

Overseas internship as a *Business Development Intern* in AsiaInspection (Madrid)

I love traveling and exploring different cultures and food. Hence, I went to Madrid, in Spain, for an internship in my second summer and Cardiff, in the United Kingdom, for a student exchange in Semester B of my penultimate year.

I participated in The Intern Group's overseas internship program from June 3 to July 15, 2017. While I was always thrilled to go abroad, the experience is different when you have to leave your home and go beyond Asia without friends and family. This was my first time taking a plane alone. My family supported my decision, but were also worried about me as they thought that Spain was not safe for a female alone.

Therefore, before my flight, I bought a personal attack alarm and a small bendable cutter to protect myself from strangers. I also bought an elastic string to tie my cell phone to my fanny pack to avoid theft. My first night in Madrid opened a whole new world for me. I had three very friendly and helpful roommates from the United States. When we first arrived, we were all jet lagged and would wake up at 3 am, looking for something to do. We would find each other cooking breakfast in the kitchen together.

There were many barriers for me to conquer when I first arrived. I did not purchase a phone card at the airport as people said that the prices were too high. However, without internet, I could not use data or Google Maps to find my location, such as the meeting center for The Intern Group, supermarket or Chinese embassy. I took a screen capture of the map and searched the closest internet provider company from my accommodation, finding Vodafone. I still remember the feeling of my first time walking on the street alone in Spain. It was more frightening than relaxing. I held my mini cutter in my palm the whole time, while hiding my cash inside my thin fanny pack in my underpants. After finally getting a sim card and the internet, I could settle into the city and feel more secure. I wrote down the emergency number and the address of the Chinese embassy to stay protected.

After a few days settling in, it was my first day of work at AsiaInspection, which actually has its headquarters in Hong Kong. My colleagues came from around the world, including Ukraine, Finland, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Italy. I did not know any Spanish before arriving and was thus glad that my colleagues communicated mostly in English. It was my first time working in such an international environment and people were very welcoming and got along well. Besides, the company provided regular coffee, breakfast and lunch breaks, allowing the staff to recharge after intense working periods.

I was given some tasks that I had never done, such as giving a presentation on manufacturing regulations in the garment industry, and composing reports on the inspection of factory products. AsiaInspection is a supply chain company, acting as an agency for suppliers to find professional labs to conduct product quality inspections on manufacturers or factories where they have placed an order. As a result, I was required to do research on topics that I was not familiar with and finish the assigned tasks in a timely manner. It was not always easy. However, I learned to be patient and calm when dealing with things that I was not confident in. I also sought help from my colleagues when needed. Speaking up may require courage, but you might learn something valuable from it.



Visiting the Madrid Zoo during the weekend with two of the internship friends from The Intern Group