



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Bachelor Bos- en Natuurbeheer
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	April 29 until August 30
Country (exchange)	Colombia
City (exchange)	Medellín
University (exchange)	Universidad Nacional de Colombia
Faculty (exchange)	Ciencias Agrarias

2. Motivation for exchange+

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

A lot of opportunities are thrown at you during your 'student life'. This should not be taken for granted and thus treated with care. Nevertheless, the opportunities are there to be used. I wanted to go on exchange because I thought I might be working abroad in the future. Studying (and living) abroad for a while makes you get used to being abroad for a considerable time and will teach you invaluable things about your work field, culture, people and yourself. Considered these things, a study abroad experience will help you make job/place related decisions in the future.

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

I had always wanted to learn more about the tropical forestry and agriculture. Although we can learn about this on the WUR, I knew that studying in a country that itself has tropical areas would give me the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in this field, particularly regarding field work. Moreover, I was interested in the country's turbulent past and the effect of this on everyday life, including of course my professional field, forestry. Also, I saw this as a way of improving my level of Spanish into fluency.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Medellin officially has two airports: Aeropuerto Olaya Herrera (EOH) and Aeropuerto Internacional José María Córdova (MDE). EOH is mainly used for inland flights, while MDE is the international airport and will probably be your airport of arrival. As MDE is located in Rionegro, a municipality in the mountains around Medellín, you have to find transport from this airport to the city. As far as I know, there are three ways to do this: Taxi, Colectiva, Bus, or your housing host might have arranged something for you (private driver). The amount of money you pay goes from highest to lowest from private driver, taxi, colectiva, bus. Uber has been banned but Beat can be used instead, this is cheap but illegal as well and it is recommended to use it in the city itself and choose one of the other options above for your transport from and to the airport. When taking a taxi, you are recommended to go for the yellow ones, they have set prices and in general are save.

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

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	Naturaleza- Cultura- Gestión de Recursos Naturales	5	An cultural anthropology like course with special focus on natural resource management. Includes an excursion to the countryside during which students live with a rural family to assess their use of natural resources.	5	Very insightful to spend time with local farmers.
2	Silvicultura de Plantaciones	5	Students will learn how to set up a timber plantation and which mistakes not to make. Includes an excursion.	4	A lot of native tree species will be addressed
3	Ecología Forestal II	5	Ecology, with special attention on tropical forests as they appear in the country. Excursion mostly existing of collecting measurements in the forest.	5	N.a.
4	Sistemas Agroforestales	5	The course teaches about types of agroforestry practices and their characteristics. Includes excursions to farms applying agroforestry systems.	4	A lot of native tree species will be addressed.
5	Filosofía y Teoría Política Contemporánea		Philosophy and contemporary political theory. Addresses topics like hegemony, social movements, suppression.	4	Pre-knowledge on political sociology is recommended.

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

The courses normally consist of lectures, 'trabajos' (assignments, individually or in groups) and 'parciales' (tests). Workload is considered as high, also by the local students. At the WUR, a student has to obtain 30 ECTS in one 'semester'. As the exam commission concluded that 3 Colombian study credits account for 5 ECTS, a Colombian student would have follow 6 courses per semester. However, in fact a Colombian student has to follow 7 courses per semester to get his/her bachelor's degree in the set time. Moreover, Colombian bachelors last minimal 5 years. To contextualize the above: students whom I talked to mentioned that usually it takes them longer than 5 years to graduate, because they, due to the high workload, don't follow 7 courses each semester. Also, some students

mentioned that when they entered the university after high school, they started off with 4 courses, to 'get used to the pace'. I started with 5 courses but decided to drop one because of the workload. Although at some points, I felt a lack of evaluation, students do acquire a lot of valuable knowledge and skills that actively prepare them for the labour market.

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 lecturers are very approachable and willing to help you. Lecturing is small scale, with classes of 15-30 persons per course.

Because of the high amount of time that has to be spent in studying, students are often to be found at the university. During the semester, the university is basically the place where student life takes place. This consists of having fun during and in between the group work, of making planning to do other activities, if time is available. Other activities, like chilling ('parchar') in the park exist, but also usually depart from the university as meeting point.

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

The university offers its students good sports facilities (including a swimming pool, fitness gym, tennis fields et al.), toilets (no paper;). Good food is available. An additional, more economical option for lunch is the restaurant "Las Negras" in the neighbourhood "La Iguaná" just outside the university. No laundry facilities are offered at the university.

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?)

You can sign up for a house with international students if you like, this is probably the most expensive option. Also stickers with offers cheap rooms can be found in many places close to the campus. In these you will find more Colombian students.

You cannot reside on the campus, but look for offers in Carlos E. Restrepo, a neighbourhood on a 3 minute walk from the university. There are options to have your food prepared for you in the house. Some people rent some rooms in their houses to self be able to pay the rent, this means you will be co-living with these people.

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

The culture of the country differs massively depending on where you are. In general, the people are not afraid to start contact, very hospitable, 'warm'. However, especially in non-university areas, foreign students should always be aware not being taken advantage of. But this is basically 'the same as in every big city', as some people I talked to mentioned.

Please be sure to treat the Pablo Escobar issue with the care it deserves. Colombia has faced 50 years of armed conflict with an enormous amount of physical and mental suffering. Pablo Escobar, being at the head of the drug trade for some time, has obviously had an important role in this.

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

- For a room: 175-225 euros. It is possible to find rooms with food and washing included, these rooms aren't necessarily the most expensive ones.

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

Public transport infrastructure (from expensive to cheap): Taxi, metro, public bicycle

- Taxi: Are all over the place, starting price is .94 euro and depending on how far you go it gets more expensive.
- Metro: You pay just about .60 euro to enter the metro system and go wherever you want with it. It is possible to by single tickets, but if you are staying for an extended period, it is much easier and also cheaper to buy a 'cívica'. This isn't expensive and among others allows you to do a transfer without paying for an extra single ticket and to use the public bike system.
- Bicycle: The public bike system of Medellín is called encicla. You need a cívica to be able to use this system. Inscription is on the internet and is free. NB: there are more and more 'ciclovías', just for bicycles, but where they are not, it is common to use the streets.

NB: Beat can also be used, its prices depend.

6. Free time

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

- Medellín: Museo Casa de la Memoria, Parque Arví,

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

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

- Restaurant 'Las Negras' in the neighbourhood 'La Iguaná' just next to the university, in front of the motorcycle parking place. Here you can eat cheap and good Colombian food.
- Going out: The neighbourhood 'La 70' (La Setenta), used to be the most popular place to go out around one or two decades ago, having lots of nice clubs and bars. Although today La 70 is still a popular and recommendable place, the biggest popularity today has shifted to 'Parque Lleras' (in the neighbourhood El Poblado) and some other locations. Each place has it's own characteristics, for example the amount of foreigners present, the costs of things, the type of people you will encounter (Lleras is the most popular, but also due to the many foreigners, which causes prices to be higher). Go there yourself to find out which one you like most.
- When going out, be extra aware of pickpockets, especially when you look foreign.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

Getting used to be from an entirely different culture and finding my way in how to tackle situations in which conflicting values show up.

What was your best memory abroad?

As a part of one of the courses, we stayed in the countryside and lived with a rural family for a few days. These days contain some of my best memories of my stay abroad, as in the particular family with whom my 3 peers and I lived, we experienced the warmth and love they had for each other and for us. Considering the fact that their lives have been severely affected by the armed conflict and added to that the lack of some facilities and government presence in the area, it was intriguing to note their positive and persisting mentality. During this week we learned a lot from each other.

8. Contact details (optional)

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