermarkets in the Netherlands, you will be helped very quickly to help as many people as quickly as possible, but in Portugal they don't feel stressed to hurry. They take the time to help you and make a chat with customers at the register, so they don't feel any pressure to be quick.

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

You can get a form from the university, which you can give to the public transport company (Andante) and then you can get a discount (if you're 23 or younger (or something like that)). For 3 zones of the public transport it is €23,- a month (with discount) and €30,- without the discount. If you want all the zones, which I did, it is €30,- a month (with discount) and €40,- without the discount. There are not that many metrolines but the ones that they have are good, and mostly on time. The busses are not that good, they are almost always late so you can't rely on them. I went to my university by metro, and then it was a 20 minute walk. You could also take the bus from the metro station but as I already said, it was never on time so I didn't rely on this. Metros drive until 1 am or something like that and start around 6am.

Trains are good and cheap and go to near city's which makes it easy to explore nearby places.

After partying, we almost always went home by Bolt or Uber. But mostly Bolt, since this was really cheap. Most of the time, a ride of 10/15 minutes was €3,- for 4 people, and because I always went with my roommates it was really cheap since we would split this between each other. If you don't want to pay this and want to walk, Porto is not that big and almost everything is within a walking distance of 30min. maximum.

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: Depends on summer/winter. In summer it was €150,- by plane (including 30kg of luggage), but the return flight was €90,- (including 30kg of luggage). With the ESN card, you can get 10% discount and free luggage on the return flight.
Visa if applicable: -
Vaccinations if applicable: -
Insurances (extra, if applicable): I had a travel insurance, which was around €3,50 a month.
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: €550,- (I was late with booking, there are also options of €300/€400,-

Groceries: I don't know the exact amount but it was around 1,5 times cheaper as in the Netherlands. So what I would get in the Netherlands for 90 euros, would be around 60/70 euros in Porto. Depends on what you get of course.
Public transport: €30,- a month (includes bus & metro)
Restaurant/going out for dinner: €10/€15,- for a main dish.
Daytrips/sight-seeing: around €10,- for train ticket. Flixbus was also really cheap.

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

7. Free time

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

Douro Valley, Braga, Guimarães, Nazaré, Geres National Park are close and really nice places. Also Madeira (€50,- return flight) and Acores (€100,- return flight) because these places were cheaper to get to than if you would go there from the Netherlands but most importantly really beautiful. Algarve is also really beautiful, which was a 6 hour drive. And of course Lisbon, you can get there for €15,- (return) by Flixbus. Vigo (in Spain) is close and really nice around Christmas time (a lot of Christmas lights).

Best way to travel was renting a car, which was really cheap (around €20,- for a day).

I booked everything really last minute, and you have some national holidays which means you are free, so then you have time to do nice things.

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

I don't know about the travel guide, but the places mentioned above are worth visiting.

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

Muti is a good Italian restaurant (recommended to me by Italians). Adega Leonor is a famous place among Erasmus students, people go there to get a drink and everyone is standing outside and chatting with each other. It is easy to meet new people here. There are also 2 clubbing streets close to the centre with a lot of different kind of clubs, a lot of Erasmus students went to More Club (also because with an ESN card you could enter for free, instead of paying 10 euros to enter). An ESN card was €20,- to get. Another tip is Erasmus Life Porto, this is another organisation that organises activities for foreign people, this was also €20,- for the card. But most Erasmus people are participant in ESN.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Language in university, but I translated the slides from the lectures with Google Translate and this worked fine for me.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

Meeting new people from different countries and making friends that will feel like a family during your Erasmus. Also exploring new places was really nice!

9. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes ☐	no ☐
Name/e-mail		