



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Bachelor International Land and Water Management
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	24/01/2023 until 30/06/2023
Country (exchange)	Czech Republic
City (exchange)	Prague
University (exchange)	CZU
Faculty (exchange)	Environmental Sciences

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

In my bachelor International Land and Water Management we mainly looked at the land and water management from an agricultural perspective. I went on a study exchange to learn more about the land and water management when different land uses are being applied, to see how the management can be for instance in cities, forests, wetlands, heathlands, etc. Furthermore, I was curious to follow these courses with people from all over Europe that all have their different background and knowledge about land types and environments that we don't have in The Netherlands. That has been a very enriching experience.

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

I chose for this university because there were a lot of courses being taught in English so I had a broad choice. Another reason was that I wanted to end up in a very multicultural place, and as Prague is located in the middle of Europe, potentially people from literally every corner of Europe could be "more easily" here. A nice bonus was that as Prague is in the middle of Europe, it also makes it quite easy for me to travel around to all the surrounding countries, which I hadn't explored yet.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

On my way to Prague I went by train, with only one switch in Berlin. This was easy. On my way back I took the bus as I had gathered too much luggage in Prague so I would not have managed the switch by myself. The bus line is direct and therefore convenient.

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	Wetlands Conservation and Management	5	Teaches about different types of wetlands, their function, how they can purify the water and their management	5	Very interesting course, especially since the Netherlands is full of wetlands and I had little knowledge about them, but for me the level of chemistry was quite high.
2	Natural Resources Management	5	Teaches about different resources (both environmental as financial) that are needed to develop.	2	Although the concept is very interesting, the course was very basic and didn't went much into depth.
3	GIS II	5	Teaches more advanced skills in ArcGIS Pro	5	I have learned a lot. Clear lectures and slides with good tutorials to practise what we have just learned.
4	Global Change and Water Resources	5	Teaches about how our climate and the atmosphere is changing and what the effects of this is on our water resources.	2	The lecturer wasn't comfortable in her English which made that the lectures took double the time that they could have lasted when everything would have been spoken in a normal speed. The themes were interesting but didn't went too deep into the material.
5	Spatial Planning	5	Showing how planners look at city planning, includes 2 excursions, and in the end we had to plan a new part of the town we have visited in a team.	4	I learned a lot from the group project and the excursions but there wasn't a line throughout the lectures and one of the lecturers was not that good.
6	Ecosystem Conservation and Management	6	Teaches about 8 different ecosystem types, their characteristics, threats and management. Each ecosystem being explained by a different expert.	5	Very interesting course. In my personal presentation I had to scrutinize on the heathland management on the Veluwe and I learned a lot.

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

What was new for me was the semester system. This implies that the first weeks are quite relaxed but then in the final weeks the workload is double.

The academic level varied from high to not too high, depending a lot on the level of English of the teacher and their motivation. In my case I had two relatively easy courses, two very tough courses and two moderate courses. In many of the courses we had to give presentations about places in our original country which was interesting because I almost learned more about the Netherlands in my semester abroad than while I was studying in The Netherlands.

The provided study material mainly consisted out of the lecture slides and some papers that were posted on Moodle.

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 relationship between students and teachers is more formal and it was important when emailing them to address them with their correct titles. There was some connection with the international fulltime students but not too much with the Czech local students as they were mostly following their courses in Czech instead of English.

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

Every building has its own canteen where you can buy sandwiches, cakes, coffees and beers. There are also machines that offer sweets, drinks, coffee, etc. There is one building "Menza" where you can go every day for lunch (11:30-15:00) where you can choose from 5 different main dishes, 2 types of soup and different deserts.

There are sport facilities available, like tennis courts, an athletic place and a swimming pool but I don't know many people who used these facilities.

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?)

You can apply for a dorm, some months in advance, which is definitely the cheapest option (€340 for a shared room). Then there is also this ErasmusinPrague website that offers shared flats in great locations but they are very expensive (€700-800). Then some people found a place by Facebook (some great, some got scammed). Others found it by student-room-flat.com (€400-600) which were really nice.

