



INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR PHD CANDIDATES

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1. Foreword

Dear PhD candidate,

Welcome to Wageningen, our small but very fine little town where you will be spending the next months and years of your life! We can imagine that the first days and weeks here are very exciting for you: full of emotions, new impressions and ideas, but also questions, confusion and probably a long list of things you need to organize and find out. We have all been there. And be assured: we have all mastered it.

To make this first phase of your PhD research as easy and as little confusing as possible we – the WASS PhD Council – have compiled this information package for you. It contains general information about Wageningen University and Research (WUR) to give you an idea of the larger institution and community you now form part of, but it also contains practical information about the first steps to take in your PhD journey.

We hope that it helps you to orient yourself and know where to go for what. In any case, please also approach us with any other question you might have. We are here to support you!

Last but not least, we just want to give you a very warm welcome to our Wageningen Social Sciences School (WASS) community. We are happy to have you here and hope to meet you in person or virtually very soon. The PhD journey is exciting because of many reasons, and the interaction with other fellow PhDs is surely one of it.

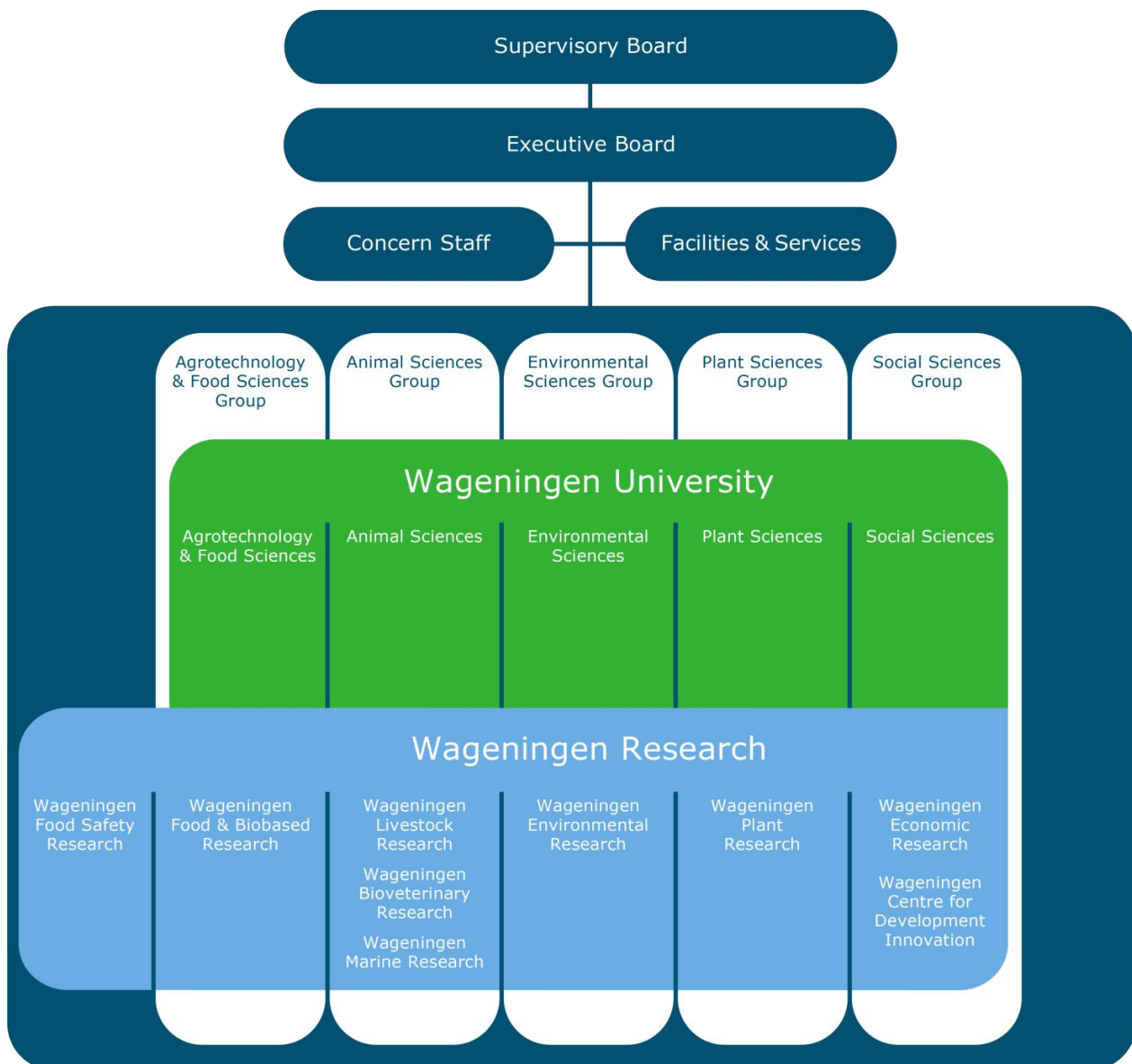
Take care and see you soon!

