



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

<b>Study programme WUR</b>	Internationale Ontwikkelingsstudies BIN
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	08/08 until 02/12
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	Universidad Nacional de Colombia
<b>Faculty</b>	Facultad Humanas & Facultad de Derecho, Ciencias Políticas y Sociales
<b>Country</b>	Colombia
<b>City</b>	Bogotá

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

For me personally, I have always wanted to go on an exchange period in my bachelors. Like a kid's dream 😊 Being in a different country/environment still unknown and different than my own country, always gives me a certain energy and enthusiasm for life. Plus the additional fact that it would be financially supported with the grant, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to be able to live in a different country for a period!

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

In a gap year I travelled to Central America and loved the culture, I expected Colombia to be comparable in that. So when I saw it was an opportunity to move there for a semester it felt like the perfect option! The country really spoke to me, and the university still had different locations throughout the country. Bogotá had the study options that spoke to me the most, so therefore I chose that city.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

The sad part about this is that the only way to reach it is with plane. So my sustainability heart bleeds.

## 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	Seminario Ambiental	6	Environmental human-nature conflict, political ecology, holistic thinking	5	We even went on a fieldtrip which was an amazing experience, the teacher Ana Patricia was really passionate.
2	Colombia Contemporánea	6	Contemporary Colombia, Role of State, Issues in society (gender/violence)	3.5	The teacher was, again, very driven and we had a lot of democratic discussions. The themes of state and government in a historic setting sometimes interested me a bit less.
3	Accion Colectiva y Movimientos Sociales	6	Social movements, protests, role of violence, specific theme of prisons	5	A lot of papers to read, but super interesting (think about Marx and Fanon) – very driven and passionate professor.
4	Etnologia en Colombia	6	Critical view on anthropology and how to do it	4	More philosophical perspective on anthropology – talking and discussing about papers.
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### What is it like to study there?

What interested me the most is that there was such a non-hierarchical position with students and teachers. There was much more room for criticism and discussion. The classes that we had were 3 or 4 hours, in which the themes and the literature was thoroughly discussed. The papers to read were usually between 20-100 pages (quite a lot) and there was more diversity in types of papers to read. Not just the research papers (as at the wur) but a lot of poetry, stories, or theories of famous thinkers were discussed. There was a more holistic view on nature-human interaction, more room for indigenous knowledge, very critical university when thinking about decolonialisation, capitalism, etc.

### What is the culture of the university?

Well, little did I know before arriving, but the UNAL sede Bogotá is known for its ultra-leftist bubble. Everywhere at the university there are political murals to be found, there is salsa music at campus, there are lots of little stalls hosted by students where you can buy food or drinks (empanadas y tinto!). Students like to spend a lot of time at campus, this is their little safe space. On Thursday nights there are parties-rave-gatherings at uni where people play games, drink and dance.

**What does the university offer students additionally?**

The university offers an introduction week for new exchange students. There is also a canteen, a free gym at university, and they offer online Spanish Classes. However, because of bad communication with the university in the application process (this was a negative critique) I could not join in the introduction week.

## 5. Housing-travelling-living

**What are the possibilities for housing?**

The university does not arrange housing for you, you have to do this on your own. I lived in a shared house of Co-Living organisation, young working people or students, international and Colombian. There were more than enough options to find housing

**What is the culture of the country like?**

You have to adapt a bit if you will start a semester in Bogota. The classes of uni sometimes start at 7, that means getting up at time. The sun always comes up at around 5h30 and goes down around 18h00. There is the rainy season, around October-November, when there is a bit more rain, even though Bogotá itself is quite rainy already. However, when the sun shines, it is super hot because of the altitude of the city. People get up really early, and have lunch outside of their houses. There is a really good menu del dia where you get soup, a drink and a full meal for just 3 euros. At night people eat something small and don't really walk the streets when it is dark because of safety reasons. The country is very laid-back, when your class starts at 7am it actually starts at 7h15 or 7h30 and the teacher and students all arrive later (don't bring your dutch punctuality). People are super welcoming and helpful, super kind and invite you for activities if you don't know each other that well yet. The country and the attitude of the people is way less individualist but a more communal way of living, as shown in people giving you hugs and kisses when they see you, and nicknames as 'amor, reinita'. Plus the nature is incredible but I won't be able to explain everything Colombia has to offer.

**Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?**

In Bogota they have the Transmilenio system, which are large busses that kind of function like a metro. Also sometimes – depending on the distance – there is a good walkability. At night because of safety it is better to take an uber or motor taxi uber which are very good price.

## 6. Expenses

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

My housing was a shared house, gorgeous kitchen, super kind roommates, via the organisation Co-Living Bogotá (Facebook). It was about 12-15 square meters and I paid 200 euros per month. Daily expenses are a lot less, so that enables weekly or bi-weekly trips. In the Semana Universitaria where there were no classes, we went to the coast to travel around. Bus prices are really good, you pay about 20 euros for a 10hour night bus.

Ticket there: 1000 euros for return ticket  
Visa if applicable: No Visa Needed  
Vaccinations if applicable: Hepatitis A and B, Yellow Fever, DTP (check it online)  
Insurances (extra, if applicable): Regular worldwide travel insurance  
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation: 200euros/month, shared housing with 10 roommates  
Groceries: Lot of lunch/snacks outside of the house, grocery shopping for cooking is around 50-100 eur per month  
Public transport: 0.80 cents every trip you make with Transmi bus, monthly around 20eur  
Restaurant/going out for dinner: Fancy restaurant in fancy areas around 10-20 euros, local place 5-10 euros  
Daytrips/sight-seeing: Because trips are cheaper, you do them a lot. Around 100-200 euros per month.

### **Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

## **7. Free time**

### **What are must-sees in the area?**

Closer areas to Bogotá are Villa de Leyva (3-4 hours by bus). A great way to escape the city for a day and get into nature is Parque Ecologico Matteradonda (it's a paramo ecosystem).

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

We also went on a lot of weekend-trips with night busses. Think about towns like Cali, Medellin (loved that one) and we went on a weekend trip to Pereira ("small medellin") with roommates. Less famous: the pueblito of Guadalupe in Santander, had super lovely people and the mountains were quiet and beautiful. Departamento de Huila is also stunning, different dryer climate, go to the town of La Jagua for Halloween during the festival de Brujas. And of course the coast! From the city Santa Marta in the Caribbean coast you can visit Taganga Beach, go to Minca for coffee plantations, go to Palomino for even more beach. Also the Pacific Coast is amazing, to go to Juanchaco or Nuqui, totally different vibe and people.

### **Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?**

In Colombia and general and also Bogotá there is a very big dancing-nightlife scene. In Bogotá for example there is Parkway, a hipster ("gentrified") area with nice places. Also calle 45 there are good bars. The best night club is the biggest queer club in Latin-America called Theatrón. Also there is a very big techno community in Bogotá. And learn salsa!!

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

For me the hardest part was getting used to being apart from your partner (long distance is hard) but also the language. When I arrived my Spanish was not yet fluent, far from it, and this made me very insecure in meeting people and communicating with roommates. However because of the Spanish classes and papers you have to read, you learn it super quickly, even more if you have a lot of Colombian friends.

### What is your best memory of your time abroad?

All the super kind people I met. Everyone is so super inviting and warm, I was super lucky with my roommates that the second weekend invited me to go with them to a camping-trip. I had really inspiring teachers and learnt a lot of the spontaneity and warmth of the country and its people. The nature there is incredible, and for example during a hike to a waterfall close to bogotá there are people giving you fresh homemade bread just out of a willingness of sharing their culture. It made me really excited to go back so planned a gap year to go back and visit all the friends I made.

## 9. Contact details (optional)

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