



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student information

<b>Study programme WU</b>	Bachelor Environmental Science
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	05/08/2024 until 16/12/2024
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	Kasetsart University
<b>Faculty</b>	Tropical Agriculture
<b>Country</b>	Thailand
<b>City</b>	Bangkok

## 2. Motivation for exchange

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

I always planned to go on an exchange outside of Europe or America because I wanted to see and experience cultures I was not yet familiar with. I also saw it as an opportunity to see how environmental issues and sustainability were interpreted in other regions of the world.

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

My academic reason was that I learned from my courses that South Asia will become more relevant and important geopolitically and environmentally due to its growing population, rapid development, and increased climate change-related impacts, so I wanted to gain first-hand experience of the current situation. My personal reason was that I was very drawn by the food and rich culture which I had heard so much about but never had a chance to experience.

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

It was the only university available in the country, so if I had more options, I would have chosen based on the university's reputation and the provided courses. However, I was interested enough in the courses provided at Kasetsart University that I still decided to apply.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I recommend downloading the "Grab" or "Bolt" app before you arrive in Thailand. Once you arrive at the airport (assuming most students will fly there), you can easily use the apps to call a taxi to your hotel or dormitory. It is safer and often cheaper than using local taxis.

## 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
<b>1</b>	Principles of Agroforestry and Management	6	The course focuses on analyzing land use in the tropics, emphasizing agroforestry concepts, classification and ecosystem perspectives.	4	The professor was very friendly and passionate about the subject he was teaching.
<b>2</b>	Tropical Entomology	6	The course explores tropical ecosystems and insect diversity, focusing on the effects of environmental factors and global warming on insect communities. During lab hours, students learn the names and characteristics of tropical insects.	4	This course required the most studying and memorization but personally, it was surprisingly interesting.
<b>3</b>	Principle in Agricultural Extension	6	The course covers extension systems, innovation diffusion, knowledge management, sustainable development, communication techniques, value addition, change management, and collaboration psychology.	5	I never knew about agricultural extension before I took this course, but as someone who is interested in filling the knowledge gap between academics and local citizens, it was very interesting.
<b>4</b>	Introduction to Tropical Agriculture	6	The course focuses on natural resources, agricultural systems and practices, and socio-economic patterns with a	4	This course was nice for getting a general overview of agriculture in the tropics.

			focus on Southeast Asia.		
<b>5</b>	Principles of Tropical Agronomy	6	The course covers cropping systems, soil and nutrient management, irrigation, weed control, seed production, harvest and post-harvest management, advancements in tropical agronomy research and technology.	3	I was least interested in this course because my interest is not really in farming. But I did get to raise a sugarcane as part of a project so that was fun. (It grew 2.5 m in 4 months)

**b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):**

No. When the semester begins, we are given a timetable of all the English courses we can take. The challenging part is finding enough courses that are not introductory (so mostly for 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> years) to get a sufficient number of credits.

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

Not really. I am interested in learning about environmental science and sustainability holistically (social science and natural science). The program provided at Kasetsart University for Environmental Science students is "Tropical Agriculture" which mostly focuses on agriculture science and issues in the tropics. Although learning about agriculture broadened my perspective, and we covered interesting topics such as sustainable development in developing countries, I would have liked to learn more about the current situation and role of the natural environment in Southeast Asia.

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

It depends on the course. Most courses were relatively easy to understand and follow. However, for some courses such as Tropical Entomology and Introduction to Tropical Agriculture, there was a lot of content to memorize such as the names of insect species and the breed names of common livestock.

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

Yes. Though the courses provided were a bit different from my initial fields of focus, I was able to broaden my knowledge and make new networks with students and professors who specialised in fields related to environmental science. I also had the opportunity to go on field trips in most of my courses, where I had fun with fellow Thai and international students and went to factories or farms that I would not have had the opportunity to go to otherwise.

**f. What is it like to study there?**

The number of students depends on the course, with about 15 to 30 students in total. The classes are mostly lectures with lecture slides, lasting about 3 hours long and have a 10-minute break. Some classes have assignments every now and then, and most courses have a report or presentation towards the end. There is a mid-term and final exam, but it is not very difficult to get a good grade as long as you participate and study reasonably.