Your WASS PhD Council

2. Organizational structure Wageningen University

Wageningen UR

Wageningen University (WU) is part of Wageningen University and Research (WUR), a collaboration between Wageningen University and the Wageningen Research Foundation. With its 6.500 staff members, more than 12.000 students, and 2.200 PhD candidates, the WUR is an internationally leading knowledge institute with the mission "to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life". It conducts pioneering research and innovative teaching programs in the areas of nutrition and food production, natural resources and the living environment, and health, lifestyle and well-being.



Sciences Groups

Wageningen University consists of one faculty with five sciences groups: Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group, Animal Sciences Group, Environmental Sciences Group, Plant Sciences Group, and Social Sciences Group. Each of these sciences groups specializes in specific research fields, although co-operation between the different sciences groups exists, especially in interdisciplinary research.

Chair Groups

Within each of the sciences groups at Wageningen University there are several chair groups. These chair groups consist of several staff with fixed and with tenured contracts, each with separate research agendas and education duties. In all cases a professor heads a chair group and the chair group employs staff members, postdocs and PhD candidates. PhD candidates are related to one, or in some cases two, chair group(s). Most day-to-day contact during your stay in Wageningen will be with other people in your chair group.

Graduate schools

Each graduate school of Wageningen University has the task to stimulate and coordinate the development of a coherent university research program according to the thematic identity of the graduate school. Furthermore, it has the task to safeguard, monitor and stimulate the quality and progress of academic research of PhD candidates, postdocs, and staff.

Wageningen University hosts six graduate schools. All PhD candidates of Wageningen University must be registered at one of the graduate schools. Each candidate decides together with the supervisors which graduate school best suits the candidate and the project he or she will be doing. In some cases candidates are member of two graduate schools.

The graduate school of the social sciences is called 'Wageningen School of Social Sciences' (WASS). WASS promotes research that increases our understanding of social processes and designs practices around challenges in the domains of food, agriculture, environment, health and development. The researchers who participate in WASS are based in 25 chair groups of the Department of Social Sciences and the Department of Environmental Sciences, as well as in two Wageningen Research Institutes.

PhD Councils

Each graduate school has a PhD Council composed of 4 to 6 PhD candidates that act as representatives of all PhD candidates from that graduate school.

Representatives from the different PhD Councils together form the Wageningen PhD Council (WPC).

This information package has been developed by the WASS PhD Council. The objectives of the WASS PhD Council are:

- To offer a discussion- and networking-platform for all WASS PhD candidates
- To represent PhD candidates in the WASS Board (graduate school level), the WASS Education Committee (department level), as well as in the Wageningen PhD Council (university level) and different ad-hoc committees
- To advise, update and inform WASS PhD candidates and WASS committees on urgent and relevant matters
- To organize the PhD Day and other workshops
- To organize a walk-in hour for PhD candidates every first Monday of the month, informal meetings and social activities.

