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My Erasmus Internship in Seville, Spain

Being a 1st year masters student in LUT I started to think over my summer plans already in February-March. An internship in any kind of international company sounded like a reasonable and logical opportunity and since Finnish companies do not offer that much to non-Finns I decided to try my luck elsewhere in Europe. And here comes the first tip:

Be proactive and persistent.

Dozens of applications have been sent to different companies all over the Europe starting from Netherlands and Poland to Cyprus and Italy. Of course I had my own list of preferences and Spain was on the list, but after first few rejections or mismatches you start to be more flexible with own wishes. Using a help of intermediary companies make the process easier for oneself, though sometimes a mediation fee is required (and from my experience, normally, it's a guarantee of more interesting and relevant internship). I used the mediation services myself, the experience was not so smooth though, but remember to be persistent and try on even after any disappointments. They found me an internship in Seville, Spain and after the interview with the company I was chosen to be a suitable person for the summer internship in Extraice SL company.

I want to say special words of gratitude to LUT International Services and particularly to Minna Niemi. All excited and confused after being accepted to the company I got really professional and precise support from Minna who told me step-by-step actions for preparing all of the documents, applications etc. Always helpful, friendly and timely.

God Bless Erasmus. The organization provides unthinkable assistance and opens doors for students to travel around the Europe and gain international professional experiences by offering the Erasmus grants and having such a well-established networks and infrastructure. Living costs and travel expenses are being covered, at least to some extent, and as majority of traineeship is unpaid, it's a lot of help.

So after dealing with all the applications and paperwork it was the time to plan my trip. It is highly recommended to arrive few days in advance before the internship starts to get settled and familiarize with the city, surroundings and overcome possible cultural shock. Though I didn't have such a privilege, I had to start working the next day after arrival.

The thing I had to realize right upon my arrival - the system, basic infrastructure does not work in Spain the way it works in Finland. So sometimes you just have to lower the expectations and take things easy, as Spaniards do that. Their notorious "*mañana-mañana*" attitude became for me the thing to adapt to some extent during my stay. I had to adjust my clocks to the "Spanish time", meaning if I am 15 minutes late for the meeting, the rest of the group would be 30 minutes late. But after all it does not matter at all, somehow there was nothing annoying about it for me. Being in Spain with this amount of sunlight every day the reasons to be upset or depressed vanish away. And to say few more words about Spanish people I was truly amazed by their willingness to help and extreme friendliness.

Extraice SL is a leading world manufacturer of synthetic ice. I loved the company straight away. Superinternational team of young professionals was exactly the environment I wanted to find myself in. Most of the time I was working in the international sales department, so I was constantly surrounded by all the languages possible - Italian, French, Dutch, Danish, English, Spanish etc. The networking within the company is great, whenever I needed some professional advice, any kind of background information, or specific detail - not only my supervisor, but the rest of the team was always happy to help. My tasks were interesting and study related, e.g. I conducted competitors analysis on the Russian market, was doing digital marketing and SEO, I was managing Social Media Marketing project. I felt really privileged to conduct independent tasks, because this was the way to imagine myself an actual employee doing a real job. Words of appraisal and appreciation were the best feedback I could get.

Corporate culture in Xtraice is great as well - always having lunches together, spending weekends travelling around, going out together. I got really attached to my co-workers. We even had a synthetic ice-rink in the office building, so that we could ice-skate during the working day. Three months term was quite enough to get the taste of working in the company and learn important skills, though I would gladly stay longer.

All in all, my summer in Seville was about meeting a crowd of international Erasmus trainees with the same interests and viewpoints, and networking is always important. I was travelling around Andalusia, visited Portugal and spent really nice weekends on the beach. This is what we call killing two birds one shot (in fact, it was at least 10 birds): I was gaining a professional experience, having a vacation moments at the same time, living an interesting life abroad at the totally new community, getting new friends - even recalling all these moments gives me a goosebumps now.

Erasmus Traineeship is *certainly something you should go for.*

Yes, Spain, as probably many other countries, is not perfect, things do not always work the way they are supposed to, a lot of unexpected situations might happen, but this kind of experience makes you more mature. Coping the difficulties on your own, adjusting to the culture and trying to analyze and understand that kinds of things adds up a lot to your personality. So not for a second I was regretting coming to Seville. Everything that happened to me was a good test, helped me to know myself better, inspired me to travel more and to get maximum out of it.

So dare, live it and enjoy.