



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| Field of study in Wageningen | Biotechnology |
| Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy) | 01/09/2022 until 01/02/2023 |
| Country (exchange) | Belgium |
| City (exchange) | Leuven |
| University (exchange) | KU Leuven |
| Faculty (exchange) | Faculty of Bioscience Engineering |

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I decided to go on exchange because I saw it as an opportunity to meet new people from all over the world as well as new cultures and cities. Also, Wageningen is pretty small and I wanted to get away for a little while. Next to this I also wanted to broaden my field a bit and an Erasmus exchange at another university was the perfect opportunity to follow different courses.

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

Belgium as an Erasmus destination might seem as a bit weird for Dutch students, since it's very close and they speak the same language (partly). However, I have always loved Belgian cities and people so I thought why not. Also, a friend of mine did his exchange in Leuven and told me it was the best time of his life. I chose Leuven over other universities because it offered me better courses.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination? (E.g. bus, train, etc.)

It's very easy to get to Leuven by train.

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 | Sustainable Precision Livestock Farming | 5 | Mostly about the use of technologies on farms to deal with | 5 | |

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| | | | the upcoming bottlenecks of farming | | |
| 2 | Seminar Cellular and Genetic Engineering | 4 | Writing a scientific paper on a genetic engineering topic and giving a seminar about this | 4 | |
| 3 | Applied Medical Biotechnology | 4 | Some applications of medical uses in biotechnology such as vaccins, small molecules, therapies | 3 | |
| 4 | Applied Synthetic Microbiology | 4 | Should have been about synthetic microbiology but from my point of view it was a die hard genetic engineering course | 1 | |
| 5 | Industrial Microbiology and Fermentation Technology | 5 | Theory of microbiology and biochemistry were applied to lots of food applications and also a big part about process engineering | 5 | Definitely recommend this course, the professor is a famous Belgian Beer experts and his lectures were super interesting. |
| 6 | Fruit and Vegetable Technology | 4 | Was a course about the chemical conversions, enzymes and other things related to fruit and vegetable processing | 3 | |
| | Urban Ecology and Green Management | 4 | Course about planning an urban area with respect to sustainability. I would say more a architectural and ecology course. | 5 | |

How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)

The year is built up in 2 semesters of which each one has 12 weeks of studying, and 3 weeks of exams. Overall, I would say the academic level is pretty high compared to other universities. The study forms and examination are pretty much the same as in Wageningen, mainly lectures, tutorials and practicals. One thing that was new to me were oral exams, which at first seemed pretty scary but in the end were pretty good.

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?)

The relationship between professors and students was really distant. Professors had a very high position in society and had lots of power. This was something I didn't like at all, because some of the

professors were really arrogant in their way of teaching. Also, the professors weren't approachable at all. However, for the rest I would say KU Leuven is a pretty well organized university. If you had a question about practical stuff, you could easily find what you needed.

What does the university offer the student additionally? (E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?)

Leuven is a city in which more than 50% of the population consist of students, so there were lots of facilities for students. Think of pretty big sport complexes, lots of catering that offered student deals and also lots of bike repair shops. However I have to mention that all local students go back to their parents every weekend to do their laundry, so most student houses didn't have a washing machine. There are washing salons, but they are expensive and also time consuming 😞

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?)

For international students, finding an accommodation is pretty hard in Leuven. The best option is to look for residences from the university. The rent rates were around 350-500 for a student room without kitchen. There were also a lot of studios, I think the rent for them was around 600.

What is the culture of the country like? (E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?)

Local students are very closed and go home to their parents every weekend. However, Belgians are very kind everywhere you go. The local cuisine mostly consist of unhealthy stuff like fries, snacks and waffles. They are definitely nice, but supermarkets also offer big variety of healthy stuff. The Belgian beer culture is definitely one of the things they are most proud of.

Could you give a general price indication of the place of residence compared to living in Wageningen?

I think it's kind of the same.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure? (E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

Within the city, everybody travels by bike. If you wanted to go to other cities the train was the best option. Compared to the NS, the train was cheap and if you wanted to go by bus you could buy a card for the whole semester for only 20 euros.

6. Free time

What are must-sees in the area? (E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?)

Within Leuven, the Oude Markt was my favorite place. Also, groot Begijnhof and Arenberg campus were definitely worth a visit. Other nice places to visit when staying in Leuven are Brussels (only 20min by train), Brugge, Gent, Dinant, Antwerp and the Ardennes. Our weekend/day trips were planned one day in advance, so no need to hurry with planning.

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

The travel guide probably says to visit the Stella Artois brewery, which is really nice but also commercial and touristic. In a village close to Leuven, Kessel-Lo, there is a very small brewery owned by a couple who were supernice. Since they don't get a lot of visitors, they have a lot of time for you and they even come sit down with you to teach you a lot about the process and other stuff. Its called 'de Coureur'!

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time (E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?)

Muntstraat is the famous street for going out, but is really expensive. Parijsstraat was just as nice, but way more affordable.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The exam period was pretty hard. I studied for 5 weeks every day and still didn't pass all my exams. Also all my friends were having a pretty hard time, we definitely underestimated this.

What was your best memory abroad?

Overall, I would say just meeting so many great people from all over the world and getting to know their culture.

8. Contact details (optional)

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