Check out our [website](#) and join the [Intranet group](#), where we will keep you posted. Furthermore, each chair group has a PhD representative whom you can also approach directly.

Type of PhD candidates

At Wageningen University, several types of PhD candidates exist. The type may have implications for the expected length of stay in Wageningen, salary and co-operation with other universities. The most common types of PhD candidates are:

Research assistant (AIO/OIO)

Research assistants are PhD candidates who are temporarily employed at Wageningen University for a full-time period of four years. In the Netherlands they were formerly known as AIO (*assistent in opleiding*, assistant in training) or OIO (*onderzoeker in opleiding*, researcher in training).

Sandwich PhD candidate

Sandwich PhD candidates are international PhD candidates who only spend a part of their time at Wageningen University. Generally, they start the PhD program with a stay of several months at Wageningen University to prepare their research proposal. Following this period, the PhD candidate conducts the larger part of the research at the home institute and finishes the dissertation during a second stay of several months at Wageningen University.

Guest PhD candidate

Guest PhD candidates conduct research at Wageningen University but are not employed by Wageningen University. Generally, they conduct the major part of their research program at one specific chair group in a four-year period. The research program is financed by an external source.

External PhD candidate

External PhD candidates are not employed by Wageningen University. They conduct their research at an institute outside the university. A distinction is made between candidates with and without a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP)

Staff PhD candidate

Staff PhD candidates are employees of Wageningen University who are given the opportunity of a PhD program. Depending on the funding source of the research program, a distinction is made between:

- WU & PhD & staff: Funding by Wageningen University
- NWO & PhD & staff: Funding by NWO (the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research)
- Other & PhD & staff: Funding by external source

Regardless of the contract type you will have, the education within the PhD program of WASS will follow the same requirements, except for those without a TSP.

Human Resource Management

Any PhD candidate with fixed term employment at Wageningen University falls within the jurisdiction of the Human Resources Management (HRM) department of their respective sciences group (in the case of WASS: the Social or Environmental Sciences Group). The HRM department is responsible for recruitment, management and advice of employees. They can be contacted for advice concerning matters such as legal registration forms, supervision problems or other personnel issues.

When a PhD candidate with fixed term employment (i.e., research assistant) is appointed, a meeting with the personnel advisor of the HRM department is scheduled in order to inform the new employee about the working conditions. In the Netherlands, there is a Collective Employment Agreement (CAO) for university employees, which can be found at <https://www.vsnu.nl/cao-universiteiten.html>. Apart from this, Wageningen University has drawn up specific regulations concerning its PhD candidates with a temporary contract. The research assistant regulations of Wageningen University can be found at <https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Categories-of-PhD-Candidates/Research-Assistants.htm>

3. Overview of the PhD program

Important Documents

There are various rules and regulations, protocols and guides regarding the PhD programme. You can find the most recent and important documents on the following page: <https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Regulations.htm>. We strongly advise to have a look at the Doctoral Degree Regulations.

The timetable provides a valuable overview of the steps of your PhD Programme. In addition, there are often deadlines with regard to housing, tickets, insurance and visa related matters. You can find the timetable here: <https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/timetable.htm>

Training and Supervision Plan (TSP)

The PhD program at Wageningen University offers tailor-made education. The content of this part of your PhD program is outlined in your Training and Supervision Plan (TSP). This document is drawn up by you and your supervisor(s), in consultation with your graduate school. It contains agreements on educational activities, teaching duties and supervision, so you and your supervisor know what to expect from each other.

The training plan, allows you the opportunity to take time for learning during your PhD (up to 15% of your time, according to labour agreements). An approved TSP provides access to an **individual education budget of €3500** (also called the “backpack”).

