



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND

Personal Experience Report

Intern: Leda Depasta, Greece

Company: Burckhardt + Partner SA, Lausanne

Internship dates: April 2019 – September 2019

If I have to describe with one phrase my experience,
I would say that: *I found myself.*



I arrived alone in Switzerland to do my first internship and to work for the first time in an architecture office. My internship was just in the center of Lausanne, in Burckhardt + Partner. At first, I felt nervous, while I was approaching the office! People were very friendly and welcoming, though, and I adapted very quickly thanks to that. I really liked the international and multicultural environment, which was a good opportunity to learn and to improve in many aspects, not only professionally, but also personally.

I was so excited that I was constantly learning new things! Soon, I actively became part of the dynamic and intense environment, collaborating with motivated colleagues and assisting even with skills that I had to acquire during stressful moments, just before a strict deadline or an important meeting. Challenges like this, helped me to be more professional and organized, keeping a good balance between my efficiency and my self-devotion in projects. I also got to improve my French without even noticing.

The approach of architecture, though, not only in the office, but generally in Switzerland, is very different, which at first did not make any sense to me. Later I realized that it is a matter of culture, different way of thinking, everyday life and weather! Another thing that is very different from my culture, and sometimes could be even tiring, was the fact that everything was so organized that I had to balance, somehow, with a messy-crazy life! Even the fixed time and duration of the lunch break took me a while until I got used to it! I also realized what I like in architecture and what I don't like, and I learned how to appreciate the importance of working in order to enjoy better my free time, and to feel more confident.

Living and working in Lausanne, was also a major part of the experience. Lausanne is a “well-hidden diamond of Europe”, with amazing views to the French Alps and to the lake. The scale of the city is perfect, and everything is within walking distance, which made my life easy and comfortable. There are bridges and beautiful buildings, hidden passages and an imposing Cathedral, amazing festivals and events during the summer, good quality of life and perfect location to travel everywhere easily!



When I first arrived in Switzerland, it was very difficult for me. I was so insecure and afraid to meet new people. I did not even want to cook in the common kitchen of my house! But thanks to IAESTE, I felt very welcome and it was easier to find my new home, settle down, handle registration issues and integrate in the local community.

Soon, I participated in the IAESTE trips that were organized. IAESTE people have soooooo much positive energy, and all of them are so interesting and motivated. As a result, we did not only have fun, but we also had meaningful discussions. We traveled altogether to so many beautiful places, meeting new people and always having an excuse for more trips and adventures.

The rhythm of life became so fast. Sometimes, returning home after a trip, I had only two hours to re-pack my backpack and leave for the next destination!



I learned about different cultures, languages, ways of thinking and communication, behaviors, rituals,

expression of feelings and perception of life. I learned to trust people, but also myself and my way of doing things. I learned not to depend on others, and thanks to that I finally traveled alone in Russia, as I have always dreamed. I became flexible, spontaneous but at the same time organized and practical, strong and protective, careful and inventive, prepared and always alert to help. I had the opportunity to forget about anything that was not helping me improve, to forget about home, but also to miss home, to find myself, but also to lose it again. I faced my fears and I tested my limits, my freedom, my will to compromise or not, my dreams, my goals, what I like and what I do not, who am I and why. I was forced to set priorities, make decisions, be responsible and solve alone my problems. I learned that *sharing is caring* and that *asking is free!*

If I have to sum up in 4 key points: *important career opportunity - trips - friends – self-improvement*

It was the most dense, intense and beautiful period of my life. From every single experience during my IAESTE internship, I learned something new. Maybe, going back home and returning to my old habits, I will forget some of the things I have learned, but at least they will be written here, hoping to inspire other people. It is an experience that you owe to yourself!

