Sustainable Student Guide
At the University of Groningen we welcome many new students every year. Because we think it’s important that our students are aware of the possibilities for sustainable living and studying in Groningen, and to help you along, we made a **Sustainable Student Guide**.

In this Student Guide, you will find information about sustainability at the UG, what you can do to live sustainably, and other information that may be useful to you when you come to Groningen (or the Netherlands) for the first time!

The **Sustainable Student Guide** was made by the UG Green Office and students from our Ambassador programme.

The **Green Office** is part of the Sustainability Programme of the University and consists of students and staff members. The Green Office coordinates and initiates projects related to sustainability and is the driving force behind sustainable development at the University. We connect, inform, and inspire students and staff members on how to act more sustainably and we show them why this is important.
Sustainability is one of the key values of the University of Groningen. This means that the UG aims to integrate sustainable development into all aspects of the University. All our ambitions and goals can be found in the Sustainability Roadmap and its visual overview.

"We need to act sustainably if we want to create a sustainable world. That might sound obvious, but in fact it is not. We see it as our task as a university to inspire people and to involve them in the topic of sustainability. The UG wants to take an exemplary role in this regionally and internationally, in its teaching, research and business operations."

Prof. J. (Jouke) de Vries
President of the Board of the University
Join the movement

Become a Green Office Ambassador
At the Green Office, there are more than 100 ambassadors: student and staff volunteers organizing green events and projects to make their own faculties more sustainable.

Join a green study association
You can find one study association in Groningen that focusses specifically on sustainability: Atmos. Join them to find like-minded students or to make an impact!

New Energy Coalition
Follow a course on sustainability and energy at the New Energy Coalition.

Sustainable study options
The UG offers 9 Master's degree programmes, 6 Minors and 6 Summer Schools on subjects related to sustainability, and 3 Bachelor's degree programmes with a specialization in sustainability.

Did you know that students can also do research assignments on sustainability at the Green Office? They are called Living Lab projects.

Green(er) student organizations
Whether you are doing a board year in a student organization, or you are just a member, the Green Office offers several tools for you and your organization to use. The aim of the organization does not matter. All student organizations can apply for a Sustainability Subsidy or a Green Label.
Over the last years, a lot of improvements have been made to the footprints of the many UG buildings. At Zernike Campus, two buildings really stand out in their design:

**The Energy Academy** | The most sustainable educational building in the Netherlands. Its unique design demonstrates how a building can make optimal use of the natural elements earth, water, air, and sunlight as primary sources of energy.

**Feringa building** | The newest University building is equipped with the latest technology. It has a sustainable energy supply and is fully earthquake-proof. The Feringa building opens in 2024.

Did you know that UG staff members founded a [Greener Lab Committee](#) to make the University labs more sustainable? They focus on themes like energy use and waste management.

In 2023, the University of Groningen ranked fourth place in the [UI GreenMetric ranking](#) out of 1183 universities worldwide. Of the universities in the Netherlands, the UG holds second place.

**Sustainable achievements**

**Fourth most sustainable university**

Did you know that UG staff members founded a [Greener Lab Committee](#) to make the University labs more sustainable? They focus on themes like energy use and waste management.
Getting around in Groningen

The bike is the most popular means of transportation in the Netherlands by far. But where can you get a bike?

Buy a second-hand bicycle that you can use to move around the city. You can also rent a bike long-term via Swapfiets.

If you have a personal **OV chipkaart**, you can also use it to rent a bike at the trainstation.

At P+R locations, the train station and around UG buildings, you can find **shared e-bikes**. Rent them through an app on your phone.

Fond of public transport? You are in the right country! Here are three things that you can do to start using public transport in the Netherlands:

1. **Get an OV chipkaart.** This card allows you to travel by train and bus.
2. **Download the 9292 and NS (national railways) apps on your phone to plan your journey.**
3. **Check if you are eligible for the student travel product or opt for an off-peak NS subscription to travel with a 40% discount.**

Did you know that Groningen is the third best cycling city in the world according to international cycling organization People for Bikes? 60% of all traffic movement in the city of Groningen occurs by bike!

The cheapest, healthiest and most affordable mean of transportation? Walking! Covering Groningen by foot is a pleasant experience, almost everything is at walking distance and you get to know the city.
In and around the city, you can find several parks and natural areas where you can walk, cycle, or swim. Within the city, you could visit the Noorderplantsoen, the Prinsentuin, and the Stadspark. Just outside the city, you’ll find the Hoornseplas and Paterswoldsemeer, the Hortus Botanicus, and Kardinge.

Groningen is a vibrant student city with famous nightlife, but it also has a lot to offer in other areas, such as sustainable hotspots, cultural attractions and nature!

**Sustainable hotspots**

Groningen has many cafés, bars and restaurants that have vegetarian or vegan options. The Green Office has made a **Sustainable Map of Groningen** where you can find many options and sustainable hotspots!

The map also shows shops and sustainable initiatives.

If you are looking for nice activities and an abundance of information about the city and the province of Groningen you can take a look at the [Visit Groningen](https://www.visitgroningen.nl) website.
Up until 2024, the UG recycled all its paper cups, but starting in January 2024 new EU legislation prohibits single use cups for all to-stay locations. The new standard is to **bring your own cup**.

