

IAESTE Experience Report

Internship at the Jicamarca Radio Observatory in Lima, Peru

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Jan Zibell

Introduction

On my search for an internship before my master studies I came across the offers of IAESTE and found a work offer in Lima, a city I always wanted to visit. For physics students at ETH, internships are not envisaged during the studies so it was only personal motivation to get working experience. This is also why I was pretty open about possible tasks that later turned out to be more suitable for me than I thought. I worked at the Jicamarca Radio Observatory during two-and-a-half months as a research intern. Despite not having known any Spanish until a month before my trip I hadn't had any serious language problems during my stay as many co-workers, IAESTE-members and my host family knew at least basic English or (thanks to French, Italian and Latin in high school) my Spanish would quickly improve. Also, I did not prepare a lot for my work such as reading lecture or papers.

Accommodation and Organisation

I lived in a host family in a southern, rather safe and wealthy district of Lima. I had my own room but a shared bathroom. Breakfast and dinner were included in the rent I paid. The company I worked for uses shuttles to pick up workers as public transport is not the best and traffic in general is a mess. For personal trips to the city however there are buses or popular ride-sharing companies available. Unfortunately, I had to visit a doctor on two occasions. Since my travel insurance was not directly accepted at the hospital, the costs were covered by an insurance issued by my employer. In order to get a refund from your swiss insurance, you usually pay your treatment in situ and send the receipt home. During my entire stay, I was supported by the IAESTE committees in Peru and Switzerland when I had questions or issues. The Peruvian members would also arrange an airport pick-up, trips around Lima and an anniversary dinner.



My Project and Working Environment

Due to the rather generic work description found on the work offer, it was not really clear what my exact tasks would be. On the first day however, it turned out that I could choose between three projects proposed by my supervisor which all were very interesting and matched the skills I described in my application. I chose to work with a radar station for estimating wind velocities and rainfall rates in the troposphere where the dominant



task was to correct and optimize the algorithm of data analysis. I learned a lot about the applied techniques in this field and also improved my Python skills. Most of the time was spent in front of a computer screen, yet I did not bother me too much because of the possible recreational activities during lunch break. Furthermore, the games of football, volleyball or ping pong offered excellent opportunity to get in touch with the (very open-minded) co-workers and improve each other's languages (Spanish and English). The main downside – the 80-minute trip to work – was compensated by the fact I only worked four days a week, which gave opportunity for many long weekend trips around Lima.

Impressions of Peru

Luckily, a friend from IAESTE Peru told me before my trip to bring a warmer jacket to Lima. During a long time of the year, Lima is very foggy at rather moderate temperatures which I imagined differently. A three-hour bus ride however makes it possible to encounter beautiful sceneries in the north and south of the capital city. Furthermore, I underestimated the size of the city having more inhabitants than Switzerland in total, yet many living



in much poorer conditions than I would have guessed. Despite the presence of criminality in some districts of Lima I never experienced a crime during my stay. I was accompanied by other IAESTE members during many weekend trips. After my internship I travelled to the south which was during the semester, so I was on my own for the last two weeks. That was not a problem at all as I met many amazing people, Peruvians as well as other travellers. I can strongly recommend to visit the cities of Arequipa and Cusco and bring some time for trips you can make from there.

Final Reflection

In total, I am very glad I applied for this internship. My troubles getting acclimatised to the culture and the climate were strongly overcompensated by the memories and impressions I made. I met many wonderful people and learned a lot not only about coding and radar systems, but also about a different culture. If you want to broaden your horizon and simultaneously get working experience, I can only recommend applying for an internship with IAESTE.