



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student information

<b>Study programme WU</b>	MSc Climate Studies
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	26/02/2024 until 01/07/2024
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	University of Padova
<b>Faculty</b>	Department of Land, Environment, Agriculture and Forestry
<b>Country</b>	Italy
<b>City</b>	Padova

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to experience studying abroad because I love travelling and comparing different cultures. A lot of my friends did an exchange in their bachelor but due to covid I couldn't go, which is why I decided to do a study exchange in my masters.

### b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

Italy is really attractive to me because of the cultural richness (history, cuisine, language, regional differences) and the variety in nature. I also thought the people were very open and welcoming when I visited before which made it seem a great country to meet new people.

### c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

Padova had an interesting course catalogue and a good academic reputation. I decided on Padova over Bologna because of its location: close to the Dolomites, lakes, Venice and the beach.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

It was easy to reach Padova by Flixbus, even though we missed our transfer in Verona and completed the journey by train for the last hour.

## 4. University and studying

### a. 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
<b>1</b>	Geology of Mountain Areas	6	Basics of geology but extensively explained with examples from mountain areas (including rock identification lab and field trips to Colli Euganei and Dolomites).	5	I really enjoyed this course, it had great structure which made me remember a lot even though the teacher was not strict at all and the exam was fairly easy. The rock labs and field trips added a lot in terms of real life examples.
<b>2</b>	Integrated Watershed Management	6	A broad course on water management in northern Italy, from flood basins and landslides to wood/sediment in rivers to risk mitigation. Significant part of the course consisted of GIS labs and field trips, not that much theory.	4	This course and the topics it touched were very interesting and relevant to the region today, linking to climate change. I liked how they used the practical parts in GIS and on the field to show this. But because there were not much lectures the course lacked some structure which made it a bit messy sometimes. The exam was fairly short because of the small amount of theory.
<b>3</b>	Animal Biodiversity in Forest Ecosystems	6	The theoretical basics of biodiversity (indices, measurement and research methods), applied on forest ecosystems. More of a methodological than a knowledge course.	4.5	I feel like I learned a lot from this course because I had no background in this field and they explained all the theory surrounding animal biodiversity. Sometimes a bit abstract. There were a lot of mini group assignments and presentations, which were motivating to be present and pay attention. I think this helped me a lot with the exam and final presentation.
<b>4</b>	Wildlife Conservation and Management	6	An extensive theoretical course	3.5	This course overlapped a lot with Animal

			about wildlife conservation and management, with a focus on large animals (undulates). Lots of lectures with many examples. There was a 2 day field trip to the Dolomites.		Biodiversity, so I didn't go to many lectures. The ones I did go to were info dense but a bit hard to follow at the same time. But the teacher was passionate (just like the ones of the other courses) and the field trip, combined with Insect Ecology, was fun although it rained. Exam needed a lot of studying so tougher than the other courses.
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**b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):** Yes, the whole Forest Science master was in English.

**c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain):** Yes, although a lot of interesting courses overlapped because of different tracks within the master.

**d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain):** Yes, because they were on the edge of my own field they were the right level for me.

**e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain):** Yes

**f. What is it like to study there?**

*E.g. Study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material?*

In general, the study forms and teaching styles are a lot more focused on the theory and obtaining knowledge than in Wageningen, where we apply things all the time. This makes the workload feel different (eg. more memorising before exams instead of practicing) but manageable. Like at WUR, lesson material is almost exclusively lectures slides which are uploaded on their teaching platform (Moodle) so no need to buy books. Examination for my courses was very flexible, it could be oral or written depending on your preference and the teachers discussed different dates with the class depending on what most suited us. But this might differ according to study programme / department.

**g. What is the culture of the university?**

*E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with WU?*

Contact with lecturers is maybe a bit more formal than at WUR (using 'professor' to address them) but they were very approachable and available, both in real life and via email. They were all passionate about their course and it was clear they wanted us to understand and to engage.

#### **h. What does the university offer students additionally?**

*E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?*

I didn't stay at the dorms so I don't know about laundry facilities. But at every faculty there was a 'mensa', a canteen where you could get a full lunch for a reasonable price and there were also cafeterias around. There is a university sports centre (CUS) but I found it a bit hard to find what/where they organized, and like for all sports in Italy you first need to get a Medical Sports Certificate from a GP.

## **5. Housing-traveling-living**

#### **a. What are the possibilities for housing?**

*E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?*

There is a housing shortage in Padova so it's good to start looking early (from 5 months before) and it can be expensive. I believe the dorms are reserved for people outside the EU but sometimes they have rooms left which UniPd will email you about. They also provide you with some directions about which private agencies to try and how to watch out for scams, eg on Facebook. I found my room through homstudent.com and it was 550 euros/month, excluding an entrance fee and deposit. Cheaper rooms can be found if you share them, which is pretty common.

#### **b. What is the culture like?**

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

Italian culture is stereotypically more 'hot-headed' and passionate than Dutch culture, but in northern Italy this is less noticeable than in the South. Cuisine is obviously way better but prepare to eat a lot of pasta/pizza, it can be hard to find ingredients for eg. a curry in the supermarket.

#### **c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?**

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

The train system is pretty good and extensive, prices vary depending on if you take faster high speed trains or slower regional ones. Buses are also extensive in the city but less reliable. I had a subscription for about 100eu for three months because I needed to take the bus to my campus every day. In the summer I went biking which is fun and very doable in the whole city, it's flat and there are bike paths!

## **6. Expenses**

#### **a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
Travelling there	60
Visa - if applicable	-
Vaccinations - if applicable	-
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	-
Daytrips/sight-seeing	750
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	550 (private, single room)
Grocery costs per month	100
Public transport costs per month	50
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	60

**b. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands:**

**c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

Prices for restaurants, take-away and alcohol/tobacco are lower but grocery store prices are more or less equal and my rent was a lot higher than what I pay in Wageningen (but this can vary a lot depending on your accommodation, its location, single/double room etc).

## 7. Free time

**a. What are must-sees in the area?**

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

- Venice: 30 mins by train so very close and obviously a must-see. Lido beach is only +20 mins from Venice station by boat so the closest beach reachable by public transport.
- Dolomites: Better to reach by car but also doable with train/bus combinations. Everywhere is beautiful, famous are the Tre Cime.
- Colli Euganei: closest nature area to Padova
- Vicenza: 30 mins by train, sleepy cute town.
- Verona: 1 hr by train, famous for the opera amphitheatre and Romeo & Juliet.
- Lago di Garda/Lago di Como/Lago di Iseo: beautiful lakes of northern Italy, Como and Garda are more famous but also more touristy than Iseo, which is smaller. 2 hrs by train.
- Further away: Cinque Terre (Liguria), Rome, Florence (Tuscany), Puglia

**b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?**

I loved going to villages in the middle of nowhere that had nothing special in particular and see what life looked like there. This way we got invited to an annual 'pasta party' in a village in the Trentino region and the people were so warm and nice to us, it's a great memory.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

**a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?**

Italian bureaucracy is a general challenge in the country, you have to be patient when dealing with administrative processes and expect some delay.

**b. Best memory?**

Going on trips with the friends I made to see all the beautiful sites Italy has to offer, late-night adventures and wild camping (officially not allowed).

## 9. Contact details

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