Did you know that the UG has sustainable and Fairtrade coffee and tea in all its coffee machines?

Have you ever thought about **digital waste**? Somewhere a server is using energy to store your emails or the content of your social media account. Check if you can delete anything that you don't need anymore!

Think about what you need to print and what you can do digitally. If you absolutely need to print, you might not need a lot of copies. Another tip is to print double sided!

Sustainability is not only about being green, but also about mental and physical wellbeing. The UG has a **Student Service Centre** where students can go for counselling, workshops, and training courses.
You might not be able to improve the insulation of the room you are renting, but you could consider having thicker curtains, installing radiator foil behind your radiators, and, of course, wearing warm clothing in winter. Also consider saving water by taking shorter showers or by doing your laundry less often.

If you are looking for sustainable options to furnish your student room, you can think about going to thrift shops. You can find an overview of these on our Sustainable Map of Groningen. Another option is to find second-hand furniture on Marktplaats (the Dutch version of eBay) or through local Facebook groups. If you can't quite find what you are looking for, consider making it a DIY project!

If you live in Groningen, you only have to separate paper and glass from your general waste. You can throw them in special bins that are located all over the city. You can hand in plastic and glass bottles and cans with statiegeld (a deposit) at supermarkets. In some neighbourhoods households have a separate bin for organic waste and general waste. If you rely on underground containers you can throw both general and organic waste in the same bin. The trash is fully separated after collection in an advanced municipal facility.

Did you know that every time you wash a synthetic garment, about 1900 individual microfibers are released into the water? You can solve this by using a washing bag for filtering microplastics. Keep in mind that you do have to separate your waste at the University! This waste is not collected by the municipality.
Did you know that Groningen has a fantastic food market three times a week? Go to the Vismarkt on Tuesday, Friday, or Saturday! Or visit the Ommelander Markt.

Our food choices matter. Our food system is responsible for one quarter of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. Here is what you can do:

Choose sustainably
Buy organic or seasonal food. In the Netherlands you recognize organic food by the following logos:

Prioritize plants
Choosing plant-based foods is the most sustainable way of eating. Plants use fewer natural resources to grow and they emit less CO2.

Reduce food waste
Reduce your food waste by shopping smartly and storing your food properly.

FoodFootprint
Would you like to learn more about how to reduce the climate impact of your food? You can visit the FoodFootprint website for more information!

CO2 emissions per kg of different food types:

- 31.34 kg
- 14.55 kg
- 10.87 kg
- 10.4 kg
- 5.92 kg
- 4.32 kg
- 1.88 kg

Background image: farm in Groningen
Many students that come to Groningen tend to stay in the city and never visit the countryside or natural areas around the city. We definitely recommend doing some sight-seeing in the province! Visit places like Winsum, Noordpolderzijl, and Niehove, or old manor houses like the Fraeylemaborg and Piloersemaborg.

From Lauwersoog, you can take the boat to the island of Schiermonnikoog for a day trip or a longer stay. The sea between the mainland and the Dutch islands is called the Wadden Sea and is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. The area is shaped by wind and tides.
Travelling by **train** is the most sustainable transportation option for destinations within Europe. Especially if you can avoid short-distance flights!

The UG has a **travel policy** for staff members that prohibits travelling by aeroplane if the destination can be reached within 9 hours by train, or if the journey is shorter than 800 km. To make things easy, we created a travel map with the most-visited destinations for UG staff. You can also use it to your advantage. Maybe it will inspire you to also take the train for your next trip!

Did you know that all Dutch trains use green energy since 2017 and are therefore fully **CO2 neutral**?

**Sustainable travel example**

Travelling by train is more sustainable because it reduces CO2 emissions tremendously, compared to a (short-distance) flight. Here is an example:

- **Groningen - Bordeaux**
  - Travel time: 8h 56
  - **Train**: 2 kg CO2
  - **Airplane**: 396 kg CO2
The making of this guide would not have been possible without the collaboration of student ambassadors, student assistants, and staff members:

Eline Bolt | Research & Education Student Assistant
Nina ter Beest | Communication Student Assistant
Malcolm Davis | Ambassador Coordinator Student Assistant
Rik Klement | Impact & Assessment Student Assistant
Luisa Velásquez | Communication Student Assistant

Erika Compatangelo | Ambassador
Maxine van Ekelenburg | Ambassador
Mattanja Gerritsen | Ambassador
Perla Keizer | Ambassador
Victoria Otter | Ambassador

Green Office staff
Dick Jager | Sustainability Programme Manager
Irene Maltagliati | Sustainability & Behaviour Project Leader
Francine Nijp | Communications Advisor
Marijke Nieborg | Education & Research Project Leader
Sander Dijkstra | Environmental Officer
Mark Bloeming | Mobility Officer

Visit the Green Office blog for a variety of articles about sustainability written by ambassadors and students.

Would you like to receive regular updates about sustainability at the UG? Subscribe to the Green Office newsletter!

Do you have a question about sustainability? Or would you like to contact the Green Office?

You can contact us via: greenoffice@rug.nl