

My Internship at the International Office

My name is Peter, I live and study in Heidelberg, Germany. From March to July 2011 I did an internship at the International Office of CISV in Newcastle. In 2011, I was in a gap year between school and university and due to the numerous CISV activities I had participated in over the years the opportunity of getting to know the IO sounded fantastic – and the internship held its promise! After having met the IO staff at the Annual International Meeting in Berlin, I applied for the internship and was immediately accepted. I really appreciated the flexibility regarding the starting point and the length of the internship.

Finding accommodation went smoothly. Thanks to personal connections to the CISV Chapter of Newcastle I quickly found a family to host me for three months during my four-month stay. Newcastle is not the most beautiful yet a

very lively city famous for its pub culture. With its two universities it is filled with students. Almost everything is in walking distance. With the metro it doesn't take you very long to the coast. The people sometimes look frightening or angry but are in fact very nice. Just beware of the 'Geordie' accent – maybe you will learn to understand the people, but won't get used to it. It might also take you some time to understand the CISV 'language' spoken in the office with all its acronyms for committees and forms.



In the office, I really enjoyed the cheerful working atmosphere. The IO staff are very welcoming and happy to answer all your questions. They are an international group of people who like going out together sometimes after working hours – such as going to a really difficult movie quiz and enjoying coming last. If you are a coffee-drinker you should know that some of the IO staff feel very strongly about the correct coffee power-water-ratio and have intense discussions about it. Gladly I didn't drink coffee so there was no need for me taking

side in this conflict (and I wouldn't recommend doing otherwise).

During the four months I got involved in a number of different projects. Most of the time I spent working on the Programme guides. These guides had to be revised, restructured and given a new

layout. Given that each of the seven guides comprised over 150 pages this meant a lot of formatting and perseverance. Again, the staff answered all my questions with a lot of patience. In addition to this project, I constantly published articles on the CISV International websites and was involved in the development of the new website when it came to interviewing different web development firms.



On top of these main projects there were various other projects going on at the same time which always kept me busy. One day, we went to the University of Newcastle and presented CISV to students in order to recruit new interns. I appreciated the large variety of tasks. Since so many things were going on at the same time, it really helped me to get a good overview of everyone's responsibilities.

All in all, I can only recommend doing an internship at the IO. It was a throughout positive experience which helped me as volunteer getting a good overview of the whole organisation and gaining a better understanding of the workflow and how decisions are made on international level. You can learn about the main challenges of the organisation, how it could improve and what its strengths are. The staff are very interested in getting input of volunteers because they may have quite a different perspective on the organisation.

The internship encouraged me to join one of the International Committees and gave me a lot of motivation for my future CISV commitments.

Good luck with your application!
Peter

