

Expedition Fund Report – My Summer in San Francisco

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Overview

This summer I spent 2 months doing an internship in San Francisco with the Eviction Defense Collaborative, which I applied to through the Queen Mary Pro Bono Society. The EDC is a pro bono organisation specialised in giving legal advice to tenants facing eviction, and the internship provided me with a fantastic opportunity to apply what I have learnt during my law degree in practice.

The funding from the QMUL Expedition Fund helped me to finance my trip, enabling me to afford rent there. The fund was hugely beneficial, especially since my trip began very shortly after the EU referendum and the pound had dropped significantly, making my budget more tight.

Rent in San Francisco is incredibly expensive, so I stayed in Berkeley which was more affordable, sharing a room with a friend from Queen Mary, and got the Bart into work in the city each day. I learnt a huge amount from the internship, and also had an incredible summer, visiting some beautiful places and making some close friends who I am already planning a trip with next year!



Interning with the EDC

My role as a law clerk mainly involved interviewing clients who were responding to eviction lawsuits. The variety of cases was vast, ranging from low-income tenants who had fallen behind on rent payments, to individuals struggling with mental health issues like hoarding, who were being evicted for nuisance allegations. I was faced with some very difficult situations, as tenants would often be in highly emotional states. By the end of the two months I had gained a lot of confidence in dealing with such situations, and now feel much more prepared for my role as a Student Adviser this year in the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre.

After conducting each interview, I would help in preparing the response documents for the client to file with the court. This involved liaising with attorneys and sometimes drafting motions for the judge to read. This greatly improved my legal writing skills and felt very rewarding when motions that I had written were approved and my clients were able to have their evictions delayed.

I also gained leadership skills when mentoring a new intake of interns towards the end of my placement. It felt rewarding seeing how much I had learnt in the two months, and being able to pass on my knowledge to others.

Attending settlement conferences at court gave me the opportunity to see how lawyers argue their cases in person, and it was very interesting being able to see the outcomes of our client's lawsuits.

This placement has not only provided me with an incredible and unique experience which I have gained many skills from, but has also enabled me to be far more confident at interviews with other law firms, since I have real life examples demonstrating my strengths and how I dealt with difficult situations in a legal context.

San Francisco and travelling

I flew out just in time for the July 4th celebrations, and went to see the fireworks on Pier 39. I then started work, and although I didn't have any time at the start or end of my trip for travelling, I was able to spend evenings exploring San Francisco after work, and made the most of my weekends visiting some incredible places outside the Bay. Some people I made friends with had a car, so we went on day trips to Point Reyes and Angel Island, and also spent a weekend in Monterrey, visiting the aquarium and kayaking with sea otters! My flatmate had family friends with a holiday home in Lake Tahoe, who were kind enough to let us and a couple of other friends visit one weekend. It was absolutely beautiful, and I had an amazing weekend hiking, swimming in the lake, and even saw a bear!



I was also very lucky that my family came out for a holiday during my trip, and my work let me take a Friday off so that I could go travelling with them. I flew out to Las Vegas, spending a night there, and then we drove to Zion National Park, then on to Bryce, and finally the Grand Canyon. Although the trip was only 3 days long, I was able to fit in a lot, visiting 3 National Parks and seeing some breath taking views.

The other interns were very friendly and we spent a lot of time together outside of work. Most of them were studying in San Francisco or Berkeley so it was great to be shown around the city by locals! I also got to experience the American university life, as my friend at Berkeley took me out with his friends there a few times.

I would like to thank the Expedition Fund for enabling me to fund my trip – I have learnt so much and couldn't have wished for a better summer!