There are different courses that you can take as a PhD. These could be discipline related PhD courses, general skills and competence courses or (research) master courses. Next to courses, part of the TSP can be filled by other activities such as international conferences, writing the PhD proposal, PhD discussion groups, research seminars and visiting research groups abroad. Basically, the major requirement for a TSP is that learning activities have to be followed with a minimum of 30 ECTS and a maximum of 45 ECTS (1 ECTS represents a study-load of 28 hours).

You can find detailed information and the TSP format on the [WASS TSP site](#). The TSP must be signed by you, your supervisor and the chair of your Graduate School Education Committee within six months after the start of your PhD program. Before submitting the final signed version of the TSP, PhD candidates are recommended to send a draft version to the WASS PhD Program Manager by email (Fennie van Straalen, fennie.vanstraalen@wur.nl). The WASS Program Manager will assess whether the TSP suits your specific needs and whether the elements form a balanced training plan. Once approved by the PhD Program Manager and supervisors, the final signed TSP should be sent, both by e-mail

and in hard copy, to the secretariat of WASS: wass@wur.nl.

In addition, PhD candidates with an approved TSP are eligible for reduced fees (generally 50%) on WASS and WGS courses. Often, the same reduction applies for courses organized by the other graduate schools of Wageningen University.

In the course of time the TSP can be adapted, the plan remains flexible. Each year the WASS Office contacts the candidate by way of a **monitoring form**, to discuss the PhD-process and the training plan with the supervisor. The form aids the conversation with the supervisor and helps you to (re)set goals during your PhD-trajectory. It is a crucial moment to discuss plans you have with your supervisors (not only the *content* of your project, but also the *process*). You may want to use the conversation to discuss expectations with regard to supervision, feedback, or co-authorship. If WASS feels that the content of the monitoring form requires a follow up in person, they contact the PhD candidate. For example this would include, the PhD-candidate is getting delayed, the supervisor and PhD candidate seems to have reached an impasse, in order to offer support to the PhD-candidate.

After you have completed the educational component of the TSP you are required to send a written request to your graduate school to receive an **Educational Certificate**. This request must be submitted at least fifteen weeks prior to the public defense of your PhD thesis. The thesis should contain an overview of all the education activities you participated in. You will receive the Education Certificate after your thesis defense. WASS also sends a reminder in time for you to submit your file to WASS.

Registering for courses

Registration procedures vary from course to course. Some general information about course registration can be found in this section. Make sure that you check carefully per course how the registration procedure works, and in which period you can participate. For most courses, a project number or "kostenplaatsnummer" is needed for registration (the number of where your backpack is allocated). Ask the secretary of your chair group for these numbers.

Type of courses:

- *MSc courses and research master courses*

To gain disciplinary or methodological knowledge, MSc level courses can be followed. A specific type of master courses are the courses provided in the 'research master variant'. This research master variant offers courses that are specifically aimed to prepare students for PhD research. This makes these courses suitable for PhD candidates as well.

To register for master courses, check out [the different steps you need to take](#). An alternative for registering is sending an e-mail to the course coordinator.

– *Domain-specific PhD courses by WASS*

WASS provides domain-specific PhD courses for which you can register online via the [website](#).

– *General skills courses*

General skill courses are offered by Wageningen Graduate Schools. You can find [more information about these courses online](#).

– *Library courses*

The library also has some general skill courses on for example information literacy or EndNote. For more information on the library courses, check the [library course website](#).

– *Language courses*

You can apply for courses that are provided by the language centre online, via [Wageningen in'to Languages](#).

– *External courses, workshops, summer schools*

WASS also stimulates PhD candidates to follow courses at other universities or institutes. Please, discuss your specific needs with your supervisor and do not hesitate to choose courses offered outside WUR. A database with external courses can be found at the bottom of the following page:

<https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Courses.htm>

Registration procedures for external courses differ from course to course, so make sure you find out about the procedures yourself via course websites.

