



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	BML
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	19-02-2024 until 25-06-2024
Exchange destination: University	Warsaw university of Life Sciences (SGGW)
Faculty	Biology and Biotechnology/Horticulture
Country	Poland
City	Warsaw

2. Motivation for exchange

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

I wanted to meet new people from other countries and experience how it is to live abroad by myself.

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

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

I was interested in plant related courses, so I searched for universities which offered that. I found Warsaw university of Life Sciences in Poland and a couple of universities in Scandinavia which offered plant related courses that also seemed relevant for molecular life sciences. Then I decided I did not want to go on exchange in Scandinavia, because so many students for WUR go there. I wanted to connect with people from other places, not from Wageningen, so I chose to go to Poland. I also was curious about Poland, because I met Polish people or people with Polish family members in the Netherlands.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

If you go to Warsaw university of Life Sciences by plane, double check to which airport you are flying. Warsaw Chopin airport is relatively close to the university and it is easy to reach the university from there by public transport or taxi. Warsaw Modlin is on the opposite side of the city and during night hours it is nearly impossible to get from this airport to Warsaw university of Life Sciences.

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	Climate Change Impacts on Plant Growth and Crop Yield: Non-Invasive Monitoring Methods	10	A lot of presentations and discussions in class about climate change and impacts, and experiments with non-invasive measurements on plants and lectures about the theoretical backgrounds of the measurements.	5	
2	Botany	5	Basic first year bachelor course about plant anatomy. Has lab classes, lectures, and field classes.	3	
3	Chloroplasts biology	2	Teaches about chloroplasts, through lectures and lab classes.	4	You have to like molecular biology to enjoy this class
4	General virology	2	Has two parts. One about animal virology and one about plant virology. Has both lectures and lab classes.	5	
5	Plant DNA exploring - genotyping and data analysis	4	Molecular biology course, teaches how to investigate genetic variation. Mostly in the lab.	4	Is difficult for people with no experience in molecular biology laboratory.
6	Plants vs environmental pollution - phytoremediation technology	3	Course about using plants to clean the environment from pollutants	5	

b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain): Yes, there was a long list of classes taught in English which we could choose from.

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain): Yes. I went on exchange to another university of life sciences and this happens to be my field of interest.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain): Yes, although at some point I got annoyed by some classes repeating things that I already learned in bachelor courses in my first two years teaching basics. However, I understand this was needed because not all students had the same background knowledge.

e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain): Yes, I was interested in plants and molecular biology, and I followed courses that were all connecting to plants and/or molecular biology.

f. What is it like to study there?

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

The workload was definitely lower at the Warsaw university of Life Sciences in comparison to WUR. I found most exams to be easier compared with WUR, although the level, the type and the grading of exams was much more dependent on the teacher than at WUR. Teachers have more freedom to change exam format and requirements. Also, exams, and in some cases also the classes are scheduled or rescheduled through discussion between students and teachers.

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?

Some classes in English are specifically for exchange students. In such classes you will rarely see Polish students. Some study programs are in English. If you are taking classes from these study programs you will be in classes with local students where you can engage with them.

Reachability of teachers is variable. Some teachers read and respond to emails regularly. Some teachers do not, so if you want to ask something to those teachers, you will have to go to their office and try to catch them in person.

If you want to engage with other people, I recommend you go to ESN activities. However, this is still a community of mostly international students. If you want to engage more with Polish people you should try to join a club or association of some sort. I joined the SGGW representative orchestra, where I met a lot of Polish people.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

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

There is a student cafeteria where you can get a warm meal for a very reasonable price, the dormitories have laundry facilities. There is also a swimming pool and a sports hall on campus and an outdoor basketball court.

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?

When you are applying for a place at the university, in one of the forms you can state that you also want to live in a shared room in the dormitory on campus. This is by far the cheapest option, and I would say it is also the easiest, because you don't have to search for a place to live. The other option is to rent a room in a shared apartment or rent a private apartment. Prices for this range between 1500 and 2500 PLN, approximately €350-€600

b. What is the culture like?

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

Polish people are quite direct, just like Dutch people. They will talk to you if they want something from you, but it is very uncommon to randomly start a conversation to a stranger in the supermarket or on the street. A lot of older people do not speak English very well. Some people will know some basic words, others will not know any English at all. However, if you need help with something, just say so, or try to make that clear, and most people will be more than happy to help you out.

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

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

Warsaw has a metro, buses and trams. You buy public transportation tickets for a certain time period that are valid on all city buses, trams and on the metro. If you are buying a paper ticket from a ticket machine that is not inside a bus, make sure you validate the ticket by putting it into a yellow box. The jakdojade app is the public transportation app for Poland. It functions as a travel planner. You can also buy online tickets in this app which you can validate by scanning a QR-code.

Jakdojade app works in multiple cities, and you can also use it for long distance trains.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	€186, 71
Visa - if applicable	Not applicable
Vaccinations - if applicable	Not applicable (but it is possible to get a vaccination for tick encephalitis)
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	Not applicable
Daytrips/sight-seeing	€200
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	€118,60, triple room in dormitory, with shared kitchen and bathroom
Grocery costs per month	€140

Public transport costs per month	€14
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	€80

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

Groceries are about the same price as in the Netherlands. Some products are a bit more expensive, some things are a bit cheaper, but you can expect to spend a similar amount on groceries.

Eating out is cheaper than in the Netherlands. Clothes are cheaper. Rent is also a bit lower than in the Netherlands. Hairdresser was similar price.

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

No

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

There is a national park close to Warsaw. You can travel there by public transportation.

It is also very nice to go on city trips for a weekend. You can book a ticket for a long distance train with 50% student discount. Slightly larger cities in Poland have plenty of hostels. Just check booking.com

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

Visit former concentration camp Treblinka. It is somewhere between 1,5 and 2 hours outside Warsaw by car. Very impressive.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

The biggest challenge was creating a schedule that worked, because I did not have complete information about the schedules of all of the classes that I wanted to take. How to deal with this: just stalk people, spam them, until you get the information you want. If teachers don't know, other students might know the information you need. (Especially if you are taking classes from English study programs)

b. Best memory?

Playing trumpet in the SGGW representative orchestra.

9. Contact details

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