



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	MSc Development and Rural Innovation
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	05/02/2024 until 28/06/2024
Exchange destination: University	Stellenbosch University
Faculty	Arts and Social Sciences
Country	South Africa
City	Stellenbosch

2. Motivation for exchange

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

I found it the perfect opportunity to experience how it is to live in another country than I grew up in, because a study exchange automatically provides you with a support system. Furthermore, you can learn much more about a country than you normally would, considering that many examples and case studies used in courses are based on local circumstances.

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

The case study for my BSc thesis was Cape Town. Consequently, I came to learn about South Africa and its history. Most importantly, I came to learn about the way history is still part of the present in this country. Yet, seeing that I wrote my BSc thesis during COVID-19 and I only had 8 weeks to complete it, I did not have the opportunity to visit Cape Town. However, I got so intrigued that I would like to experience it myself. I realised that I wouldn't experience it to the extent I desired if I would just visit for holidays. Therefore, I aspired to spend more time in South Africa. Nonetheless, South Africa is known for the high rates of crime. As mentioned above, a study exchange provided me with a support system and hence the confidence to live in a country that is considered to be less safe than the Netherlands.

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

It is one of the few partner universities of the WUR in South Africa and highly ranked. Furthermore, the campus and province the university is located in is very safe. On campus, there is 24/7 campus security who you may ask to escort you home. During the day, it is even safe for girls to walk by themselves throughout Stellenbosch. Yet, the predominant reason why I chose for this university, was because of the similarities to Wageningen. Stellenbosch is a small town thriving with students. Besides, nature can be

found close by. This was in contrast to my other options in South Africa, considering that e.g. the University of Pretoria finds itself in an urban area.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

The international office of the university provides a 24/7 airport transfer upon arrival, about which students receive an email well before departure. This airport transfer is safe and I experienced the communication as pleasant. It is also for students who need to be dropped off in private accommodation.

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	Social Anthropological Themes	4	Provides an introduction to anthropology, with a focus on the professor's research on the implications that access to water has.	4	This course lasted for one term, which is half a semester.
2	The South African City	6	Discusses planning principles throughout (post-)Apartheid, applied on case studies and examples in South Africa.	5	Seeing that cities encompass much more than spatial planning, I learned more about the history of South Africa as well.
3	Medical Anthropology	4	Teaches students to think critically about the conception of health in society.	4	It was very interesting how the course applied its contents to for instance the use of skin lightening products and HIV/AIDS in South Africa. This course lasted for one term, which is half a semester.
4	Afrikaans Language and Culture for Dutch and Belgium Students	6	Makes Dutch and Belgian students aware of the history behind the	5	The Examining Board does not approve language courses. This meant that I could

			Afrikaans language, thereby elucidating aspects of the Afrikaans culture and all its (hidden) social implications.		follow the course and it will be printed on my academic transcript that I will receive from Stellenbosch University, but I won't receive credits for it. This course is taught in Afrikaans.
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b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes, especially considering that English is the main language used within the university. However, it was difficult for me to find suitable MSc (postgraduate) courses. Consequently, I followed courses for undergraduates. Fortunately, these courses were accepted by the Examination Board.

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

Yes, even too many! Aside from the courses offered by the faculties, Stellenbosch University offers various courses that are part of the Global Education Programme, specifically oriented towards international students. Several of these courses delve deeper into the South African culture and history, which was my specific field of interest.

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

Yes. Even though I followed undergraduate courses as a MSc student, the grading system is noticeably stricter than at WUR. This resulted in grades that were slightly lower than I'm used to of myself. However, the level of the content of the courses were just right for me in my experience.

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

Yes. The courses Social Anthropological Themes and Medical Anthropology were follow-up courses of each other and hence complemented each other nicely. Yet, I was particularly glad that I chose to follow the course Afrikaans for Dutch and Belgian students, in spite of not receiving credits for it. This course provided me with a deeper understanding of daily life in South Africa. I found this very valuable, considering that it is easy to stay in the elite (international) bubble in Stellenbosch. Therefore, you might fail to see what is part of daily life for other citizens in the rest of South Africa.

f. What is it like to study there?

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

At Stellenbosch University, one semester lasts 5 months and consists of 2 terms. In between these two terms, you have a recess of one week.

As a student from WUR, I was not used to following courses for the entire semester (5 months). However, this means that examination of courses can comprise the course material of the entire semester. Yet, there are interim examination moments (A1s). This ensures that students keep up with the course material and will not have to start learning the full course material for the last exam. Rather, you keep repeating the course material that you already had to learn for other examination moments. Even though this increases the depth with which you engage with course material, it does raise the workload for students.