Go/no-go decision

At the start of the project, PhD candidates at Wageningen University get an appointment or contract for 18 months. At the end of this period there is an official evaluation, followed by a go/no-go decision. The go/no-go decision is an official assessment from the supervisors regarding the capacity of the candidate to carry out research. A go decision implies that the appointment or contract is extended (in most cases with another 30 months). In the case of a no-go decision, the appointment will not be extended, and the PhD project will be ended.

Note: The go/no-go decision has to be taken at the latest at 15 months after the beginning of the initial contract. For the go/no go decision WASS Office will distribute a special form that supervisors have to complete.

4. Housing, finances & contact information

Due to the ever-increasing number of students, finding a nice room in Wageningen within a reasonable time is not always easy. As a PhD candidate/employee you are entitled to apply for student housing, but you have to do it through the secretary of your chair group.

Some useful links:

- Information about housing at the website of Wageningen UR
<https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Moving-to-Wageningen/housing-for-phds.htm>
- Idealis (student housing agency)
<https://www.idealise.nl/en/i-am-looking-for-a-room/this-is-how-it-works/how-do-i-find-my-room-in-wageningen-or-ed>
- Housing Desk Wageningen (A non-commercial housing agency for students and PhD Candidates <http://www.housingdeskwageningen.nl/>)
- Facebook groups, such as Wageningen Student Housing
- For short stays check: <https://www.shortstaywageningen.nl/>
- Student housing, real estate agencies (fees apply for most of them) and other
<http://kamernet.nl/home/>
<http://www.kamerhuren.nl/en/>
<http://www.kamertje.nl/>
<https://www.expatrientalsholland.com/>
<http://www.funda.nl/huur/wageningen/>
<http://www.directwonen.nl/>
<https://www.rotsvast.nl/>
<https://www.duwo.nl/>
<http://easy-apartments-to-rent.com/>

Backpack

Each PhD candidate with an approved TSP gets a budget of € 3,500 for expenses during their PhD project. It can be used for a variety of expenses, such as

- Course fees (some courses are free, others have fees)
- Summer schools/workshops (travelling, accommodation, fees)
- Expenses made for conferences (travelling, accommodation, fees)

In some cases it is possible to get extra funding to cover expenses, for instance by applying for specific scholarships. You can find more information on sources for extra funding in the PhD guide and your supervisors might be able to point out potential sources of extra budget.

WASS funding and others

WASS offers funds for a number of activities that you can organize on your own initiative, in coordination with your supervisor. They provide a great possibility to get the most out of your PhD! The funds can be used for:

1. Thematic activities
2. Short stays abroad at prestigious university or research institutes
3. PhD excursions organized by PhD candidates of at least two WASS chair groups

For more information, check the [details on the WASS website](#) and take initiative! We as the WASS PhD Council are also happy to facilitate the organization of such activities, for example if you would like to organize an excursion and look for partners to do so.

If you want to do an internship or organize a stay at another research institution within Europe, the Erasmus+ grant is also a great opportunity for additional funding. It will not cover many costs but can certainly be a good supplement (the amount of the grant varies between countries but can be up to €480 per month). For more information, check the [Erasmus+ website of Wageningen University](#).

Contact information

In case of serious trouble about your project, do not keep quiet but seek help as soon as possible. Esther Roquas and Fennie van Straalen are confidential advisors; you may contact them at any time for confidential advice and support. Please find her contact details below as well as other helpful contacts throughout your PhD period.

WASS Office

	Heleen Danen Management Assistant: Courses and all general questions E: heleen.danen@wur.nl T: +31 (0) 317 482923 Leeuwenborch, room 1048
	Marcella Haan Information Management Administrator and Management Assistant E: marcella.haan@wur.nl T: +31 (0) 317 484126 Leeuwenborch, room 1048
	Esther Roquas Executive Secretary E: esther.roquas@wur.nl T: +31 (0) 317 484334 Leeuwenborch, room 1047

	<p>Fennie van Straalen PhD Program Manager E: fennie.vanstraalen@wur.nl T: +31 (0)317 484116 Leeuwenborch, room 1046</p>
	<p>WASS Office Secretariat E: wass@wur.nl T: +31 (0) 317 484126 or +31 (0) 317 482923 Leeuwenborch, room 1048</p>

WASS PhD Council

You can find more information on the WASS PhD Council on our [Website](#).

