



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Msc. Forest and Nature Conservation
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	01/10/2022 until 31/03/2023
Country (exchange)	Germany
City (exchange)	Freising
University (exchange)	Technische Universität München
Faculty (exchange)	School of Life Sciences

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I always wanted to experience how it would be to live in another country.

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

I wanted to do my Erasmus in a country which is easily accessible by train. Furthermore, my preference went out to a university that was located in or close to a big city. Resulting in Munich (TUM) and Vienna (BOKU) to be the most interesting locations for me. In the end, it was just a toss-up between the two of them, it seemed like both of them had interesting courses.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Flixbus is pretty cheap. If you buy your ticket on time, you can get a ticket for ~€25, but will take you 11 hours.

Going by train will be quicker (7-11 hours), but will be a bit more expensive. DB increases their prices the closer to your date of departure, so I would recommend to buy your ticket as soon as possible. Besides, I would also advise to buy a Bahncard before you buy your train ticket. With this card, you can get either 25, 50 or 100% discount on your train tickets via the Deutsche Bahn website. I bought the Bahncard 25 for €41 and used it for several trips I made during my exchange. In this way, I was able to save a lot of money.

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	Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation	5	The module consist of 2 courses: 1. Fisheries management: an introductory lecture series. 2. Applied aquatic conservation: seminar about either sea turtle conservation or river restoration.	3	The Fisheries management course was very interesting and the teacher was very nice. The Aquatic conservation seminar was only one week which makes it feel very rushed. I did not feel like I learned a lot from that course.
2	Fischbiologie und Aquakultur	5	This German module consist of 2 courses: 1. Fischbiologie: lecture series about the main phylogenetics of fish, their biology and ecology. 2. Aquakultur: lecture series about aquaculture, with a focus on inland aquaculture.	2	It was an interesting course and I feel like I learned several new insights into fish biology and aquaculture. However, since the course is in German, it required much more effort than other courses. There were often moments in the lecture that I did not completely understand what was being said.
3	Genetic Resource Management and Forest Genetics	5	The module consists of 2 lecture series: 1. Disturbance ecology and management: the effects of snow, fires, wind, insects on forest ecosystems and how to manage it. 2. Genetic resource management: environmental genetics of different ecosystems and fungi	4	This was my favourite module I followed. I felt like these topics were also very characterising for ecosystems in Bavaria. Though, I feel like this course would have been much better if there was also a seminar component.
4	Natural Resources – Traits, Management, Theory of Sustainability	5	This course is an introduction to sustainable resource management and covers multiple topics related to this (climate change, food production, biodiversity, water management, etc.).	2	The lectures were very elaborate and could have also been explained in less than half of the time. The personal reflection paper was very interesting.

5	Urban ecology	5	This course has a lecture series about different topics within urban ecology and a group project for which we had to realise an improved design for a square in Munich	3	The lecture series were unnecessary and did not contribute to the group project. Also, the practicals were also poorly organised and it often did not become clear what the purpose of it was. Though, the group project self was very interesting, we gave it our own twist which made it much more enjoyable.
6	Introduction to GIS, Inventory Methods and Statistics	6	This module consists of 4 courses: 1. Introduction to GIS: very basics of GIS. 2. Remote Sensing: long lecture series. 3. Statistics: basically a statistics class pushed in 4 lectures and without assignments. 4. Inventory Methods: lectures about statistics and sampling strategies	2	This module is too little ECTS for the amount of work. The way the statistics course was given did not help to give a better understanding of statistics. The remote sensing course was very technical and given by a teacher that spoke very monotone making it very boring. I did like the GIS course since they did provide ways to practice with GIS.
7	Zoologische Formenkenntnis	0	During this German course you learned about 160 bird species and 80 mammal species.	3	<p>This is a pass/fail course. You can get 5 credits for this course if you also follow another course on animal ecology. I only followed this course for personal interest and I feel like it is necessary to have some European animal species knowledge for a future ecologist.</p> <p>Even though the lectures were in German, I was able to follow more of this course than the fish biology course since it was prerecorded making it easier to repeat the things that you did not understand. This really helped me not only improving my German but also to learn more about animal species that live in Europe.</p>

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

I would say the workload is lower compared to Wageningen. The structure of the periods is very different there. You have to follow all your courses at the same time, which makes it very complex to create a schedule since a lot of courses give their lectures at the same time.

The examination is also a bit different compared to Wageningen. Only for one course I had a group project that was graded. The exams are also way shorter than in the Netherlands. Don't be surprised if you have to finish your exam in 60min with the same number of questions as here.

