

# From Rottenburg to the jungle

## Introduction

In summer 2014 I started my study of forestry in Rottenburg (HFR) and moved to Emmerich am Rhein in summer 2016 to continue with tropical forestry at the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Science (VHL) in Velp.

I want to share some experiences, give some insight on the study and university and contribute to the decision and preparation of future students for this specialization.

## Introduction week at VHL

Before the lectures start the student unions organize the introduction week. This week is not mandatory, and you should consider joining it if you like a week of camping in the school yard with hundreds of other students, having a tour through the city, mingling with others at the camp fire, visiting the different pubs in the city and experiencing the Dutch student parties.

You shouldn't expect to meet your new classmates. The introduction week is mainly for the students that are just starting their studies and you will join the class in their third year.

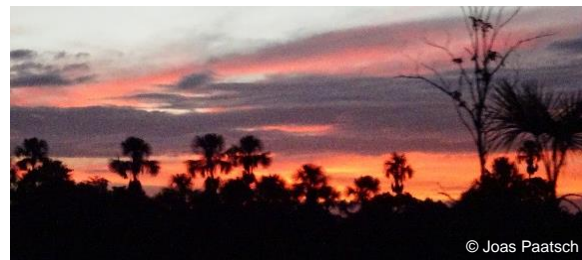


*Suriname River at Menimi vacantie resort*

## Year 3/1

At VHL one semester is divided into two periods. Each period consists of nine lecture weeks and exams at the end. After the third semester the students have to decide, which major they want to follow for the rest of their studies.

As mentioned before, you will join the third-year students in the major of tropical forestry (B3TF). Your class will already have had one semester of tropical forestry and therefore, the intersection of HFR and VHL isn't perfect.



*Dawn at Jan Starke Opleidings en Ontspanningscentrum, Suriname*

The lectures are in English and most of them are easy to follow because it doesn't build on the content of the former semester too much. The only challenging subject is Spanish because it is level A2 and, therefore, I highly recommend taking Spanish courses at HFR to join the class without having deficits.

An important part of studies at VHL are group assignments in each period. The results of these are part of the oral exams.

The first period of B3TF included lectures on Tropical Nature Management, Tropical Ecology, Geomorphology and Land use, GIS, Forest Policy, Communication and a project on Project Development.

The second period focused on tropical silviculture and included a three-week trip to Suriname for field research and training. The trip was perfect to add some real-life experience and practical exercises to the assignment of a sustainable management plan for the forest of a village in Suriname.

## Year 3/2 and 4/1

In the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semester you must do an internship and a minor. You can choose in which order you want to schedule them.

In the minor you have the chance to study a subject of your choice at any university. You are free to do whatever you are interested in, if it fulfills the requirements of VHL.

I chose to stay at the VHL in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester and take the first semester of tropical forestry (B2TF) to deepen my knowledge and gain more experience in tropical forestry.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> semester I did my internship in Uganda and worked on three projects with Ndejje University. I wrote a management plan for a 2,3 ha eucalyptus plantation, planned and implemented a 1 ha plantation with native trees and conducted a social survey analysing the effects of climate change on farmers.

## Sound preparation

If you chose to do tropical forestry or international timber trade at VHL you should consider the following things.

Erasmus+ is a good support for financing in the first year, especially because of the high tuition fees in the Netherlands.

I chose to live in Emmerich because my wife found work there and it was easier to find an affordable flat in Germany.

The train connection is good enough and with the train and bike it takes about an hour to university. But it is much easier to hang out with classmates if the distance to the housing isn't that far.

Although the lectures are in English it might be helpful to have some knowledge of the Dutch language because the classmates tend to switch to Dutch in the breaks. Dutch is somehow similar to German and English and therefore I am able to get the main points in Dutch discussions, but I would have done a language course if I had known how helpful that would have been.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me per mail.

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