



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	MSc Forest and Nature Conservation
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	01-08-2022 until 03-12-2022
Country (exchange)	Colombia
City (exchange)	Medellín
University (exchange)	UNAL
Faculty (exchange)	Sciencias Agrarias

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

A study exchange is the best thing you can do during your studies imo. I decided to go to Colombia and learn a new language, culture, country, city and friends. It's difficult, but it's extremely educational and fun, and very satisfying once you manage to complete the exchange and realize how much you've learned.

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

Because of the difference in culture and language. The more different the experience than what you're used to, the more you'll learn.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Plane works the best. If you're a good swimmer you could try that but that's another challenge. But on a more serious note, I'm trying to back by sailing boat to Europe to avoid flying and to learn how to sail. Something you could consider if you like adventure and want a challenge. There are loads of websites where you can "hitch a ride" on a sailing boat.

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	Mangrove Ecosystems	5,4	Course about mangrove ecosystems, which in my semester included a stay on a tropical island for a week.	5	Amazing course with a really fun teacher.
2	Nature-Culture-Management of Resources	5,4	Comparable to FNP courses that go into detail about human-nature relationships, but from a Colombian perspective. Focuses among other things on colonial aspects of science and nature management in Colombia. Excursion to a farmer's house where you help out with work on the farm to understand their life.	4	Good course to put in contrast to some similar WUR courses.
3	Diversity and Distribution of Species	7,2	Understanding of differences of biodiversity and species diversities worldwide. Alpha, Beta and Gamma diversity. Why is tropical diversity so high?	3	Technical ecology course on data analysis, making use of R script writing. MSc course so a pretty high workload.
4	Interactions in Forest Communities	7,2	Focuses on species interactions in tropical forests and tropical biodiversity.	5	Very fun MSc course. Super kind teachers and nice atmosphere. Workload wasn't that high and yet I learned a lot.
5					
6					

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

To my surprise there was very little focus on exams with my courses. Lot of group work, presentations, excursions etc. Semester begins pretty easy-going, but the last weeks the workload increases immensely. Workload overall is higher than at WUR I'd say, but changes a lot throughout the semester. Lesson material is pretty good. Academic level is comparable to WUR. Maybe slightly easier but if you're not a native Spanish speaker you'll have enough on your mind regarding the language.

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?)

In a way pretty comparable to the WUR. Quite an informal atmosphere and the lecturers and students are super nice. However I heard from some other exchange students that they had very different experiences, especially regarding some lecturers. Guess it depends on the faculty and course. Local students are super kind and very easily approachable, although a culture difference remains so outside of uni it was mostly easy to become friends with other exchange students.

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

Lots of cheap catering options on Campus and many sport/music/culture opportunities. Much more than at WUR.

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?)

Housing in Medellín is easily available and prices are a lot lower than in Wageningen. For less than half the Dutch price you should be able to find good housing. The neighbourhood Carlos E. Restrepo is super recommendable because of the student atmosphere, location near university and quietness. Prices of rooms slightly higher than average, but definitely worth it.

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

Very different culture, but quite westernized. Easier than expected to be vegetarian in Medellín, but outside of the city this becomes harder. Nearly impossible to be vegan. People in the department of Antioquia and basically all of Colombia are super nice, well-mannered and helpful, so you'll feel very welcome. Not super easy to become best friends with most though, as many students still live with their parents and go home after uni.

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

Student rooms comparable to what can be found in Wageningen cost between 600.000 and 1.000.000 Pesos (about 120 to 200 euros at time of writing).

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

Medellín has a metro system that works very well and costs little (2600 pesos or 50 cents per ride). Ubers are also very cheap (often between 1 and 4 euros per ride). Keep in mind that large parts of the city, especially at night, are not safe to walk or cycle, so Ubers or Taxi's are a must for parties etc.

6. Free time

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

Nearby Medellín, especially in the east, are many beautiful villages in nature that are worth a visit (e.g. San Rafael). Bus travels easily possible. Cheap flight to other parts of the country as well, but if you're still planning to frequently fly in the country in this day and age you should be ashamed of yourself.

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

I loved the village of Concepción! Also Isla Fuerte was amazing and not very known. Colombia has countless hidden gems.

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

Lots of good restaurants and parties in the city. Ask for MIEO (Medellín international exchange organization). This is a organization by international students that host many activities every week, and an easy starting point if you want to get to know people in the city.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

The language was the biggest challenge for me, as speaking 100% of the time in a foreign language incapacitates your ability to express yourself comfortably. But it's a great way to quickly learn a language.

What was your best memory abroad?

So many things! Go travel the country before or after your exchange! It's absolutely beautiful in every way!

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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