

Being on placement in London

To the person who is interested in doing an internship in London!

Just in case you wondered why you are looking at an English text right now – two reasons for that: firstly and purely nostalgic: I just came back from London; secondly: I do not know you but since you are reading this you seem to be somehow interested in working in London so you might just as well start the whole thing by reading this in English. I was asked to write a text about my time in London which doesn't necessarily deal with my internship's content but more with organisations around the internship (including my experiences with ERASMUS) and the overall life in this wonderful city. Here you go.

Let us start with the rather dull stuff (organisation) and come to the more interesting things (living in London) a little later. If you're not interested in organisation you might skip this paragraph. I did my internship at the Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma (CADAT). I found the place via the University of Oxford which was of interest to me for various reasons and they had a link to CADAT since the founders of the organisation are now or have been in the past professors at this university. By the way, at my time Oxford University couldn't allow any interns to join their projects, this might be different for when you are looking for a place – and they have (in my opinion) extremely interesting projects going on. Just saying. I contacted CADAT directly and luckily they considered my application. We had a Skype interview and I was then informed that they'd take me on as an intern. Having said that, getting a placement in England is usually not this straightforward. If you are planning to apply, keep in mind that most people will not receive a "yes" straight away. As is the case in Germany, psychology is a very popular subject to study and placements most often quite rare. Furthermore there are certain regulations in England that do forbid certain organisations to take on unpaid interns in an attempt to create a job environment which is fair to everyone and not just open to those students that can afford not being paid for a couple of months. But this means that things get a little more complicated for the applicants. So don't be frustrated if you won't be taken on the team with your first application, maybe try to contact more than just one institution that might be interesting to you. And London most often proves itself to be worth this struggle – more of that later. ERASMUS! I try to make this short but precise: lots, lots, lots of bureaucracy. You'll have to complete numerous documents and forms and things won't end once you successfully applied, they'll get probably worse. But: the International Office will help you with these things and Anna Henker proved to be most patient with me and bared with all the hundreds of questions – so do apply! Especially in London you'll be glad for every single pound you know to be on your bank account. My advice: try to sort these things out as soon as possible as some of the documents might have to be signed by people who will not

reply too soon. If you're thinking about applying for additional scholarships – do it. I did not and regret this a lot. And again Anna Henker will be the one to ask about regulations and opportunities here.

In case you already have a placement in London but not all the necessary documents, try to sort these things out as soon as possible, too. There's a good chance your host institution will require another load of documents and proofs and proofs of your proofs and they'll be quite strict about that. If you are doing a clinical internship and will have direct contact to patients they will probably require a police check. Regarding the police check (Führungszeugnis) there are two things to consider: will they accept the German version of it? And will they accept the document without apostille? The best case for you is that they'll do exactly that. If not, then make sure to get your police check translated in Germany already, as they will want you to have an official translation and these seem to be quite hard to get in London. The apostille is a German and horrible thing: a stamp of a German institution that officially proves that the police check is an official and authentic German document. This stamp will cost you around 13 euros and another week or two (if you're lucky). Curiously enough the stamp will be held in German and one might quite cynically ask how an institution that requires a translated and twice validated document will make use of this German stamp but this seems to be common practice and England apparently is at present one of the nations whose institutions will in general require your police check to boast an apostille. So make sure you know about these regulations and you might give it a try and ask your host institution whether they'll pay for expenses like that.

Let us talk a little about life in London. By that I mean something along the lines of "let me write a little about life in London". Wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. If you like the ways of this city and its inhabitants. Like a lot of the big cities, this one seems to polarize people quite a lot; some love it, some hate it. But this will be a thing for you do decide upon on your own!

Public transport in London: get yourself an Oyster Card. This is by far the cheapest way of using the public transport and beats all these daily or weekly travel card offers. You might want to let potential visitors of yours know about that so that they won't fall for them. The Oyster Card works a little like a prepaid sim card: you can use public transport as long as there's money on your card and you'll pay for each journey. The system of how much you pay is quite complicated and the Oyster Card will automatically charge you the cheapest fares. So much to that. One thing you might want to consider: tube and overground journeys are at least 2.40 pound, depending on where you'll travel to. Buses are 1.50 wherever you take them and if you change to another bus within one hour they will not charge you again. On the other side: being stuck in a bus during rush hour trying to get home is an experience of a special kind. There is too much I could write about life in London I realize, so I'll try to focus on the most important points. Housing and accommodation! When I came to London the average price of a room in a flat share was 800 pounds. I never paid that amount of money and never met anyone who did but be aware that this is an average number

and might give you an idea about prices in London. Rent prices are a huge problem in the city so here are some ways how you might save a little money on that: London is organized in different zones, zone 1 being the very centre. These zones refer to the tube map and by the way define to some extent how much you'll pay for your train journeys. But they'll define the height of your rent as well. Zone 1 will be the most expensive one and the further you'll live outside of the city the less money you'll probably have to spend. Keep in mind the unreal size of London though. Not living in zone 1 or 2 does not at all mean living outside the city in any way. There is a number of websites you can use for your flat hunt. The biggest are by far "sparerroom" and "gumtree". I suggest taking a long look at "moveflat" as well. There are lots more but these will probably be sufficient. Additionally, facebook is the thing to use. Many of them are rubbish and quite dodgy but some might be the place where you'll find your room in a way more personal than via the big sites. If you use sparerroom and gumtree make sure to properly define your search with words such as "short-rent", "sublet", etc. so that you'll find rooms which are available for your period of time. And this way (if that is a thing you like at all) you'll find more already existing flat shares and less impersonal ads by housing companies. Sublets are by the way often cheaper than renting a room for your own as their actual "owners" might charge you less money than they'll actually have to pay.

As public transport is – probably just as in every other city – very expensive in London, you might want to think about using a bike instead. But be aware that cycling is most popular over there and using your bike in London can become quite an adventure. Both the good and the bad way. By the way, the location of your accommodation will influence the costs you'll have for using public transport which is something you should keep in mind. Maybe you could as well think about asking your host institution whether they'd pay for your travel costs.

Speaking of payment: most (psychology!) interns in England are not being paid. But because this is such an expensive city and institutions are aware of that, some of them will allow you to not work for them 5 days a week but have a paid job of your own on some days. This might be helpful for you but be aware that this affects the conditions of your ERASMUS scholarship and potentially those of the IPU as well.

There is one last thing for me to say before finishing this: if you'll find yourself being asked "how are you?" (and this will definitely happen multiple times a day), do take the time to reply and ask back how the person is doing. This is no substitute for "Hello" but part of a very polite interaction and you'll be amazed about the resulting reaction which lightens up the whole following conversation.

Much has been written about now but much more left open. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any questions about things I have said here or maybe not said here and do ask me. I have experienced London as an extremely vibrant and open city with wonderfully friendly people and just as many peaceful and calm places as it has crammed and energized places that burst with life. If you are thinking about moving there for some time to experience that yourself I wholeheartedly wish you the best for

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that. Fingers crossed you will in a couple of months feel as happy about having done this as I do right now!