Internship at Hotel Plevna in Malta

My university’s requirement to spend at least two months in an English-speaking country brought me to Malta where I was working as an intern at the Hotel Plevna for 3.5 months.

One may think that Malta is an appropriate place to practice English, well I say - it certainly is. Malta is a multicultural country and it offers a great opportunity to communicate in English every day. Though English is not the only official language in Malta but it is surely the official business language and generally preferred language for communication. The other language spoken in Malta is Maltese which dominates in domestic life of the Maltese people. Those who speak Italian would also have a chance to practice it. Due to a relatively short distance to Italy (≈4.5 hours by ferry) and large number of tourists from Italy a lot of the Maltese are fluent in Italian. Apart from the language practice Malta presents a perfect combination of fascinating culture, nice weather and beautiful landscapes which makes it one of the best spots for the internship, especially in summer.

During my internship I was working at the Hotel Plevna, a three star hotel, situated in Sliema, not far from the capital of Malta, Valletta. The hotel can boast of a beautiful sea view and nice location, rich on cultural events and very well established transport connection to the rest of the island. Hotel Plevna accepts trainees for different positions: 3 interns for the head office – 1 for human resources, 1 social media and 1 for reservations and marketing; interns for the reception, restaurant and bar, the latter three positions can accept more people at a time whilst the head office only three, so the position will be opened only when the previous intern has finished his/her internship. The administration of the hotel would prefer to choose those interns who agree to stay for at least 3 months, max. 1 year.

While looking for an internship I did not have any specific place in mind, the only condition from LMU was to spend at least 2 months in any English-speaking country for the sake of practicing the language and experiencing the culture of a foreign country. I started my search at the LMU job market where I found some interesting internship offers for UK, USA and Malta. Most of the offers seemed either too short/long or what is more important way too expensive for me. Unfortunately a lot of the employers abroad do not offer any salary or accommodation to their interns and though Hotel Plevna was not an exception the deal it offered seemed to be pretty alluring. The interns get a free accommodation (a shared apartment in
summer or a shared room in the hotel in winter) and are offered a free meal during the working days in summer and all of the meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) at the hotel in winter due to the absence of the kitchen in the rooms. Besides the hotel offers to pay both of the airport transfers to and from the hotel.

Having applied for a position in the marketing department I got a relatively quick response offering to choose the date for the skype interview, which was (as found out later) successful and a week after I got the internship agreement.

My main goals for this internship were to practice the language, to get to know a different culture and of course to get some practical work experience, preferably to some extent related to the future occupation. Working in a hotel seemed to be the right choice, as it offered a lot of multicultural and multilingual experiences. Firstly, the staff members and the interns of the hotel Plevna were the representatives of different countries. Secondly, the guests staying at the hotel came from all over the world, but most of them from the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia.

As far as the cultural aspect is concerned, Malta has a lot of things to offer. The country’s history goes back to 3000 BC and represents mostly in architecture various influences of its conquerors through centuries till the modern time. A great number of the locations were taken under protection by UNESCO Heritage Center: the ancient Megalithic Temples that are considered to be even older than the pyramids of Egypt and so called the oldest standing monuments in the world; the whole city of Valletta – capital of Malta; town- fortress Mdina, that preserved its medieval flair till now; beautiful Citadella in Gozo; also merely nature-produced place the Azure Window in Gozo, which belongs to one of the best known geological wonders in the world.

Most of the feasts and celebrations on the islands are connected with religion. On every festive occasion small and cozy towns of Malta are usually decorated with quiet a great number of bright festoons and statues, small markets offer a great range of eatable and non-eatable goods of local production and the celebration usually ends up with grandiose fireworks.

The fans of wine and cheese, Italian or Maltese cuisine can attend different food and wine tastings and festivals on the regular basis, the usual entrance fee is between 10 and 15 Euros.

One more fascinating thing about Malta is its language that to some extent represents the most significant periods of Maltese colonial history and is a mixture of Arabic Italian and English.
I had the feeling that Malta is so versatile that even if you don’t fall in love with this country you are sure to find something exiting about it.

All of the interns get 2 days off a week and 2 additional ‘vacation’ days per month so apart from working there would be enough time to explore the new places or relax on the beach. Those interns who work in the office usually get the weekends and public holidays off, the interns who work in service area (reception, bar, restaurant) get their days off during the working week as the weekends are usually busy at the hotel.