**g. What is the culture of the university?**

The lecturers are very friendly and easy to talk to. They are sometimes hard to find physically outside of class but they are more than happy to answer questions or help out when students ask directly (during breaks or after class) or online. Thai students can be a bit shy, but they are very friendly so if you talk to them, you can make friends easily. Unlike WUR, the semester schedule and exam times are different for the courses taught in Thai and English, and there are not many opportunities to interact with students from other

faculties so if you want to make connections with many Thai students or people from other faculties, you have to be more outgoing.

#### **h. What does the university offer students additionally?**

The university has free shuttle bus services that run from morning to evening between faculties and dormitories. It has a sports facility that is a bit difficult to find, but students can learn Muay Thai or use the running track and gym for free (Some gyms at the university have a fee). Coin laundry machines and free drinking water are available in the dormitories. Tap water is not safe to drink at any place, so always get water from free drinking stations at the dormitory or faculty buildings or buy some at convenience stores.

## **5. Housing-traveling-living**

#### **a. What are the possibilities for housing?**

Students can ask the university to stay in their international student dormitories. As soon as the request is made, the students have to provide/sign the necessary documents within 24 hours so be careful. I know some students stayed in private apartments or condos, and while they are not costly compared to prices in the Netherlands, many places require a half-year or full-year contract so it might be difficult to find a good place.

#### **b. What is the culture like?**

Most of the local food is spicy but if you say "mai pet" (no spice) for some dishes they will make it non-spicy. When crossing the road, the pedestrians do not have priority so don't be surprised if the cars, bikes, and buses don't slow down. Make sure to cross with caution or just follow the locals.

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

Inside the campus, there are free shuttle buses running from morning to evening (Also from the dormitories to the faculties). To travel from outside the campus to the university, the BTS train system is most useful, costing about 0.40 to 1.40 Euros depending on how far the student lives.

## **6. Expenses**

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

<b>Category</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
Travelling there	400 to 550€ (from Amsterdam by plane)
Visa - if applicable	70€ (Initial 90 days) + 50€ (Extension)
Vaccinations - if applicable	NA
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	NA (AON global coverage)

Daytrips/sight-seeing	10 to 60€ (depends on activity)
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	About 150€ for student dorm
Grocery costs per month	0€ (No kitchen so no cooking)
Public transport costs per month	About 7€
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	150 to 170€ (All food costs)

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

Generally, everything is much cheaper than in the Netherlands. This includes food, transport, accommodation and other daily expenses. The only time price levels are about equal to the Netherlands is for luxury experiences such as rooftop bars/clubs, buying branded items, or joining guided tours.

**c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

For reference, I spent about 350€ per month on average for all expenses (accommodation, food, and entertainment). Most student accommodation does not have a kitchen; even when there is a kitchen, most students do not cook. This is because buying food from local restaurants, food stalls around campus, and convenience stores (such as 7/11) is significantly cheaper and time-saving compared to buying groceries and cooking for oneself.

## 7. Free time

**a. What are must-sees in the area?**

I recommend going to Ayutthaya and Pattaya for nearby travel. I travelled by making use of tour companies or grab taxis because it was relatively cheap (Public transport is difficult to navigate or very slow for long distances). I made plans pretty spontaneously but was able to see a lot and enjoy for a reasonable price.

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

There are many weekly markets in and around the university campus. Some are there only on certain days of the week or at certain times of the day. Each market has different Thai local foods or desserts for a much lower price than in the city centre or famous markets, so I recommend checking them out. You might find special Thai delicacies that you won't easily find in other places like I did.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

A big challenge was having to extend my visa after 90 days in Thailand. We have to send a request for documents to the Kasetsart University International College (KUIC) Office, pick up the documents, and bring them to the immigration bureau to get an official

extension. The immigration bureau is only open during weekdays, and because of long lines and wait time, it takes about 3 to 6 hours. I was lucky enough to have a weekday free of classes to go but if you have to skip a class to go, don't forget to notify your professor.

Also, Thailand requires educational visa holders to officially cancel their visa before leaving the country, regardless of the expiry date. So, you have to do the same process as a visa extension to have your visa cancelled or else the next time you enter Thailand, you may be fined or banned from getting an educational visa. Thankfully, the cancelling process does not take as long as the visa extension (about 2 to 3 hours).

#### **b. Best memory?**

I became very close with the members of the Muay Thai boxing club. After a week-long boxing competition, I helped them clean up the stage and move the equipment, so they invited me to an after-party barbecue where we sang, got drunk, ate a lot of local foods, climbed a coconut tree and had lots of fun. I made many new Thai friends and met international students from other faculties. It was one of my best memories in Thailand.

### **9. Contact details**

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