



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	Landscape Architecture & Regional and Urban Planning (BLP)
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	7/9/2023 until 2/2/2024
Exchange destination: University	Universitat Politècnica de Valencia
Faculty	Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura
Country	Spain
City	Valencia

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to learn more Spanish and go on an adventurous and new experience while I still had the chance. I also heard positive experiences from friends.

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

I wanted to go to a Spanish speaking country and city without having to fly, and Valencia was the only option for my study program.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

I bought an Interrail pass, which I used to travel to Valencia from The Netherlands in two days, staying overnight in Lyon and Barcelona on the way there and in Paris on the way back. I would recommend booking all tickets in advance, in my case all trains to Barcelona were full, which meant that I had to travel for a day longer than planned.

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	History of Art	4.5	A very fast-paced review of the history of art, from classical to contemporary.	4	I thought it was very interesting, but it was very simple and not very in-depth. Very easy to pass, but I thought it gave a good

					background for architectural appreciation and history, which I found interesting.
2	Architectural History 2	6	A very detailed course about the history of architecture from 1800 till the 1960s, focusing mostly on modernism.	5	I thought this course was very interesting. The lecturer was fantastic and it gave me a great understanding of the history of architecture in Europe. Heavy focus on memorization of facts for the exams – huge lists of places you need to know.
3	Architectural Graphic Expression	6	A course focusing on graphical representation of a building	3	This course is mostly just good practice at working with photoshop and illustrator, and a good opportunity to learn new software such as AutoCAD, D5 and SketchUp.
4	Introduction to Construction	4.5	A course about the basics of building construction, looking at foundations, floors, roofs, walls etc.	3	The content was interesting as a background for how things are actually built, but just focused on buildings so not directly interesting for landscape architects. The teacher wasn't great, he didn't use powerpoints and explained things unclearly.
5	Urban Design and Planning 2	4.5	A course about urban planning in a busy city context, with a large practical group assignment.	4	This course was very relevant for landscape architecture students, and could easily have been given in the WUR. Similar to Studio Urban Design, but then working in a group. Good practice and interesting context – busy city as opposed to quiet the Netherlands

What is it like to study there?

E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material.

Classes at la Universidad Politecnica de Valencia (UPV) are overall good and interesting, with friendly and helpful teachers and staff. Most courses have a mandatory percentage of classes you need to be present (~80%), which is regularly checked with a list. The focus is overall more on memorization than applied practice than in Wageningen. Overall the workload differs per class but is similar to Wageningen in respect to the amount of credits you receive. UPV has their own site similar to Brightspace where classes have all their information available.

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?

Overall, all professors were very approachable and helpful (with the exception of the Introduction to Construction lecturer). Because of a tight planning schedule classes were booked back-to-back in many cases, meaning that you didn't have time to talk to the teacher after class, but they all responded quickly to emailed questions (with the exception of the Introduction to Construction lecturer). Almost all classes started 10-15 minutes late but did end on time or in many cases earlier than scheduled. Arriving late (for whatever reason, including scheduling issues) was absolutely no problem in most cases (with the exception of the Introduction to Construction lecturer).

What does the university offer students additionally?

E.g. catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?

I didn't make use of extra facilities, but there is a large sports center and a medical clinic on campus, along with restaurants, cafes and a Santander bank office.

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 found a room several months in advance through uniplaces.com, but the university also sends a list of websites you can use, many of who focus on Erasmus students:

www.aluni.net

www.uniplaces.com

<https://www.rookieintown.com/city/alquiler-pisos-valencia/>

<https://erasmusu.com/es/alojamiento-estudiantes/valencia>

<https://www.live4life.es/>

<https://micampusresidencias.com/pisos-valencia/>

There were also many students who found an apartment while they were already there, the benefit is that you can view it before you accept. There are also many apartment requests and offers in Erasmus group chats you get added to automatically at the beginning of your stay.