Also join our Intranet Group to always stay up to date:

<https://intranet.wur.nl/Project/WASSPhDcouncil>

SSG Liaison Office (registration with department, PhD contract for non AIO/OIO PhD candidates)

- Nalini Gangabisoensingh (E: nalini.gangabisoensingh@wur.nl; T: +31 (0)317 482256)

PhD Services (formal admission to the PhD programme)

- Vacancy (E: phd.services@wur.nl; T: +31 (0)317 486020) Note: You may contact her for information regarding residence permits.

Human Resources Management (personnel affairs for AIO/OIO PhD candidates)

Do you have a HR question and would you like to know who to call or send an email? Please have a look at an overview of your HR colleagues [here](#).

Confidential Counselor Social Sciences Group

- Sietze Vellema (E: sietze.vellema@WUR.nl; T: +31 (0) 317 484754)
 - Piety Runhaar (E: piety.runhaar@wur.nl; T: +31 (0) 317 486316)
- If you experience undesired behavior of any type you can contact the confidential counselor. The confidential counselor deals with undesired behavior, whereas the confidential advisor deals with work-related problems. The confidential counselor never takes actions without permission of the PhD candidate, but most of the time she gives advice without taking action at all.

PhD Advisors WASS

- Esther Roquas (E: esther.roquas@wur.nl; T: +31 (317) 484334)
 - Fennie van Straalen (E: fennie.vanstraalen@wur.nl; T: +31 (317) 484116)
- PhD candidates who face problems during their PhD programme can contact the PhD advisor(s) of their own graduate school. The PhD advisor gives confidential advice and coaching on how to tackle the problem or challenge, and when needed may direct the PhD candidate to other advice, support or counselling bodies within or outside the university. When needed and approved by the PhD candidate, the PhD advisor may take action to help the PhD candidate solve the problem.

Tips from the PhD Council

1. In your first week you will get a WUR card, which will enable you to print and make copies, use the coffee and tea machine. The card is also your "ID" when you are in the building outside office hours. In some buildings the WUR card is needed to enter the building even during normal office hours. Ask your secretary to arrange a WUR card.
2. A bike is an essential part of the experience of living in Wageningen; so, you may consider buying it in your first week. Some chair groups have bikes to temporarily lend to its members. You can look for a bike (new or second hand) in bicycles shops, or in advertisements on boards around the campus.
3. A website on safe cycling in Wageningen has been developed to inform foreign (PhD) students on cycling rules, facilities etcetera, see <http://www.cyclinginwageningen.nl>.
4. Many PhD courses have waiting lists. So, make sure you think about courses you want to take in advance, and apply for them on time.
5. Please note that the academic calendar mostly applies to BSc and MSc courses. PhD courses and general courses usually set their own starting date and length which not necessarily fits in the periods of the academic calendar.
6. Most MSc courses are for free. For PhD courses with a course fee you can sometimes get a 50% discount when you have an approved TSP. Even if your TSP has not been approved yet, you may ask authorization of WASS to answer 'yes' for this discount option.
7. To get a glance on the locations of the university buildings, you can have a look at https://www.wur.nl/upload_mm/3/6/7/f0692778-b63a-4122-a11a-fe8ad4f57813_bewegwijzering%20plattegrond%20met%20legenda%20zonder%20logo.pdf
8. Research Assistants need to register their working hours in 'MyProjects'. Ask your secretary for more information. PhD candidates that are 'on contract' and receive external funding do not have to register their working hours.
9. Want to learn some Dutch? The International Student Organization ISOW offers free Dutch classes. Check out their website: <https://www.isow-wageningen.com/courses>. Other language course are offered by Wageningen in'to Languages.
10. All PhD candidates qualify for sports rights for Sport Centre De Bongerd (the sport centre specifically for WUR students and employees). In order to make use of these sport rights you need to activate them on your WUR Card. After filling in the official form, you can sport at De Bongerd for a reduced fee. More information can be found on: <https://www.wur.nl/en/sports-centre-de-bongerd.htm>

