



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	BSc Soil, Water & Atmosphere
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	14/08/2023 until 11/12/2023
Exchange destination: University	University of Iceland
Faculty	Faculty of Earth Sciences
Country	Ijsland
City	Reykjavik

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

Going abroad always felt like an opportunity you simply had to take during your studies. To get to experience a different country whilst also learning new things is simply a really cool way of living.

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

I wanted to expand my curriculum with geological topics. And where to go best to study these things then the country dictated so directly by these very phenomena? But realistically of course, Iceland had also always been on my bucket list for its cool nature and impressive landscapes.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

If you have a car and a bit of spare money and time you might consider taking the ferry from Denmark. Otherwise the only realistic option is flying. Do note that the international KEF airport is not in Reykjavik itself. There are plenty of busses that shuttle between them and it only takes you around 50min. Try and search for the Icelandic public bus operator Straeto, line 55. Which is slightly cheaper and better connected than the other bus operators aimed at tourists.

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	Introduction to the Geology of Iceland	10	Really an introduction to all possible geologic topics in Iceland.	5	Really cool excursion week before the start of the semester
2	Current Crustal Movements	6	Tectonics and faulting	5	
3	Geothermal energy	7,5	Geothermal systems and their utilization.	4	
4	Paleolimnology	7,5	Study of lake sediments in relation to past environment	5	Focus is on practical skills, which is a really nice way of learning.
5	Volcanology	7,5	All things related to volcanoes	3	All things related to, so a bit unstructured and chaotic. But lots of cool information
6					

What is it like to study there?

The philosophy of the University of Iceland is a bit different. They approach all courses like they want to ensure that you pass. This translates to a lot of smaller tests and projects where you learn a lot from, yet they do not require too much attention since they are small and the level relatively easy. Only problem is that the courses do not cooperate with each other. So there are times that you have nothing to do, and times that a lot of small things from different courses add up in a small time period. But in general very pleasant learning experience.

What is the culture of the university?

All the teachers are very approachable and really fun to talk to. Often nice ambiance in the class rooms. Have not experienced too much of other university culture.

What does the university offer students additionally?

The main building offers a bookstore and small restaurant. Also there is a modest university gym for a reasonable price.

5.Housing-travelling-living

What are the possibilities for housing?

Acquiring housing is a bit of a trouble. As the city itself has a housing shortage, public rental options are very hard to find. Conveniently however, there is plenty of on-campus housing available for students, which is definitely the way to go. Relatively cheap, good location and all of your fellow (exchange)students in one place. This housing is run by a company called Studentagardar. If you sign up on the waiting list a few months in advance you should theoretically be fine.

For the autumn semester specifically: There are relatively much summer internships here at the university which commonly leave after the start of the semester. This might imply that you have to wait a little before you get a room.

What is the culture of the country like?

Iceland is a bit of a different culture. There are a few strong and nice Nordic beliefs and ways of living remnant of the settlers. The food is a bit dependent on what is currently being shipped but definitely sufficient. Even the vegetables.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

Reykjavik has a pretty good bus-system for which you can buy a monthly ticket that only costs around the equivalent of 32 euros. This is only applicable for the buses around Reykjavik. It's best to rent a car with friends and split the costs to explore the rest of the country.

6. Expenses

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

Of course, Iceland is well known for being expensive. Generally rents start from 800 euro and up and cost of living is also simply just higher. But with some budgeting decisions it can be very doable.

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: 800+ for student housing
Groceries: Expect to pay a lot for dairy and meat. But vegetables and basic stuff is relatively decently priced
Public transport: 32 euro a month
Restaurant/going out for dinner: Really expensive
Daytrips/sight-seeing: ~30 Euro a day to rent a car and split the bill with friends

7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

Close to home are the mountain Esja and the lighthouse at Grotta. But not too far away from the city impressive things can be seen on Reykjanes or the famous golden circle.

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

There are plenty of really good travel guides for Iceland of course. Yet in my opinion Heimaey is often being overlooked and definitely worth a visit.

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

Invite people from home, it's a lot of fun to show them what you have learned and often initiates nice road trips. Also definitely go to the public pools, these are heated and outdoors which feels pretty luxurious. Also often fully equipped with saunas etc. This is the place all the Icelanders hang out at and are often approachable for a chat. Really increasing quality of life in the colder and darker days.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

Personally, with a bit of bad luck, I only received housing allocation a month after my arrival. This meant I had to bridge my first month living in a hostel, which definitely was not ideal.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

The excitement and atmosphere of people looking together to the northern lights or a volcanic eruption in the far distance.

9. Contact details (optional)

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