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

The people look quite cold and grumpy on the streets but a lot of them are actually very friendly. Most of the people speak English but it is very much appreciated when you know some words of Czech. They eat 2 warm meals per day. A lot of fat/meaty/potato dishes (very nice in the cold winter). A difference is as well that alcohol is way more accessible than in The Netherlands so you will see way more people passed out in the public

transport or on the streets compared to The Netherlands. But these people never did any harm.

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

See answer 5a.

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

The public transport in Prague is excellent. With the ISIC card you can travel unlimited through the city for €15 for 3 months. Everything is well connected and functioning 24/7. From the Dormitory West to the university it takes 40 minutes from door to door.

6. Free time

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

- Places inside the Czech Republic: Karlovy Vary, Bohemian Switzerland, Brno, Cesky Krumlov.
- Places abroad: Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava, Berlin, Krakow.

Trains are cheap with the ISIC card. I also did some hitchhiking and it was really fun to be in a car with the Czechs, because on the streets they can appear a bit cold and unfriendly but this is just the outside.

The trips can be planned very spontaneously, especially within Czech Republic you can easily come up with the idea one day before you actually go. The travelling abroad can also be easily planned some days ahead, only Berlin is substantially cheaper when you do it some weeks ahead.

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

- Behind the Dormitory West there is a nice park with many bbq spots where you can have a nice view of the city.
- In general Prague has many many nice parks to explore and discover.
- The jellyfish museum. Apparently Prague has the biggest collection of jellyfish in the world so there is a jellyfish museum on the roof of some big shopping mall. A surprisingly nice place.

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

- Popular Erasmus bars are Popos and Dogs Bar, they are unmissable. For dancing I really enjoyed Harleys and Bike Jesus.
- For food go to Menza at campus as all the Erasmus student will be there for lunch every day so you will always walk into people. And you can have a warm meal for €3.
- For the rest there are many very good and very cheap Asian restaurants that are definitely worth trying.

- Cultural events are going to the ballet or the opera, but also going to the beer festivals. During the warmer months every day of the weekend there are various beer festivals where all beer brewers of Prague come together and you can come and have the chance to taste 100 different kinds of beer and enjoy watching the Czech families have their family time and listen to the Czech bands that are playing.
- I also really enjoyed the 20th century Free Tour of Prague. I took it in one of my final days and it gave really fascinating insights about the city I have been living in for half a year.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

For my stay in Prague I booked the CZU Dormitory West as an accommodation. This meant I would be sharing my room for 5 months with a roommate. The dorm turned out to be an old communist hotel with all its original furniture and looks still intact. Fresh looks different. When I entered my room in January, my roommate hadn't expected me. There was a tropical temperature in the room and she was sitting there in her bikini (probably because she was missing Nicaragua, her country of birth). As soon as I got rid of my two jackets and sweater (it was snowing outside) my nose smelled the awful smell that was in the room. My roommate hadn't cleaned her room for the past 7 months. There wasn't even cleaning gear present in the room. I won't go too much into detail about the bathroom, but when I cleaned it 2 weeks later the tiles turned out to be white instead of brown/yellowish. Also the shared kitchen with 23 people was one of the most extreme ones I have ever seen. I could not possibly live here and felt like I had to leave this disgusting place as soon as possible. Fortunately, my roommate then told me she was supposed to move out in one week. I decided to stay and see if the room would feel better after she had left and when it was clean. It turned out to be a lot better and for 2 weeks I had all the time to make it my home. Then my new roommate arrived. I was a bit nervous but at least now the norm of the room had increased so it would be more easy to keep this level more or less. My new roommate turned out to be amazing and we became really close friends.

What was your best memory abroad?

Where to start? My Erasmus has been a rollercoaster of fun activities, great people and inspiring courses. After my tough first week with the disgusting roommate there were not more real challenges and everything went from the one fun day into the other. I think what was the most special for me was this feeling we shared with all Erasmus students. This would be our semester. There wouldn't come a second one and after this the chances of meeting these 100 people together again are nihil. Nobody knew anyone before coming to Prague nor the city or Czech Republic itself. All these factors together made that everybody was completely open and willing to explore the city, country, surrounding countries, activities and each other. It was a beautiful sensation. This summer I will be travelling to 6 different countries to visit the friends I have made. A journey I could have never predicted one year ago.

8. Contact details (optional)

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