5. Must-sees in Wageningen (and surrounding areas)

History & culture

- Sculpture gallery The Depot with many sculptures situated in a beautiful arboretum garden, De Dreijen, <https://www.hetdepot.nl/en/Home>
- Museum De Casteelse Poort, host the history of Wageningen from the medieval period to modern times, <https://www.casteelsepoort.nl/>
- Het Wallenpad, a walk from the city centre along the city walls and moat, allows you to see interesting historical features of Wageningen.
- Hotel the Wereld was the location where the capitulation of the German Occupation of the Netherlands during WWII was made official on the 5th of May 1945. Hotel De Wereld and the related National Liberation Monument are located in the city centre of Wageningen. Further interested in the history of the Netherlands during WWII? Visit:
 - Airborne Museum at Hartenstein, Oosterbeek <https://www.airbornemuseum.nl/en/home>
 - Airborne Cemetery WII, Oosterbeek
 - Military Cemetery WWII Grebbeberg, Rhenen

Nature & outdoor

- Wageningen has several botanical gardens that you can visit:
 - Botanical gardens Belmonte, <https://www.botanischetuinen.nl/en/gardens/belmonte-arboretum>
 - Arboretum De Dreijen, <https://www.hetdepot.nl/en/Arboreta/General-information>
 - Arboretum Oostereng, https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g616255-d13899563-Reviews-Arboretum_Oostereng-Wageningen_Gelderland_Province.html
- Wageningen is located at a crossroad of different landscape types – Riverine landscape, woodlands and open heathland. Most of the areas contain signposts for hiking or cycling. Some suggestions:
 - *De Blauwe Kamer*, a nature area where numerous birds can be found, with long and short walks. It can be reached by bicycle within twenty minutes from Wageningen, <https://www.utrechtslandschap.nl/blauwe-kamer>.
 - Binnenveld, a grassland and meadow area to the northwest of Wageningen.
 - The Wageningse Eng, a historical open agrarian landscape located on the side of the Wageningse Berg is very nice for walking tours, <http://wageningseeng.nl/>
 - You can visit the national park De Hoge Veluwe,

<https://www.hogeveluwe.nl/en>

- Bennekomse Bos, a mixed woodland to the east of Bennekom (a village north of Wageningen)
- Hoekelumse Bos, a country estate between Bennekom and Ede (North of Wageningen) that castle Hoekelum
- The estate Oranje Nassau's Oord and the Renkums Beekdal, both closely located to the village of Renkum (East of Wageningen). Oranje Nassau's Oord used to be the summer residence of King Willem III of the Netherlands. Renkums Beekdal is a nature area located between two creeks with an unique cultural historical past,
<https://www.renkumsbeekdal.nl/>

Foods & Drinks

- Wageningen knows a weekly market on the Markt around the Great Church, on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.
- The city centre of Wageningen knows several nice restaurants and pubs where you can have a nice meal or go for some drinks.

For more information, see also the Tourist Information Brochure "A Taste of Wageningen": <http://proefwageningen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Engelstalige-algemene-brochure-Proef-Wageningen-LR1.pdf>

Other cities

You can also visit several other Dutch cities by making use of public transport, for instance:

- [Utrecht](#) (30-45 min by bus/train).
- [Arnhem and/or Nijmegen](#) (20-30 min by bus).
- [Amsterdam](#) (60-75 min by bus/train).

We – the members of the WASS PhD Council - hope this information package helps you. If you have any feedback on the information package, please let us know by sending an e-mail to phdcouncil.wass@wur.nl.