

SUMMER INTERNSHIP IN BELGRADE, SERBIA

BEFORE AND ON ARRIVAL

I was selected to intern in Serbia. The preparation for my trip to Serbia was simple. Since it was a visa on arrival country from Germany, I had no hassles with the immigration. The Serbia IAESTE committee were very helpful in listing out the necessary things to come with for my two-month stay. I boarded a two-way trip from Berlin to Budapest by air, and from Budapest to Belgrade by bus. The bus trip was eventful as we were mostly internationals going for vacation or internships like me. I arrived in Belgrade around 17:00 which was still a bright time for a quick overview of the city from the bus. Unfortunately, they couldn't delegate a committee member to meet me up at the bus station for pickup, which was fine by me. Navigating the maps to get to my allocated accommodation address was difficult due to the absence of an internet connection. Luckily, I was met with my first show of kindness when a bar attendant on the street offered me the password to the bar's which I used to book a taxi to the hostel.

ACCOMMODATION

Honestly, the accommodation was not what I expected but it did the job sort of. A dormitory located in the School for the Handicapped was allocated to IAESTE interns and visitors from other organizations. Three to four persons were allocated a room, and a general kitchen on each floor for the occupants. The place had a big resting area indoors and an outdoor cozy place which we called "The Swings". Restaurants, supermarkets, bars and bus-stops were located in close proximity to the place, which was really comforting considering the super-hot temperature of the country (up to 40 degrees Celsius). The best part of this accommodation were the persons I cohabited with. It was an international atmosphere as fellow interns from different parts of the world, and also summer visitors made the place enjoyable. For interns, the kitchen was the main meeting point in the day, as that was a general place to sit, talk and eat together. At night, "The Swings" came alive. Together, we sat, drank, sang and played games. Every evening, we had different activities organized to keep the fun going up until midnight.



Picture 1: International Evening at the Hostel



Picture 2: International Evening at the Hostel



Picture 3: International Evening at the Hostel

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

I was assigned to a company known as Montprojekt. The company is a sole partner of Siemens in Serbia. They are an electrical engineering servicing firm that produce switchboards and switchboard cubicles in-house for local sale and exporting outside the country. They are also big contractors of several high-rise buildings in Belgrade. We were two interns assigned to the company. My Malaysian colleague and I, worked with the technicians in the workshop because we were limited to working with them due to the language barrier we would have if we worked in the office. However, it was a very teachable and learnable experience. I engaged in practical tasks such as cutting and assembling metal rods and pipes for the cubicles, measuring and constructing the switch boards, fixing and placing the switchboard components, testing for electrical faults after final assembly. We had the opportunity to go to the sites where the company worked on. The technicians were very patient with us, as this was a new experience, that differed from the theoretical experience. My knowledge base expanded as we were taught about field practices of my profession that must be adhered to.

A typical everyday life in the office starts from having a coffee immediately arriving work. By 11am, the company organizes breakfast for all of us. This was the most fun part. By 12:30pm, we have a coffee break where one of

the best coffees (Turkish coffee) is served to everyone. By 3pm, the interns and the engineers leave the office, while the technicians work till 5pm. I enjoyed my time spent in the company as the workers were very hospitable and welcoming.



Picture 4: Thermal Plant in Western Belgrade



Picture 5: On the Job



Picture 6: My Colleague with an Engineer at a field site



Picture 7: Group photograph with the technicians

THE COUNTRY- SERBIA

Belgrade, the capital of Serbia was my destination and where I spent most of my time. It is the biggest metropolitan city in the country. It is a beautiful city with lots of attractions. The moment I started getting closer to the people, my former thoughts about the country started to change as they are one of the kindest people I have met in my European sojourn. As a

person of colour, I even enjoyed much more hospitality and kindness than I expected. I made friends really fast, and was taken to see their fun-attractions such as: The Kalmegdan Fortress, The Church of Saint Seva, The Museum of Yugoslavia, Nikola Tesla Museum, Avala Towers just to mention a few. The Kalmegdan Fortress was a special attraction to most of the interns cos we get to watch the beautiful scenery of sunset by evening. The Nikola Tesla Museum was especially important to me as an electrical engineer because I got to know about the great man who revolutionized electricity.

The food and drinks in the country were one of the best I have had. Meat is a staple in the country and as such has a variety of meat-filled foods. My bests included: “ĆEVAPĆIĆI” and “PLJESKAVICA”, amongst others. Beer and Wines is like a ritual necessity every day after a long day’s job. I joined in the ritual and had some of the best beers and locally made gins, such as “RAKIJA”, “PELINKOVAC”.

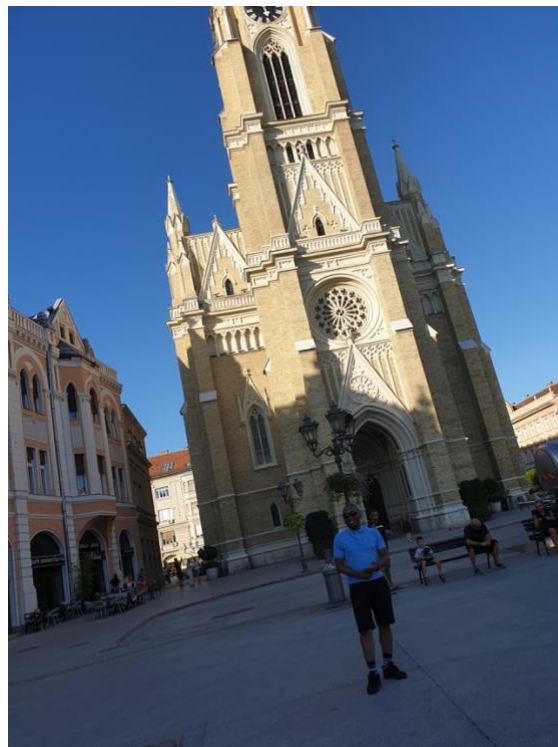
Festivals and public feasts are very common in Serbia. I had the opportunity to attend one of the biggest international festivals in Europe, the EXIT festival in Novi-Sad. Other festivals I attended and enjoyed included the Belgrade Beer Festival where I broke a record of tasting over 20 different beers in one night. Incredible. During two of the weekends I spent in the country, I took a trip to the warm springs in Krupaj, a city nearby Belgrade. It’s a 435m length stream that originates from a natural thermal source.



Picture 8: Experiencing the sunset at Kalamegdan with fellow interns



Picture 9: Rare picture of the Kalamegdan fortress



Picture 10: Church of the Name of Mary, Novi Sad

In conclusion, it was a memorable experience. I thank the Rostock IAESTE and the Belgrade IAESTE that gave me the opportunity to experience intercultural diversity while gaining experience in my chosen profession.