

Experience Report - Traineeship at Servicios Rotoplas Group in Mexico City

How did your traineeship influence your personal development?

This traineeship helped me in several ways developing myself. Firstly, I could learn a lot about the incredible huge metropolitan area of Mexico City. For me it was the first time working in a city with a population of over 20 millions. Commuting and living was quite different compared to the rather small towns in Switzerland. Distances in Google Maps seemed to be fairly longer as they first appeared. In rush-hours there were more people than expected. Nonetheless, the public transportation was very effective, cheap and helped reaching most of the regions in the city. Besides the usual work at the office of Rotoplas in Mexico City, I could go on a road trip to the beautiful state of Zacatecas. There, we had to collect water analysis data of many small, rather remote villages or towns. The data helps to evaluate suitable places for the projects prototype plants, which will supply these areas with fresh water. During this week, while we were travelling through the entire state, I gained a lot of impressions about the country and its citizens. I learned to not take everything very seriously and precisely and rather adapt to different cultures and their customs.

What was the most valuable thing you learned from your colleagues at work?

Networking and patience. Having meetings with many co-workers, authorities and engineers from smaller towns gave me insights into the Mexican working culture, which was surprisingly positive. At Rotoplas in Mexico City, the office, the meetings and the general work culture is very similar to the European work philosophy. Very different was my impression in the state of Zacatecas. In those small towns and villages, you couldn't expect punctuality or fancy offices. Nevertheless, the people showed up, were always very passionate about their work and helped out, mostly with very good data or inputs about their local water situation. My co-workers from Rotoplas explained me, why it is important to be friendly and patient with people from rather remote places. Once they see how much you like their village or tell them where you are from, they are astonished you travelled that far, just to meet them. Thus, they are happy to share further contacts of authorities or responsible persons to help the project succeed.

What was the most special food you had during your stay?

One "saltamontes", or grasshopper. Yes just one, but it was crisp. Not that I would have tried it on my own, but if three friends make you try one, there's no way out.

What will you miss most when back home?

The Mexican food, especially tacos, tlacoyos, avocados, nopal cactus, all the hot salsas and much more. And of course my roommate and our host family. It was great to have an intern, living at the same place and working at Rotoplas as well. Both of us got help from IAESTE (USA and Switzerland) to find this host family. Further, I'll also miss my boss, whom I considered more a colleague, with whom I worked together all the time. And last but not least, the memorable and vivid culture of Mexico City.

What were the advantages of doing an internship through our exchange organization?

The best advantage was definitely that IAESTE helped me to find such an interesting company like Rotoplas. Furthermore, it was great that you did not have to look for a host-family yourself. Generally, I would recommend staying in a host-family. It made the whole stay worth so much more, than just staying alone in an apartment. Unexpected, but very cool was that an American student worked and lived with me in the same host-family. Therefore we could commute to work and travel together at the weekends to explore several states and cities around Mexico City. This friendship even made me visit her in Atlanta after my internship on my way back to Switzerland.

In conclusion, completing an IAESTE traineeship surely gives you the opportunity to make new friends from all over the world, helps you creating memorable experiences and broadens your personal horizon.