



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	Soil Water Atmosphere
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	06/03/2024 until 18/07/2024
Exchange destination: University	Universidad de Chile
Faculty	Sciences, Geography
Country	Chile
City	Santiago de Chile

2. Motivation for exchange

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

I have always been interested in traveling and exploring other countries and cultures. I think it is very good for your personal and academic development to have classes in a different culture, and in this case I also learned the language (Spanish).

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

I wanted to travel for Chile for a long time, partly because of the language, but also the nature is incredible. Also, Chile is one of the safest countries in South-America.

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

It was the only partner university of the WUR in Chile.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

No, you have to fly.

4. University and studying

a. Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	E C T S	Short description of the contents	Appre ciatio n of cours e: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Cultural Geography (Geografía Cultural)	6	The course treats some cultural	3	For me it was interesting to follow a 'social' course. I like

			concepts, and applies this to (mostly) cultures in Chile and sometimes (South-)America. It contains 2 field excursions.		what I learned, but the ways of teaching were not the best. We read a lot of papers, and each lesson 1/2 couples had to present their text. Language is also quite important in defining the concepts, making it harder for me as I am not native in Spanish.
2	Geomorphology (Geomorfología)	6	This course treats mostly geomorphological processes and how landscape features form. This is mostly applied to the area around Santiago and Chile, and 2 field excursions are included.	4	I loved the field excursions, and the geomorphological processes in the Andes are interesting. I also learned more about cartography, and the use of ArcGIS. The professor of this course was also really nice! Sometimes the processes seemed really easy, and were repeated too many times.
3	Biogeography (Biogeografía)	6	The course includes ecology and treats the distribution of species in Chile, also with 1 field excursion.	4	It was quite laid-back. I really liked this topic, but information was not that profound.
4	Conservation and Biodiversity (Conservación y Biodiversidad)	6	This course is given to students in the last year of their BSc (so fifth year) and includes many guest lectures by other professors. It treats many factors in conservation, concluding the course with an essay (and presentation) written about the conservation strategies for an assigned species.	5	I loved the contents of this course. Every lecture had a different topic, ranging from chimerism to conservation law. There are professors with different expertises, making the course diverse and interesting. The 'main' professor is very smart, funny and kind, but sometimes I found it hard to follow his Spanish. He speaks good English, and most of the papers you have to read are in English.
5	Aarde, Zee en Atmosfeer (Tierra, Mar y Atmósfera)	6	The course treats the 3 components in different blocks. It was given in the night, and 3 different professors gave the lectures.	3	The course was a bit too basic. It was also given on Wednesday night, meaning I got home around 20:30. The examination of this course consisted out of 3 'exams', which were basically short essays.
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b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

No, there was (in my faculties) no option to follow any courses in English. In the economics and business faculty (FEN) there were options to follow (enough) English courses.

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

Yes, in the end I did. However, the offer of different courses in this field is not that big, and it can be hard to make a fitting schedule. There were interesting courses taught at Campus Sur, but this was more than an hour away from my house. Furthermore, you have to choose at least 51% of your courses in 1 faculty (in my case this was geography). Another problem was that the interesting courses usually were only 3 ECTS. The course descriptions are really vague (or not available), so it's hard to determine beforehand which courses you will follow.

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

Yes, but the way of teaching is quite different. You follow (max.) 5 courses simultaneously, and the pace is not that high. However, there are exams and assignments throughout the whole semester, so you usually have some type of assessment each week. A lot of the supporting material consists of scientific papers, either in English or Spanish.

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

Yes, I feel like the semester was educational.

f. What is it like to study there?

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

As I mentioned before, I read a lot of papers. A lot of the assignments you have to do are in groups, which can be nice (getting to know your peers), but sometimes also quite hard. I have noticed that Chileans can wait a long time before making their assignments. Sometimes it was also hard to join in group discussions for example, as the level of Spanish needed for this is quite high.

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 lecturers were all really kind and understanding to my situation and offered support with the language. I was the only exchange student in most of my classes, meaning I worked with local students. It is not easy to become real friends with the Chileans, as they are quite reserved and sometimes live very far (an hour) away. This makes it harder to meet up with them after class for example. I did go get lunch or a beer with some of my classmates, but it's not automatic. I feel like I might have been closer to them if I had been more fluent in Spanish when arriving in Chile, as I struggled quite a lot in the beginning which made it more difficult to have conversations etc.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

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

The university offers different types of sports and catering facilities on the campuses.

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 university does not provide any housing, so you have to find something yourself. I booked a room from chileanwayhouses before coming to Santiago, because I wanted to be sure of having a room in a good location with other international students. I do know some people who first stayed in a hostel, until finding a good room. This is also possible, but I preferred having a place beforehand. I would really recommend chileanwayhouses, as I met many friends through the housing. It can be a bit more difficult to meet new people if you are in a faculty like mine, as there are barely any exchange students. However, my roommates were part of the FEN (which hosts many international students). It is also easier to be in contact with students from other houses who study in different universities (UC, UDD, etc).

b. What is the culture like?

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

The cuisine of Chile is not great, but you can buy groceries which are very similar to groceries in the Netherlands (except for cheese). Santiago is a big city, and has some parts which are considered more dangerous than others. It is advised to use Uber (especially at the airport, take an official taxi inside or an Uber), and parts of the city are not safe at night (center, Bellavista, etc.). There are pickpockets active, so take care of your money and your phone.

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 metro system works well, and also the buses arrive very often. When you arrive you have to buy a BIP card, and each ride costs between 750-830 CLP.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	1000-1800
Visa - if applicable	-
Vaccinations - if applicable	250 (incl. rabies)
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	-
Daytrips/sight-seeing	(depending on amount of trips and destination, sometimes very cheap sometimes quite expensive)

Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	370,- (room in student house)
Grocery costs per month	+/- 300 (similar to NL)
Public transport costs per month	+/- 60 (incl Uber, but shared)
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	40

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

My rent was lower, which made the overall costs less than they would have been in the Netherlands. However, some groceries were a bit more expensive, but others were cheaper again. It is recommended to buy your fruits and vegetables at a market to reduce the costs, but keep in mind that it might go bad more quickly.

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

Nearby you can find the Andes, which is really easy and cheap to travel to if you rent a car with a few people. There are also buses to Pichilemu (surfing) and Pucón which are not too expensive! Santiago itself also offers multiple cultural activities, I would recommend everybody to visit the Museo de Memorias y los Derechos Humanos and to take outside salsa classes near the GAM!

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

Salsa classes on the street, this was a great evening activity and costs only 2000 CLP per session.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

My biggest challenge was communicating in Spanish. I found it difficult to follow my classes and afterwards approach my peers to make friends. Usually I was already really tired from the class, and sometimes I did not have the energy to socialise. However, this got better as my knowledge of the language grew, and if there were misunderstandings it did not matter to me anymore.

b. Best memory?

Hard to say, I think I enjoyed my daily life with my friends the most! But also the trips to Pucón and Pichilemu were great. You travel with people you just met, exploring beautiful nature and cities, which makes amazing memories and friendships.

9. Contact details

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