



FLF Internship at Asian Overland Tours and Travel *September Report*

As my first month in Malaysia is coming to an end, I look back and remember imagining this trip when first applying for the internship. I was so full of excitement and looking forward to the possibility of working with a great company in Kuala Lumpur. Now I am here, I can say that my initial expectations have easily been exceeded!

After my arrival I got to know one of my roommates – Dominique, a French lady that is a Manager in the Sales Department of AOS. A few days later I met Andy – also a Manager in the Sales Department. Dominique was very helpful and being European, invaluable at helping me navigate the inevitable cultural and work differences that I came across whilst in Malaysia.

Dominique introduced me to the neighborhood and gave me a brief overview of the company and the people working there. Culture-wise, I can say that despite the traveling I have done, and all the times I have stayed in a foreign country for a long period, I have never experienced such a big culture shock!

Prior to the internship I had read as much as possible about Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur, and I am lucky to have friends from various countries in Asia, but nothing could prepare me for the actual experience. It is different here, in every aspect, but that is certainly not a bad or a scary thing. The opposite! It has been very enlightening to compare my mind-set with the Asian one, to try to see the world as people here see it, to understand the culture and way of life.

Malaysia has for centuries provided a home for people of many different cultures and religions and is therefore an ideal place to experience Asia. It is fantastic to celebrate holidays with Chinese friends one day and the next day to be celebrating Malay holidays with Malay friends! Also just being around Indian, Chinese and Malay all at the same time and having a laugh together is a great cultural experience. There is a really valuable lesson to be learned here when it comes to understanding and acceptance of other religions and cultures – still quite a contentious issue in the Western World.

A very big help in overcoming the cultural shock of everyday life was AOS and my colleagues. For my first month of the internship I was assigned to the Sales Department and specifically helping the Asia Market Team. My supervisor Moon and his assistants Justine and Rachel were very patient and understanding with me. They did their best at introducing me to the overall work that they do, as well as introducing me to the company philosophy and the city.

I began the internship with product training, which really helped me to know more about Malaysia as well as exactly what I was working with in the Asian Market and what we were selling. I had different product training almost every week, which I enjoyed a lot. I was also assigned to an inspection trip to Malacca where I helped with quotations, various communications with clients and agents, worked on costing sheets and created different itineraries.

I got the chance to attend few meetings with clients and potential partners and do some more inspections with my supervisor and I was also responsible for the update of the price list for agents. This involved further communication with agents and afterwards I created brochures that were to be used for the clients of AOS for various destinations. I really enjoyed the working environment here, it was so nice to have the freedom to be creative and help support the team with anything they needed. The team was great, they answered all my questions and were there to help me if I needed feedback on my progress. I am very



pleased to be able to report that I was treated as a regular full-time employee and the trust that everyone had in me was really encouraging and ensured that I was able to embrace the job at a faster pace.

Together with my duties came also the additional benefit of visiting some more of Malaysia! After only one week in Malaysia I was invited to visit Malacca, which I loved. I also got the chance to visit the Batu Caves and Jungle Lodge as well as many other areas of Kuala Lumpur.

Jungle Lodge is a part of the AOS family and I was really impressed by all the “green” practices that are applied there, as I was with the office in Kuala Lumpur. It is of real importance to me, as a MPI Speaker on Corporate Social Responsibility, that any company I work for considers the environmental impact they have on the planet. And I am very proud to now say I have worked for a company that considers the “greening” of its operations to be of maximum importance. And this applies to all branches of the AOS family!

I am looking forward to my transfer to the MICE department, where I am going to spend the next two months left of the internship. I am looking forward to the challenges that this department will bring to me and all new things I will learn there.