



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	International development studies
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	04/09/2023 until 22/12/2023
Exchange destination: University	University of British Columbia
Faculty	Forestry
Country	Canada
City	Vancouver

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to experience studying in a different country. I specifically wanted to study at a university known for its Forestry faculty.

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

I wanted to study in a country where I could easily reach the mountains as I love mountain sports. I also wanted to get more experience in ecology and conservation and UBC is known to have a very good Forestry faculty. I had also always wanted to go to Vancouver.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

Only way to get there is by flying, sadly ☹️

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	Introduction to Conservation	6	Lectures on natural resources conservation and forest science topics	5	Great course, David Bunn, the lecturer, is a great and enthusiastic lecturer with a lot of knowledge on conservation.
2	Foundations of Conservation	6	Conceptual foundations of conservation; means of conserving nature and natural resources. Lectures on the history of conservation and different discourses in conservation, as well as biodiversity.	5	Great course, lecturer is great and super interesting to listen to. Variety of teaching methods is used making it easy to pay attention.
3	Forest Ecology	6	About the structure and function of forest ecosystems, including: energetics; productivity; nutrient, carbon and water cycling; soils; the physical environment; population and community ecology; disturbance ecology; ecological succession; biological diversity and ecological resilience.	5	Great and fun course, especially loved the outside labs in the forest.
4	Community Forestry and Community Forests	6	Community forests and community forestry throughout the world, with special attention to participation by aboriginal peoples; emphasis is on forms of governance, public participation, and adaptive learning.	4	Great course in which you learn a lot about Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and other places and how they implement community forestry.

What is it like to study there?

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

Lecturers are very enthusiastic and use different teaching methods in their lectures and labs. In my opinion, courses at the WUR are a little harder, but some courses at UBC are

a little more work in the sense they have a lot of (small) assignments (sometimes several per week).

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?

In general I heard that the lectures are a little less personable than at the WUR. However, I found that the lecturers in Forestry are extremely personable and use a wide variety of teaching methods to make their classes interesting and engaging. Even though my classes consisted of over 200 students, the lectures were still interactive. I find Canadian students more easy to engage with than Dutch students at the WUR as they are a little more approachable. It's fairly easy to make friends in class if that is something that you want. There are also a lot of international students that are experiencing the same thing and are always up to do cool stuff.

What does the university offer students additionally?

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

UBC offers a wide variety of cafes, food, and shopping. The sports facilities are also amazing, for example, the swimming pool and ice skating rink are free for students. There are also sport competitions (intramurals) which makes doing a sport very accessible.

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?

There is availability to sign up for a room on campus (before may 1st), however, not all international students get appointed a room so keep in mind you might have to find housing off-campus. There are some great Facebook groups such as:

UBC students looking for housing rental/sublet

VANCOUVER – places for rent

Vancouver rentals and roommates

Vancouver – Housing, Apartments, Rooms, Flatmates, Sublets

Rent rates will not go much lower than 900\$, and that is already a steal. Expect around 1000\$-1300\$ per month for rent.

What is the culture of the country like?

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

North America is quite different from Europe, but I found the culture in Vancouver very nice. It is a very outdoorsy place with many Vancouverites loving any outdoor sports. I had to get used to everything being big and bright and loud but in general I loved it! Vancouver has food from all over the world, when out for dinner or drinks, always tip! Tipping is big in Canada. In general 18-20% for dinner or anything that you stay in for is standard (or 15 if you are feeling a little stingy that day). For take out you don't necessarily need to tip.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

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

Public transport is very accessible in Vancouver. There is a compass card which you can purchase for 5%. Through UBC you can pay for your U-pass (mandatory) which then gives you unlimited use of public transport in Metro Vancouver (so also including North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond). There are many buses that go to the university and they run frequently (google maps: UBC exchange).

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: 650 euro

Visa if applicable: 5 euro (ETA) (7\$)

Vaccinations if applicable: 0

Insurances (extra, if applicable): one time 235 euro (iMED) (\$330)

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: 670 euro (shared house)

Groceries: 220-280 euro per month

Public transport: one time 123 euro (\$180.4)

Phone plan: 35euro(45\$) (Canada is the most expensive country in the world phone plan wise...)