My room was in a student apartment with 7 people in total with a shared kitchen and two bathrooms. It cost 250 euros per month for ~9 square meters, which was on the cheap side in Valencia. Nicer rooms in the same apartment cost 300-400 euros. I also heard of other students paying 500 in other apartments.

I would personally recommend booking in advance, to make sure your first few days are less stressful.

What is the culture of the country like?

E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?

Spanish culture is much warmer than Dutch culture. The culture is much more focused on street life, and it's much more common to see people outside in evenings till early in the night. Restaurants are packed from breakfast till dinner. People are very friendly and polite overall in my experience. Traffic is hectic compared to the Netherlands but still well organized, and people are very polite – letting you pass and apologizing if they made a mistake. Valencia has a large homeless population and it's not uncommon to see someone begging outside your supermarket. The city never felt unsafe (as a man), except in the Turia park late at night, where it can be very dark. Some female friends did feel less safe in some outskirts, but felt fine cycling home at night in the well-lit main part of the city.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

During my time in Spain there was a Carnet Joven or a Youth Card, which was a free multi-use public transport card that allowed you to travel completely for free for unlimited trips. Otherwise, a metro ride costs 1,50 within the city center and 6,00 to the airport and bus rides cost 1,50. Public transport is very good with a massive bus, metro and tram network. I personally barely used public transport, as I used Valenbisi, a share biking service. For 30 euros a year you can take a bike from any of the hundreds of points throughout the city and drop it off at any other point. This worked great for me, although sometimes a point would be empty when I needed one or full when I wanted to park my bike. I also had friends who bought their own bikes, but some had a bit of trouble selling it when they wanted to leave.

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: 580 euros (by train, with Interrail pass)

Visa if applicable:

Vaccinations if applicable:

Insurances (extra, if applicable):

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: 250 euros per month for a single tiny room with shared facilities and terrible view (cheaper than Netherlands), but all inclusive

Groceries: 180 euros per month (equal to the Netherlands)

Public transport: ~50 euros total for the full five months, including the Valenbisi subscription

Restaurant/going out for dinner: 10 euros per meal on average (cheaper)

Daytrips/sight-seeing: most museums are free for students, and otherwise have a discount, only costing 2-4 euros. Only the Oceanografic was expensive, costing 30 euros for students.

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

Public transport, restaurants and cultural activities are much cheaper, everything else is fairly similar I would say.

7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?

Valencia has a lot of places within the city and beautiful locations around it that you should absolutely see.

Within the city: City of Arts and Sciences, the cathedral, Museum of Fine Arts, Turia park and the city center in general.

Outside of the city: Albufera, Xativa, Bunol, Altea, Guadalest, Alicante, Montanejos. I heard Peniscola is beautiful too, but I didn't get the chance to go.

Many places are easily and cheaply accessible by train (try renfe.es or trainline.com, or book at the station (Valencia Nord) itself, otherwise by bus (alsa.com). Erasmus Life, Happy Erasmus and several more Erasmus organisations organise trips regularly, which I would definitely recommend. Check their websites for details and costs, these usually get updated a week or two before the trip.

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

If you like massive castle ruins, Sagunto is worth a visit for sure. If you like parks, definitely visit Jardí de Montfort, its small but beautiful.

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?

Shere E Khan is an excellent Indian restaurant. Turia Park is beautiful to walk, cycle or skate in.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Signing up for classes was a hassle in the beginning and took a lot of patience and trying to get into different classes. I ended up asking a teacher if there was space in his class, who ended up helping me get what I needed.

My landlady was interesting. She wanted all my rent in cash in the beginning, which I didn't know till about two weeks before I was going to leave. This meant that I had to take 1800 euros in cash with me on the street, and I had to withdraw it across two days because I could only withdraw a maximum for 1000 a day. This was really stressful and not a good time, I can't recommend that experience. Everything ended up ok, thankfully.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

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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