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 engagement with local students is a bit mixed. There are ways to engage with them such as the buddy program and through your dorm. The buddy program is a nice opportunity to meet local students that are also interested in meeting internationals. My buddy invited me for some events which was nice. Also dorms are often mixed with German and international students. I noticed that the Germans were often hanging out more with their own friends. Some of them also struggled with speaking English, so if there is a chance for them to speak German they will do it. The full-time international students were more open and friendly.

The rest was very similar to me. I did feel like people in Germany were more focussing on doing as much as possible for their CV than here.

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

Every campus has a canteen with cheap food from which you can get lunch. It is not per se the best food but they change the menu every day with lots of options. There are also several sports activities. Though, it depends on where you live how much options there are. In Munich there are way more opportunities than in Freising. You also already have to sign up for specific classes before the start of the semester.

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?)

WG-Gesucht.de is the place to be to look for rooms in Germany. However, the easiest and cheapest way to get a room is via Studentenwerk (the "Room" of Munich). They have several dorms allocated for exchange students and you can apply for them during your application process. These rooms are already furnished and often also have nice social areas. Though, keep in mind that if you are going to study at the School of Life Sciences, you will get a place in Freising and not Munich. I got one of their rooms in Freising and did not enjoy my time there. A lot of people that study in Freising (both local and exchange students) live in Munich since there is not a lot to do in Freising. Therefore, I would only recommend to live in Freising when that is your only option.

After two months I moved to Munich, which was double the rent, however, I enjoyed my time there much better.

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

Bavarians are very proud of their culture. Some of them also wear lederhosen even the weekends that are not during Oktoberfest. They like to drink beer. Every Bavarian town has their own beer that they think is the best. Though, they all agree that Tegernseer Helles is the second best. You can also get beer in vending machines at uni and some people drink some during classes. Food wise, the Bavarian cuisine is a bit mediocre with a lot of potatoes and meat. But you can basically order it anywhere. I did really like Käsespätzle and Butterbretze.

People of Munich are also considered to be more conservative and into the classicals. A lot of Germans go to the opera or ballet. I felt like Bavarians are more focussing on themselves and can also be at times very passive aggressive, but it is also very easy to ignore. One thing I did like about Bavarians is that they are really into being active. They will go to the mountains at least one weekend per month where they do some camping, hiking or skiing/snowboarding.

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

Finding housing in the Munich area is very difficult and very expensive. Don't be shocked to pay more than €600 for a 8m² room. Other living costs are very comparable to The Netherlands.

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

With your student card you are already able to use all public transport infrastructure in the Munich area in the evenings and the weekends for free. There is also an option to buy the Isarcard for ~€200 which enables free travelling in the Munich area for your entire exchange semester. I would recommend buying it, since Munich is a huge city and the chances of you having to use public transport to get somewhere are very likely.

The U-bahn system in Munich is amazing and there is a metro driving every 5 minutes or so. Travelling to and from Freising is more challenging. Often, there are delays with the S-bahn making you miss your connecting bus. Also at night, busses in Freising don't drive that often. So, if you met your friends in Munich and you arrive in Freising after 23.00 you probably have to walk back home which can take up to 40 minutes.

6. Free time

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

Some typical Bavarian/Munich things I would recommend is to do at least one hiking and skiing and to visit the Staatsoper for opera or ballet. For students it is so cheap, so it is a nice way to try it out once.

Munich is centrally located in Europe making it very easy to travel to so many amazing locations. But I can also recommend to visit local cities and towns such as Regensburg, Passau, Staffelsee, Ingolstadt, Nürnberg, Starnberger See and many more. Get a Deutschland Ticket and then it will be very easy and cheap to explore Germany :)

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

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

If you want cheap Indian food I can recommend Chat Junction. It is a takeaway place close to Isartor. For activities I really liked Staffelsee. There is a camping on an island which is super quiet in a beautiful area.

Also if you are into skiing or snowboarding there are several ways for a nice trip. Skibus München organises multiple day trips to the Alps to several locations. SkiGaudi organises a few 4-day trips to Axamer Lizum. It is a trip for students with lots of activities and parties. A good way to get to know people. Besides these two there are also student organisations that organise day trips to different skiing areas.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

During the first 2 months, I was almost every day in Munich since that's where the social life was. Travelling back home to Freising was very challenging with often delays of the train and also having to go walk back home in the beginning for 30 minutes. I was also a bit disappointed with the courses at TUM. So I did wonder in the beginning why I did not try to find a place in Munich at the beginning. But moving to Munich was for me the best thing to do and made life so much more enjoyable.

What was your best memory abroad?

There are a lot. I made a lot of nice travels with my friends which were all highlights. But I also loved the feeling of freedom when being on top of a mountain when I went snowboarding.

8. Contact details (optional)

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