



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	Biology
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	05/02/2024 until 30/06/2024
Exchange destination: University	CZU
Faculty	Forestry and Wood Sciences
Country	Czech Republic
City	Prague

2. Motivation for exchange

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

I wanted to live in a different country to experience a new culture and get to know new people. I am also interested in different learning and teaching methods. I am curious about other cultures and habits that people have.

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

I liked Prague, and the courses of the university appealed to me. The Czech Republic has more (commercial) forest than the Netherlands, so learning about forestry here made more sense. I also did not know a lot about the country and the culture and was interested in getting to know more.

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

The university had a lot of courses that I found interesting and wasn't familiar with yet.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Since March 2024, there is a night train from the Netherlands to Prague (european sleeper), which I highly recommend. The Flixbus is also available, but less comfortable.

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
--	--------	------	-----------------------------------	---	---------

1	Forest Protection	6	Different forest agencies and threats	4	The course was short, but with 2 excursions. Very relaxed with an easy exam and chill teachers.
2	Forest Ecology	5	Information about Czechian forests and general forest management	3	The lectures are all by different people and incoherent. But there is a lot of information about different forest agents and excursion possibilities (eg to Slovakia)
3	Non-forest Vegetation	6	Different vegetation types (savannas, grassland, salt marches, etc)	4	The lectures are interesting and have a lot of information. The teacher can be vague, and excursions might be very last minute or cancelled.
4	Plant Ecology and Conservation	5	Very broad course about plants (breeding, succession, Czech plant history, life history, hybridization)	5	Lectures contain a lot of information and are very complete. The seminars are based on student participation and can (with a good group) help with broadening views on plant ecology.
5	Physiology of Forest Trees	4	Basic course on general plant physiology (hormones, tissues, photosynthesis, respiration, transport)	2	There is no focus on trees specifically, only general plant physiology. The lectures are very easy and the practical is short and non-informative.
6					

b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes, each faculty had a lot of courses available in English

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes, all faculties had a wide range of courses available.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain):

No, the level of the courses and specifically some exams was lower than I expected. The workload of all courses was low, and there wasn't a lot of attention for seminars.

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

Yes. Most courses provided new information on topics I wasn't very familiar with

f. What is it like to study there?

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

It was very relaxed and not a lot of work. The material of the courses is generally not a lot and not very difficult. The exams are all very easy and for a lot of courses the exam questions are already available beforehand.

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?

The teachers are generally not available via email, so it is recommended to ask everything face to face. In general the teachers are nice and helpful, and relaxed about deadlines and being present in general. Sadly, most courses are also taught in Czech so it is hard to integrate with Czech students. There is a higher focus on lectures than seminars/practicals, and excursions are more of a bonus than required to understand the course.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

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

There is a Menza (big canteen with full meals, very cheap) on campus, as well as a small gym apparently. Each faculty also has a canteen and offers different types of meals.

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?

For international students, the West Dormitory is available but the hygiene is very bad. I would recommend finding a room on a website like student-room-flat.com. Be careful of scammers on Facebook, ask them to face time and show the room beforehand. Rent in general is higher than in Wageningen, but it is not super hard to find a room in the centre.

b. What is the culture like?

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

Czech people are more polite and quiet than Dutch people, but are less open especially if you don't speak the language. I recommend learning at least a few basic words (hello, thank you, bye) to get around. In general the people are nice and helpful when asked, but they don't talk to you. In public transport people are quiet, not on their phones and they move out of their way when people enter/leave. At night it feels safe, just be careful around intoxicated homeless people.

The local cuisine is meat focused, in Prague a lot of vegan restaurants are available and prices are a lot lower than in the Netherlands.

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 public transport system is amazing, there are trams/metros/busses everywhere. At night there are also trams every 20/30 minutes so it is easy to get home. With an ISIC card, public transport in Prague is 5 euros per month, the app is called Pid Litacka where tickets are available. Travel to the university is a bit far, but the bus from Devitska leaves every few minutes. Taxis like Uber and Bolt are not expensive, around 5/6 euros for 15 minutes of driving.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	45
Visa - if applicable	
Vaccinations - if applicable	
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	
Daytrips/sight-seeing	30
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	590
Grocery costs per month	250
Public transport costs per month	5
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:

Lower – public transport (including train), restaurants
Higher - supermarkets

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

In general prices are a lot lower than in the Netherlands. It is good to have some cash with you for unexpected 'cash only' places.

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

The botanical garden in the North of the city is cheap (should be 1 CZK for students if you speak Czech). Outside of the city the Karlstein castle is beautiful (30/45 min by train via IDOS app), with a lot of hiking paths. The parks in the city are a must see (especially Stromovka park). Restaurants just outside the centre are very cheap. Prague 7 has a lot of restaurants, second hand stores and is not as touristic as Prague 1. Prague 2 is closer to the centre and also has a lot of nice places.

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

The botanical garden (next to the zoo). Scout institute on the left of the astronomical clock. First the Kafka museum and then Café Louvre are good destinations. For Alfonse Mucha, don't go to the Mucha museum but go to the Central Gallery, they have a bigger

exhibition. Lucerna cinema has cheap movies. The Farmer's Saturday market is a good place to try some food and get mushrooms. The national museum is popular, but worth it for both Czech history and natural history/evolution.

Since Prague is very central in Europe, going anywhere by RegioJet or Flixbus is easy, from one day to Karlsbad (2 hours) or to Budapest (6 hours).

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Finding a hospital. The reception doesn't speak English but after 2 hours of being sent to different places a private clinic told me where to go.

b. Best memory?

Going to Southern Bohemia with my 3 closest friends and getting to learn more about the Czech culture and habits.

9. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name & email address (if yes)	Cornelia Rommens (cornelia.rommens@wur.nl)	