



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	Bsc Environmental Sciences
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	15-01-24 until 04-06-24
Exchange destination: University	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Faculty	Environmental Sciences
Country	Sweden
City	Uppsala

2. Motivation for exchange

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

I chose to go on an exchange to experience a new culture, landscape and education system. I wanted to study courses that were more in line with my interests, as well as to see how the learning approach would differ from that taught in WUR. I wanted to challenge myself with the prospect of travelling to another country, and to see how I would adapt to the obstacles and opportunities that came my way.

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

I've always admired the wild landscapes of Sweden's natural environment. As an outdoorsy person, I wanted to spend time outdoors in nature and immerse myself in new ways of seeing and interacting with the more-than-human world. Aside from this, I was very drawn to the courses that were being offered in Sweden, which were also more attentive and sensitive to nature-based learning and education. I was curious to experience a new climate as well, which was much colder than what I was used to.

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

SLU offered a blend of unique courses that lined well with my specialization and interests for the future. The opportunity also to try courses at their partner university (Uppsala University) through a course collaboration was also special. The approach to longitudinal learning and emphasis on case studies and site visits was unique to me as well.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

My advice to students would be to prepare and apply well in advance for the visa and permits necessary for the country. I tried to circumnavigate this step by applying for a 'request to travel' to the destination, which ended up being a much more complex and long process. I would also advise students to prepare their budget and financial expectations well, because there's the possibility to encounter unexpected challenges where more money will be required. Lastly, engaging with the exchange destination's language (also in advance) is a nice way to immerse better in the destination's culture, as not all countries are as well versed with speaking English as the Netherlands is.

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	Engaging Critically with Environmental Governance Practices (MX0157)	15	Social science theories on env governance, case studies and on-site experiments	5	This course was very well organised, I particularly enjoyed our project work and excursion to Dalarna, which involved immersion with diff stakeholders in a novel env governance approach
2	Sustainable Economic Futures: Nature, Equity and Community	15	Exploration of alternative economic systems such as degrowth, universal basic income, circular economy and doughnut economics	5	The possibility to read 4 books on Sustainable Economics, and have discussion circles was unique. The lectures were very diverse and engaging. The final assignment was challenging, and my favourite part of the course
3					
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b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

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

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

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

f. What is it like to study there?

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

I would say that the workload is far more evenly distributed in Sweden than it is in the Netherlands. The fact that one course lasts many months means that one can easily structure a balanced routine around the classes. The opportunity for graded assignments within the course takes away from the pressure of the final exam (if there is one). The lesson material was rich and diverse in both the courses, the lecturers were from many different faculties, although I also see this in WUR. The teaching styles in my economics course were unique, such as having the opportunity to read a book over the course of a few weeks and then critically discuss the components, also having a debate about all the books at the end of the course.

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?

It was difficult to engage with the local students because of the language barrier. There were less international students, but also, Swedish is more commonly spoken and even accepted in social circles than English. This was not entirely surprising, but it meant that it was harder to find activities and opportunities for me to engage in.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

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

Laundry facilities were located in our dormitory, which was super convenient. Sports facilities were also available on campus, such as an indoor and outdoor gym, although given my limited stay I did not indulge in these facilities. There was a good network of cycling paths around the university and city which made things super accessible and provided additional sporting possibilities. There was a canteen at the university as well, although given that my housing was located on campus, I could easily go back home to prepare 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?

The student housing company and university offered me housing automatically, and there was no searching involved from my side, which was a huge relief. We had to fill a survey beforehand which also included the possibility to request for certain types of room

(low rent, studio, shared, etc). I was matched with what I had requested, so I was very pleased. The rent rates were accessible for the country, although there was no subsidy.

b. What is the culture like?

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

Compared to my home country, the differences were massive. Compared to the Netherlands, there were still many stark differences. For example, it was much harder to approach people and make easy social contact due to a culture of less contact and more personal space. Small talk was not super common among strangers, only really possible with friends. For example, you would typically not say hello to people on the street, or strike up a conversation on the train. I did not engage much with the local cuisine as eating out was quite expensive (more than NL) and so I prepared meals at home. Manners were quite professional across most age groups.

c. 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 was bookable with an app and a card. The buses were super accessible in terms of price and routes, and were comparable to transport in NL. Travel to the university was not required as I lived on the SLU campus. However, since I was also commuting to the Uppsala University campus for another course, I had to travel there as well. Instead of using the bus though, I would just cycle (which could take up to 30 mins). Places are more far apart in Sweden, although in Uppsala, there is a very organized network of cycling routes that helped immensely. I enjoyed cycling around, even with the presence of hills and snow. Taxis were very expensive and I avoided them and only used them in emergency circumstances. Intra-city trains were comparable in price points with NL.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	~200 eur (one way)
Visa - if applicable	~0 eur
Vaccinations - if applicable	~0 eur
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	~0 eur
Daytrips/sight-seeing	~500 eur
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	~380 eur
Grocery costs per month	~180 eur
Public transport costs per month	~10 eur
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	~30 eur

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

Sweden is overall a more expensive country than NL. The food and amenities were more expensive, as were public services (bike repair, haircut) and eating outside. However the student housing was surprisingly affordable and comparable to my rent in NL, and furthermore, the public transport was almost equally priced.

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

I ended up spending a lot more because of missed trains. This caused a dent in my savings. Students should prepare for the possibility of missing transport and not getting refunds. The costs for repair and public services were more than expected (for example, adjusting my derailleur took 70 euros for a one time visit) and I had not accounted for such things in my calculation. I saved money because I took my bike to Sweden and cycled almost everywhere but taking the bike to Sweden itself was an expensive and time consuming process (which I will possibly not recommend). I also recommend travelling light and not carrying too much luggage as this saves on shipping costs.

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

Swedish Lapland is a must see. The spruce forests in the North, along with the reindeer, Northern Lights, and sparkling snow make for an unforgettable experience. It was nice to travel with a touring company designed for students (Time Travels) as the budget was competitively priced for the package offered. So it is better to go with a travel/tourist company than alone, as train prices to the North can be especially high. Camping freely in Sweden is a must, because of allemansrätten, one can camp anywhere. Even so, there are cabins all across the country which do not have to be booked in advance, and are free to stay in for a night or two. I would recommend also going to Stockholm and the other larger cities (Gothenburg), perhaps to see the coast as well.

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

Taking the time to cycle across Sweden is really an amazing experience which is not talked about enough. Night trains are also recommended.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

My biggest challenge was my delay in travelling to the country and my legal obstacles with the Swedish Migration Agency. They had first denied my entry, which I eventually had to appeal to the Swedish Migration Court about. This took several months, and I had to deal with high levels of stress and uncertainty. I dealt with this situation as I could, one step at a time, and my persistence to speak with the court eventually paid off.

b. Best memory?

My best memory is standing with two friends of mine, shivering in the Lapland winter near a bonfire, and watching the Northern Lights in the sky. I also loved snowshoeing across the Spruce Forests in the North, which smelled like peppermint :).

9. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input type="checkbox"/>	no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name & email address (if yes)		