My work was concentrated in the marketing and reservations department. Most of the basic responsibilities were kindly being explained to me by the previous intern during the first week of work (the usual procedure, the previous intern teaches the new one). Of course it is impossible to learn everything in one week but there are always other colleagues who can help. The reservations department consists of 2 people: Marketing Manager and the trainee, me, whose job is mainly to accept (reject) and process the reservations. It may sound very easy but it was enough to keep me busy the whole day (I had an impression that the amount of work depends on the season, summer is usually more busy).

Daily the department receives bookings that need to be processed (confirmed, rejected and modified). The reservations are received by e-mail, fax or through online booking platforms or hotel’s web-site. Before confirming the booking the availability has to be checked and the confirmed booking can be entered into the hotel’s reservation system, the prices have to be calculated as well, according to a particular contract and preferences of the guest pointed out in the booking. Besides, the trainee in the reservation department has to perform some secretarial duties such as answering the phone calls and either consulting the clients or forwarding the calls to the responsible recipient, filing the reservations, contracts, vouchers etc., scanning and coping. Every day the trainee has to check the number of rooms available and prices for online booking platforms on the extranet and adjust them according to the availability. Moreover once a week the marketing analyses has to be submitted. In order to establish the market position of Hotel Plevna the intern has to list the discrepancies in prices of the other hotels in Sliema comparable to Plevna for the current and 2 following months. For my price comparison report I used Booking.com as all the local hotels are bookable through this platform.

I must admit that in the course of work I had to do a lot of calculations (prices, discounts, commission invoices) which was not always very easy for a person who studies literature. One more example of that is calculation of the commission invoices. At the beginning of each month the trainee has to check the invoice received from a booking agent by comparing the sum of the
invoice with the payments that hotel had collected from the guests. Furthermore, when the Department Manager is not in the office the intern takes over her job i.e. answering the e-mails, participation in weekly staff meetings, preparing weekly hotel performance reports, reservation reports for the coming week etc.

This job offers a great opportunity to learn something new almost every day during the whole internship, the possibility of everyday communication in English and meeting new people.

However, not everything was so smooth and perfect. What stroke me as a bit unusual was Maltese emotionality. During my working hours in the office I witnessed a lot of loud conversations in Maltese between the colleagues which to my mind sounded very rude, like a quarrel (as I could not understand a word of it) but in fact it was just a normal interaction about the weather, dogs or food. Of course, there is nothing bad in being emotional but sometimes in very stressful situations some local people will not restrain their emotions without even giving a thought that shouting will not help to find the solution and can only worsen the whole situation and in addition can hurt the opponent’s feelings.

Anyway, there is no guarantee that situations like this do not appear in Germany or any other country. Besides subjectivity is also to be taken into account and perhaps somebody else would not have found the Maltese emotional at all.

In general, when I look back on my ´Maltese experience´ only positive memories come to my mind. After all I managed to find a nice deal for the internship, had an interesting work experience with a very helpful and understanding supervisor, had an opportunity to get to know a unique culture and meet a lot of interesting people from all over the world. I would only recommend this position to other students who consider Malta as a potential place for the internship.

Some additional tips and photos:

1. Public Transport

The transport fee is € 1.75 for a ticket (€ 2 in high season mid. of June – mid. of October) which is valid for 2 hours, but if you use a public transport card (Tallinja Card) the fee will be reduced to 0.75 cents. So as you see, having such a card is a good way to save some money on the transportation, especially if you are planning a longer stay in Malta. The card can be ordered either online before the arrival or at Public Transport kiosks upon the arrival to Malta at a cost of € 26. The processing time is approximately 3 weeks and the card arrives with € 20 on the account so the factual cost for it is only 6 Euros.
2. SIM Card

If you plan to buy a local SIM Card I would recommend Vodafone pre-paid card. It costs €20 with €15 on your account. It offers pretty cheap calls and 350 MB per week. (for some it may seem too little but since I could use the free Wi-Fi in the apartment, hotel or office it was more than enough for me to use whenever I was travelling). Every week the bundle €3 will be deducted from your account.

The Azure Window, Gozo

The Blue Lagoon, Comino
Skyline of Valletta

Tuffieha Bay

Paradise Bay