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?

Even though Stellenbosch University doesn't have the horizontal structure that the WUR has, the lecturers are approachable and willing to help. Especially the lecturers of the Global Education Programme, who are familiar with the questions of international students who are unfamiliar with the university system. Furthermore, the international office is very helpful and approachable.

The international office also organises the Matie Buddy programme. If you apply, you will get assigned a Matie Buddy, who is a South African student at the university. You may ask these students questions about all kinds of aspects; the university, courses, (student) life in Stellenbosch, etc. This is one of the ways to get in touch with local students, next to e.g. joining an association.

Yet, one of the notable differences with the WUR is that most classes I attended outside the Global Education Programme have high student/teacher-ratios is therefore less personal.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

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

In the Neelsie Student Centre, you can buy cheap food. You can even find a mini-supermarket (SPAR) inside. Aside from that, the Neelsie houses several stores and a small cinema.

Furthermore, the Maties Gym offers a wide range of sports, including a swimming pool. In addition, you can decide to join an association.

In Academia, laundry facilities are available. One wash will cost you 30 ZAR. Moreover, there is a study hall and small shop where you can buy the essentials and order coffee/food located within Academia.

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 provides the opportunity to sign up for the university residences Academia or Concordia. These residences are relatively expensive and fellow students question

whether they would have chosen these residences again, considering the high level of surveillance and rules. Yet, I was pleasantly surprised. In Academia, you get your private bathroom. Furthermore, one big advantage is that you encounter many international students daily. As a consequence, it's easy to make friends. A difference between Academia and Concordia is that in Academia, they have generators since last semester. This means that you won't have to take loadshedding into account.

Private rooms are to be found on Facebook. However, be vigilant for scams.

b. What is the culture like?

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

In general, people are very friendly. When you greet someone, you often ask how they are doing.

There are a few local dishes, which often contain meat. Nonetheless, many restaurants offer the usual Western cuisine. In every restaurant, vegetarian options are available. Vegan options are less common.

Many South African students live by the saying "work hard, play hard". In Stellenbosch, studies are taken serious. Nevertheless, students make time to go to wine farms or hike for instance.

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

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

There is no public transport. Everything in Stellenbosch is doable on foot, but you can also rent a Matie bike for the semester. As soon as it's dark and you have to diverge from routes that will take you through campus, it is advisable to take an Uber. The Uber prices are cheap, think of max. €3 for an Uber for six that will bring you to the other end of Stellenbosch.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	€1248
Visa - if applicable	€33
Vaccinations - if applicable	€302
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	3246R
Daytrips/sight-seeing	€15
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	11.062R
Grocery costs per month	€110
Public transport costs per month	N.a.
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	€120

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

The price levels in the supermarket are similar to and for some products even higher than in the Netherlands. Yet, the prices in restaurants are significantly lower.

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

Keep in mind that the currency is South African Rand (ZAR). Even though you can pay with card almost everywhere, including tips, it is advisable to carry some small change (e.g. in bills of 50R). These are for instance often used to tip the employees at gas stations.

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

The Wolfberg Arch hike in Cederberg is a must-do. This is a rather challenging 8-hour hike. If you have the opportunity, I would advise to camp under the Wolfberg Arch. However, be aware that securing permits to conduct this hike requires some organisation.

Kogelbay Beach is another must-see nearby Stellenbosch. It is a beach with no facilities, but you will be rewarded with the most extraordinary colours in the landscape. And of course the wine farms with their beautiful scenery!

Renting a car is necessary for most travels, seeing that there is no (safe) public transport and Ubers are not always eager to bring you to remote areas. Most of the time, it is doable to conduct trips spontaneously.

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

At the wine farm Boschendal in Franschhoek, you can rent mountain bikes. I would highly recommend this if you are fit and enjoy doing sports.

Furthermore, hiking in Jonkershoek Nature Reserve and climbing Lion's Head during sunset are amongst the many things that are worth doing.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Personally, I luckily did not have to deal with it. However, two of my roommates got their phone stolen.

In South Africa, Dutch citizens don't need an international driver's license. However, if you would like to drive in e.g. Namibia, Dutch citizens do need an international driver's license. This driver's license needs to be retrieved in the Netherlands, as mailing something per post takes months to arrive in South Africa.

b. Best memory?

Too many! For me, it would be camping in Cederberg, hiking to the Tugela Falls in Drakensberg or the lunches on the grass in front of the Neelsie Student Centre.

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)		