

Erasmus report, internship Saint Jean de Luz, summer semester 2015

1. Preparation

You should plan at least 6 months to prepare and apply for an internship abroad. Depending on the size and structure of the company, the application phase can be divided into several stages and last for weeks. I submitted my application documents in October 2014 and only received confirmation at the end of December to start my internship in February 2015. The internship position was advertised on the sportyjob.com and aspom.com portals. Both sites offer a large selection of internships and jobs in the sports & lifestyle industries.

2. Formalities

Before starting the internship, I had to present proof of health and accident insurance to my future employer. It is also highly recommended to open a French bank account, as without one it will be difficult to rent an apartment or sign a contract with an internet provider. Fortunately, you don't need a visa or a work permit for France, so you can go there straight away once you have prepared everything.

3. General information about the internship

The internship was in the industrial area of Saint Jean de Luz and the job site was a 10-minute bus ride from my apartment. However, I usually drove to work with my roommate. I often spent my lunch breaks on the company premises, where there was a small cafeteria with a large selection of inexpensive food. Self-caterers had the option of warming up their own food in one of the microwave ovens. There was also a cafe bistro next door in the in-house shop, where you could buy good coffee as well as small snacks and sandwiches for lunch. On particularly sunny days, I took my lunch to the nearby beach and enjoyed the break outside. Other restaurants offering lunch can be reached in the surrounding area by car, but these are significantly more expensive than the cafeteria. Since the lunch break was quite long at 1.5 hours, it was a good idea to take advantage of one of the many sporting activities on offer (surfing, skating, soccer, jogging, fitness studio).

The atmosphere in the company was very pleasant and I was warmly welcomed right from the start. However, the colleagues from the individual departments were happy to stay among themselves, which is due to the size of the company with 500 employees. An exception, however, is the large group of interns, which, apart from me, consisted entirely of French students. Interns from other countries are rare, but welcome.

QUIKSILVER Inc. is an international company and people from all nations work at the European headquarters. However, it is an advantage to have a basic knowledge of the French language or at least want to learn it. In my case, almost all major meetings were in French because my closest colleagues were exclusively French. However, this varies from department to department.

4. Working life

My work day usually lasted from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and was characterised by close collaboration with my direct superiors. I worked in a small team that consisted of the designer and the product manager from the design line named ROXY's and I thus gained a very good insight into the processes of a large fashion company. My responsibilities included, among other things, dealing with specific inquiries from sales representatives at an international level; the technical

monitoring of sample parts; creating collections according to a chosen theme; the research and development of new forms and patterns; the search for new fashion trends in order to establish new collaborations and supporting the product manager in sales analysis. I was able to work very freely and independently and improve my knowledge of Adobe Illustrator. I also took part in many presentations and conferences to learn how to deal directly with customers and meet deadlines. At the annual sales meeting with representatives of major customers, I explained my team's work and presented the designs for the coming season.

5. Accommodation

I had already taken care of accommodation in advance and the website leboncoin.fr was helpful. The portal is a kind of eBay classifieds and you can find lots of private listings without broker fees. Since there is no university nearby, it was difficult to find offers for shared rooms and one-room apartments were relatively expensive. I finally decided on a furnished holiday apartment in Saint Jean de Luz and shared the accommodation with another intern. The cost of my room was 350 euros per month. The deposit for the apartment had to be provided in the form of a check, which is very common in France. You receive a check book when you open a French bank account. The neighbouring towns of Bidart and Guéthary, as well as Biarritz and Bayonne are also recommended for living. However, the last two can only be reached by car and, especially in the summer months, there are congested roads and long travel times to work due to tourists.

6. Public transport

The infrastructure and the public transport network still have a lot of room for improvement. Buses only run every hour and are very unreliable. Therefore, having your own car or at least a carpool is essential. Cycling is not recommended as there are no cycle paths and the area is very mountainous.

7. After the return

The employer adhered to all of the agreements that were made in the Learning Agreement before the start of the internship. The recognition of the internship at the HfK also went smoothly.

8. Suggestions/other/personal recommendations

The French Basque Country is located on the Atlantic and stretches along the Pyrenees. There, the seacoast, mountains and forests combine to create a breathtaking landscape and there are plenty of culinary delights on offer. Here you will discover a very unique way of life, characterised by tradition, joie de vivre and a self-confidence that you cannot find anywhere else in France. Biarritz is the largest holiday resort on the French Atlantic coast and is considered the surfing epicentre of Europe. In the southwest, the Basque Country borders Spain and a day trip to San Sebastian or Bilbao is highly recommended. In Bilbao you can visit the Guggenheim Museum and the old town of San Sebastian has the best tapas.

9. Special experiences in the host country, cultural

At the end of July you definitely shouldn't miss the Fêtes de Bayonne, the largest folk festival in France with over 1 million visitors. The five-day festival is celebrated as a harvest festival after the grape harvest. What is typical here is the uniform white and red clothing of the people.

10. Conclusion

I can recommend an internship at QUIKSILVER in Saint Jean de Luz to anyone who is looking for a good balance between work and leisure and has an affinity for surfing or another board sport. I can now very well imagine continuing to work in the board-sport & lifestyle industry. The company offers a few other interesting areas that I only got a small insight into and that's why I would want to work for this company again. It is really worth learning the language, because being able to communicate in the local language opens up new paths and doors and brings you much closer to the culture and people.