



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	BIL
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	01/09/2023 until 31/01/2024
Exchange destination: University	Universitat Politècnica de Valencia
Faculty	EPSC – Environmental Sciences
Country	Spain
City	Gandia

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

The sister of a good friend of mine went on a study exchange in my first year and after hearing her positive experience I wanted to do it as well. This is what motivated me.

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

I really wanted to go to Spain for my exchange as my goal was to learn Spanish. When looking at all the universities I could choose from this was the only one that offered courses in English.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

From the airport there is a metro that takes you straight to the train station. Gandia is an hour below Valencia by train. When I was there, a 10 euro ticket was available with which you could use the 'Trenes de Cercanías' (trains around Valencia) unlimited times. If you used them over 16 times you would even get the money back. Therefore, I can recommend getting this ticket at the counter of the train station. The trains to Gandia leave around every half hour during the week and around every hour during weekends. The last train is around 23h and I have barely ever experienced a lot of delays. When arriving in Gandia you will have to take the bus to Gandia Playa (every 15 minutes) where the university is located. You can only pay with cash in the bus (coins and bills up to €20) so make sure you have cash on you and I can recommend getting a card with 10 travels or more as this is cheaper.

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	Intercultural Communication	5	This course is all about communication and how this can differ in cultures. What the impact of certain communication patterns impact can be on people and how to keep this in mind. There are also two excursions and lots of group work.	5	Many international students follow this course and have to give presentations about their country and therefore you learn a lot about different cultures from people that are from there, which I found very interesting.
2	Groundwater Management in the Coastal Zone	4,5	This course is about groundwater and how these physical mechanics work. There is also group work and weekly modelling sessions with computer practicals.	3	
3	Ecotourism	5	In this course there is literature on tourism and how to make it sustainable on which there is an exam. Moreover, there are group projects in which you have to think of your own business and give presentations on them using information learned during the lectures. There are also two excursions.	4	We went wine tasting on one of the excursions which was very nice.
4	Adaptation to Climate Change in Ecosystems	4,5	This course is all about how the climate works, the history of it and anthropogenic causes of global warming. This course also has group work in which a own idea has to be developed as a solution to climate change (mitigate or adapt). There is also an excursion.	4	
5	Project: Creation of Multimedia Elements on Cultural, Natural and Immaterial Heritage for the O-City Platform	6	This is an Erasmus project on which you have to make one individual multimedia element of a heritage element in your home town (video, animation, podcast, etc.) and one with a group on a heritage element in a Spanish city near Gandia to which you will also go on an excursion.	4	
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What is it like to study there?

It was pretty nice to study there. The level of the courses and exams is definitely lower than it is at the WUR. I never had any exams that very long (e.g. 3h) but rather 2 smaller exams or none at all. However, then there are a lot of assignments which might not be very hard but do take some time to complete (think of many papers, group work and presentations instead of exams). There is a online platform on which study material and slides are uploaded and I did not need to buy books for any of my courses.

What is the culture of the university?

The classes are a lot smaller than at the WUR (around max. 25/30 people) and most rooms looked similar to a high school classroom. This also meant there was a lot of engagement with the teachers and them asking questions etc. I never had big lectures in large rooms such as at the WUR. Local students and teachers are very nice and try to help you the best they can if you have questions although they aren't the best at speaking English.

What does the university offer students additionally?

On campus was a cafeteria where you can get coffee, pastries and warm lunch as well as beers and other drinks. There was also a free gym and they offered weekly group lessons such as spinning, yoga, bachata and other sports classes as well. There is also a small indoor climbing wall. The university's library is modern and has a lot of space to work individually as well as special rooms you can reserve online for group work.

5.Housing-travelling-living

What are the possibilities for housing?

There is housing available through the university but I did not rent through them. Similar to most other exchange students I rented my room through 'Europa Inmobiliaria Gandia' (<https://www.accommodation-gandia.org/>). Through them you can rent a room in an apartment with other students. I was put in an apartment with three other Erasmus students next to the beach which was very fun. For this room I paid a total of €190 rent a month with utilities included. The apartment had WiFi (Keep in mind that it is a fixed amount of data per month. We have had that at the 28th of the month we ran out and then you have to wait to the next month for new data). There was however no heating (there was none in most apartments), which is fine in summer but in winter it will get cold. So bring thick blankets (!!) or buy an electric heater at some point. During the language course the inmobiliaria also organised a programme with fun activities to get to know other Erasmus students.

What is the culture of the country like?

Spanish culture is different to the Dutch culture in several ways but I did not find there to be a very big culture shock. They are a lot less punctual than in the Netherlands and take their time for things. Moreover, their food culture is very different to ours. They eat lunch later than we do, aren't scared to enjoy a beer at university at 11 am and eat dinner around 22h. They take their time to enjoy the food and the company they are with and this is very important to them. They are more family oriented than us as well and are very outgoing and were very inclusive in my opinion. The only thing that really shocked

me was that when they go out they only go to the club between 2 and 3 am and party to around 6 or 7 am.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

You can get a ticket with 10 travels from and to the airport for €11. As mentioned before, the trains are not very expensive as you might be able to get a €10 ticket for unlimited rides. There is a bus from the Gandia train station in which a ticket with 10 travels is around €13. This bus is driving very 15 minutes. If you want to take a taxi from Gandia train station to Gandia Playa (where the university and housing is) this will cost approximately €14.

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: ca. €70 (€100 with luggage) from Eindhoven Airport with Transavia (Ryanair is cheaper)

Visa if applicable: -

Vaccinations if applicable: -

Insurances (extra, if applicable): -

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: ca. €200 (4 person shared apartment)

Groceries: Equal

Public transport: Lower

Restaurant/going out for dinner: Lower (around €15 pp)

Daytrips/sight-seeing: Through Erasmus Valencia around €10-€20 for a day trip

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

When you go out for dinner, the food is prices similarly to the Netherlands but drinks are a lot cheaper.

7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

Near Gandia there are some very nice hikes in the mountains. There is a castle you can hike to but you can also take the train to the next stop (Xeraco) and hike from there into the mountains for some very nice views. Erasmus Valencia also organises hikes and day trips. I would also visit Mallorca and Ibiza as plane tickets are cheap. If you have time also visit the south of Spain (Seville, Cordoba and Granada) and Morocco.

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

When you are there during the fieras (local festival) definitely go to them. The beautiful nature in the nearby mountains.

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

There are several large clubs in Gandia Playa. Some of the biggest are Bacarra and Falkata, unfortunately they close for winter but they still organise some parties in the weekends during these months. You can follow them on Instagram to keep updated on these. There is a bigger club in the city centre as well that is opened all year, it is called La Fabrica. In Gandia playa there is also a smaller club called El Varadero and this one organises a party where students go to every Wednesday. You could also go to Valencia for parties as there are many clubs there. The Erasmus students themselves also organised beach volleyball nearly every day so this would also be fun to do.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Many restaurants and shops in Gandia Playa close for winter around the end of September. Closer to the harbour and during the weekends there is however more opened but it is still very quiet most of the time in winter. Keep this in mind when going to Gandia and try to get an apartment closer to the harbour. Otherwise all the lively areas and university are far away.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

My best memory was spending time with the people I met there. My roommates and me had a very good connection and spend a lot of time together also going on trips and hikes. The Spanish people, culture and weather is also very nice. Living next to the beach was amazing as I would walk to university during the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets most days.

9. Contact details (optional)

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