Restaurant/going out for dinner: general dinner 11-25 euro (15 if you go to an Indian or Thai place, but more expensive in burger places etc) (15\$-30\$)

Daytrips/sight-seeing: evo is super useful and 120\$ per day, so if you go for a daytrip to the mountains it is only like 25\$ each for a car (including gas)

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

Most sightseeing tours are quite expensive, but hikes are free (apart from the occasional national park pass) and renting a car is easy and fairly cheap through Evo (18+) or Turo (if you are 23+).

In general, life is more expensive in Canada than in the Netherlands, but I found the Erasmus + grant helped a lot. The cheapest supermarket is NoFrills. Safeway is also a good option, and if you get the rewards card, Save on Foods is also doable. But NoFrills is by far the cheapest. London Drugs is also great for anything that is not fresh produce and they have some good deals on breakfast cereals or peanut butter from time to time (also one of the cheaper places for any over the counter medicines you might need)

7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

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

- The seawall in Stanley Park (walking or biking it)
- Wreck beach (at UBC)
- Kitsilano beach
- Stawamus Chief (Squamish)
- Grouse Mountain
- Panorama ridge in Garibaldi National Park
- Joffre Lakes (camping is glorious here, especially if you go in October when it is less crowded)

- Vancouver Island (Juan de Fuca trail)
- Park Butte Lookout Washington State US

Travelling in the city by public transport, outside of the city by EVO or Turo (very easy to rent affordable cars that way).

If you go hiking, remember from October on the weather gets a little more unpredictable, so definitely take that in mind when going anywhere and be safe.

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

If you are into hiking, especially scrambling, there are some great hikes close by to 3 hr drive away that are not easily found in general travel guides. My favourites were: Mount Weart (not for the faint hearted), Train Glacier Traverse (definitely not for the faint hearted) and Park Butte Lookout in Washington State US. (Check out this website: <https://besthikesbc.ca/>)

Check out VOC at UBC. They are an outdoors club with 45\$ member fee and then you can rent gear such as helmets, hiking boots, snow shoes, crampons and even back country skis for free (you have to pay a deposit in cash but you get them back upon return).

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?

Great restaurants:

Nuba in Gastown (Lebanese)

Sula Indian Restaurant

Thai Basil

Karma Indian Bistro

Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen Restaurant

Cafés:

Cafe Lokal

Grounds for Coffee (glorious cinnamon rolls)

Good Earth Coffee House

Platform 7

Artisan Bread and Bakery

Breka Bakery (mainly because they are open 24/7)

Even though Tim Hortons is actually not that great, it is very Canadian and cheaper than most places, and you will somehow end up at Tim Hortons more times than you'd like 😊 (they do have very nice doughnuts and timbits)

Other stuff:

Banyen Books and sounds

The Improv Centre

8. Challenge

s & best moment abroad

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

I struggled finding a room, so I recommend starting replying to many rooms as early as possible (and apply for University housing). What helped was that with every message I sent I included a bit about myself (not too much but enough for people to get to know me a little bit) and it helps if you add something that makes you stand out. Don't freak out too much when people don't reply at all, as they often get hundreds of messages and are overwhelmed by the response. In general, only reply to a place that you feel OK about, if your gut is telling you no, listen to it. Also, if they don't allow video calls or any personal calls to view the place or get to know them, definitely don't do it, it might be a scam. Start early, but know many people only post their place approximately 1.5-2 months before hand as that is when they have to hand in their notice that they are leaving the place.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

Meeting my friends and going on many many hikes and adventures with them. But one of my favourite memories is when I went camping at a fire lookout in Washington State in the US. It was a beautiful sunny day and there was lots of snow (as we did it late November). We just sat at the rocks near the fire lookout for basically the whole day and marvelled at the view. We could even see mount Rainier from there, and Vancouver on the other side! Both the sunset and sunrise were amazing and one of my favourite memories ever.

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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