

My Time in San Francisco

By Elizabeth McTeigue

In the summer of 2015 I travelled to San Francisco in California to complete an internship with a Pro Bono organization, the Catholic Charities of the East Bay.

Arrival

I left London Heathrow at 12.30 on Thursday 11th June feeling completely terrified and very excited. I arrived in San Francisco International airport the following day at 3. A bag of nerves and completely exhausted from my 11 hour flight I endured a 2 hour queue in security and a 2 hour drive from the airport due to horrendous traffic to finally arrive in Berkeley, a student town across the bay bridge from San Francisco.



First Impressions

After an exhausting first day, my roommate and I woke up bright and early on the second day and headed straight into the city to explore. It was a warm day, perfect to explore the city. We managed to explore a good section of the city in one day; starting with a traditional American breakfast in a



1950s style diner, going into the main shops like Saks Fifth Avenue and Macy's and accidentally wondering into the Tenderloin (the most dangerous area of San Francisco) before immediately turning around to get back to safer streets. After our first trip into the city, we headed to buy food and for what would be a surprisingly stressful trip to an unusual supermarket called 'Trader Joes', we left feeling confused and slightly appalled at the food Americans seemed to eat; such as 'maple water', we later learnt

that this was a particularly unusual supermarket and not representative of American supermarkets in general. We finished the night by going to a party at a fraternity house with another QM student and his flatmates who were from UC Berkeley; the best public college in America. The party lived up to all expectations we had from watching American movies, even down to the red solo cups and beer pong, it was the perfect end to our very first day.

Starting Work

After a great but tiring weekend of sightseeing I nervously headed to Richmond, a fairly dangerous part of the Bay Area where I would be working as a legal intern for CCEB. After an introduction with some of the other interns and a few members of staff to a new process initiated by the Obama administration I spent the day reading and learning about the asylum process in America.

After a slow introduction to the American immigration I finally began work, during my time at CCEB I completed a number of projects. I translated clients' statements which included witness statements to crime reports, and character statements to aid Visa and asylum cases. I also helped to prepare Asylum and Visa applications by researching countries and then writing country conditions report and writing applications by applying the current law and arguing why the client falls within the allowed categories. During my time there I also organised the filing system and interviewed and filled in forms for DACA clients; clients who arrived in the U.S. when they were young with their parents and have completed high school.



I loved working at CCEB, everyone there was so friendly and made me feel at home. I hope to be able to go back and visit them all again.

Sightseeing

Around San Francisco

Over the two months I spent there I tried to see as much as I could of California. San Francisco is an amazing city, whilst in California the city is more reminiscent of New York rather than LA due to the typically cloudy weather, skyscrapers and famous bridges. The city boasted many piers, including the famous pier 39 which hosts bright lights, games and cafes and is a general tourist hub; it's also the closest city to Alcatraz; the American prison on an island which is notorious for a

failed escape attempt ending in 5 deaths. San Francisco also has an impressive China Town and of course many great shops!

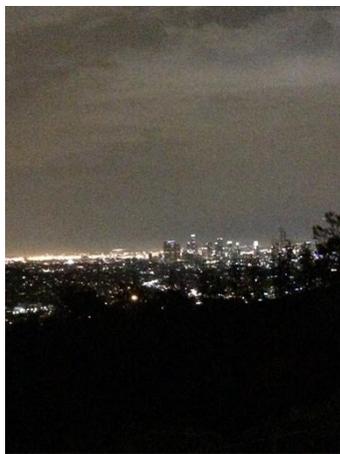
I also spent a significant time in the Bay Area around San Francisco due to living in Berkeley and working in Richmond. Berkeley was home to one of the branches of the University of California; UC Berkeley, similar to how Queen Mary is part of the University of London, as such the town is catered to students and there was loads to do. One of my flat



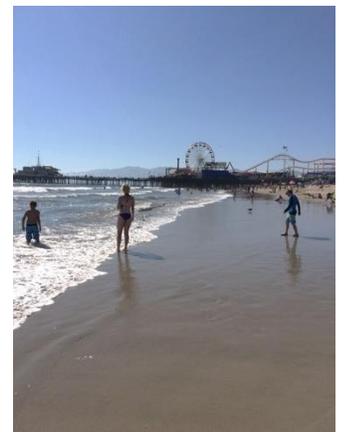
mates was a student at UC Berkeley and introduced us to her friends and invited us to many of the parties happening so we felt like we had experienced the social side of an American university life. The actual campus of UC Berkeley was beautiful, it was very green with huge grand buildings which were built in the 1800s, I was so glad I was able to walk through there everyday on my way to work. One of my favourite things about Berkeley was the food; there was so many amazing and affordable restaurants that we were spoiled for choice every night.

Los Angeles

Around halfway through the trip I was lucky enough to go to LA with my roommate. Despite having the incredible bad luck to catch LA having a rainy day, I had an incredible time. LA was much warmer than San Francisco and



also has many famous beaches which we visited. Even though we were only there for four days we managed to travel all over the city walking along the walk of fame, seeing the Hollywood sign and of course going to Beverly Hills and (window) shopping on Rodeo Drive. The highlight of the trip for me was definitely going to the Griffith Observatory where you can see all of LA; we went at night and the views were incredible. My phone's camera does not do how beautiful the city looked all lit up justice. Despite there being a tarantula



wondering around that employees were desperately trying to catch and spotting coyotes in the car park it was a truly unforgettable experience.

Santa Cruz

Just before I left I went on a road trip to Santa Cruz with my flat mates and another QM intern. Santa Cruz is a small beach town, north of San Francisco. We spent the day sunbathing on the beach, exploring the boardwalk and then finished with cocktails by the sea. It was an amazing day although slightly bittersweet as I knew I was going to leave soon.



Overall

I had an incredible time in San Francisco, I learnt so much from my work experience and travelled to some amazing places. I never could have imagine having such a great time and making some really good friends. I would highly encourage anyone who's study law to apply for the Pro Bono International Placements, they are a brilliant opportunity and you will have a great time. I'm so grateful to the Pro Bono Society for arranging this, the university for helping me to fund it and CCEB for having me, I will never forget my time in America.