

Foreign lawyers at the Paris Bar

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Last year I took part in the International Internship Programme for Foreign Lawyers at the Paris Bar, representing the South African Bar.

Depending on your skills of adaptability and tolerance, the four months you spend in Paris might be cozy and touristy – sipping a café, eating a croissant and trying to cover as much as you can from the pages of Berlitz or Lonely Planet or whatever you revere as your passport to the highs of living in Paris. In all likelihood you will quickly swap your Pariscope for a Larrousse or a Hachette, and by the end of the four months you can happily proclaim yourself to be a true Parisienne with your *Carte Orange* and knowing the quickest metro line/RER from wherever you are to the *Palais de Justice* or to any one of the various *Tribunal d'Instance*!

Depending on your language skills in French you will also quickly learn that conversational French is not quite the same as legal French, just as conversational English is not quite the same as a high court judgment. And no matter how beautiful your French accent is, you will be quickly humbled by what I fondly term, “*la différence parisienne*” (a *k a* Parisian idiosyncrasies), which fortunately is not the fate of foreigners only but is dished out in equal proportions to fellow French citizens as well.

So, without wanting to deter you from eagerly signaling your availability, I should forewarn you that this may perhaps rank as one of the most challenging and enriching experiences (or, perhaps, second-best to your first appearance in motion court) you could possibly encounter in a lifetime of memories.

Upon your arrival at Charles de Gaulle, you will be under the protective and supportive wings of EGIDE (the

organization that takes charge of your well being while on French territory). However, in the event they are looking for a yet another Chinese student, and are not there to carry your luggage, ensure that you have arranged accommodation for the first night until you find your way to their enormous offices. EGIDE is the organization that will ensure you are accommodated for the duration of your internship, receive your monthly stipend, which is just that – a stipend – (so manage your finances carefully), and which undertakes a plethora of other functions as you will discover. You will also learn, while waiting in a queue (also learn to profit from such queues, which will become a common feature – always carry your *Le Monde* wherever you go), that EGIDE is the paterfamilias to well over 10 000 foreign persons of all ages and levels pursuing all sorts of studies, research or internships in France!

Preliminaries

Accommodation will be allocated to you by EGIDE upon your arrival. This could include anything from living in the student residences for international students – *Cité Universitaire*, to a block of apartments with communal facilities. Accommodation (furnished rooms) is clean yet very basic with communal facilities being very common. Alternatively, you can find your own accommodation and pay for it yourself out of the funds made available by EGIDE. The accommodation offered by EGIDE is subsidised by the French government, so the rent that is deducted from your stipend is excellent value for money, as you will discover that renting an apartment in Paris is really exorbitant.

As you will be cohabiting and interacting with several other foreign students and professionals, what you will encounter is an amazing diversity of people from different cultures and countries, all who speak different languages, least of all English. The unifying factor between you all will be the French

language! Perhaps for an average South African, this may well be a culture shock, or, on the other hand, this could be the most enriching and intellectually satisfying experience, you ever encounter. You will encounter this diversity from the communal kitchen you are sharing to your legal seminars to the various weekend trips organized by EGIDE. Keep an open mind and revel in this *mélange* of people and culture.

International Internship Programme: September – December

The month of September is spent at the *Alliance Française* in Paris. (Or you may be posted to another language centre.) The internship presupposes a good knowledge of French, and so while your lessons at Alliance will retune your ears and help you to acclimatize to the French lifestyle and build your confidence, you will, as I mentioned earlier, discover in October that perhaps you ought to have opted for the class on Legal French!

In October you will meet the other interns on the programme with you. You commence a very rigorous and intensive programme at the prestigious Bar school for the education of lawyers in Paris (*Ecole de Formation du Barreau*). (Take note, there is no split Bar in France.) Included with the seminars are visits to several legal tribunals. This is very interesting and informative, particularly as the French legal system is very different from ours, and conceptually the operation of the various tribunals is difficult to grasp from formal lectures.

Included in the internship programme is a three-day visit to (last year) Brussels. Unfortunately there is no chance to get your breath back before work in chambers thereafter! This is one of the most interesting aspects of the programme. The Brussels trip is a visit to the delegation of the French Bar at Brussels/European Union. The three days are filled with very informative lectures on various topics ranging from the functioning of the EU to the representation of the French Bar at the EU. And, of course, a visit to the European Parliament.

The next two months, November and December you spend in the offices of a lawyer or a law firm. During this time you will put the previous two months' theory into action.

Your range of duties there can spread over a variety of activities, depending on the firm to which you are attached and its specialization: reading dossiers/briefs, attending court or drafting of basic contracts and pleadings. It is particularly challenging, as we are not intimately familiar with procedure in a civil law system.

You will discover that your day starts around 9h30-10h00 and finishes off at 19h00-19h30. Which is not too bad, until you discover that all the supermarkets and *boulangeries* are also closed, and you have no dinner. (Shops trade from 10h00-19h00.)

All participants are individually allocated to a firm, so you have almost no contact with the other participants. As with pupillage, depending on the specialization of your advocate you may be farmed out as well, and this can prove to be very informative and useful.

In summary your two months, will certainly be challenging, not just for you, but also for the other participants. Nevertheless, it will enhance your appreciation and understanding of an important civil law system and its interaction with European law.

Final observations...

Undoubtedly you will be faced with several impediments, and these are

generally magnified when the means of communication is at issue. Integrating in a foreign country, even for a few months, is challenging, despite this, you will certainly return a better advocate.

Remember that you are an ambassador of the South African Bar – and lawyers in South Africa generally, so show respect, tolerance, open-mindedness with everyone you engage with and everything you do. For the many diverse people you will encounter during this internship, you may be their first and perhaps last contact with South Africa. So ensure they leave with a positive image of us.

Bon courage, mon cher(e) confrère! 📖

Calling on young lawyers to participate in skills development project in the field of telecommunications law

The result of the project will be the publication of a book entitled "The Regulation of Communications Infrastructure in South Africa".

Participant authors will author at least one chapter and will also have the opportunity to engage in supervised in-depth research in the field, and to interact with fellow participants as well as more experienced professionals.

The project will last approximately twelve months. The participants are not expected to work on the project full time but sufficient time away from any existing work and/or time outside of existing work should be budgeted, to participate adequately in the project. A stipend may be paid, if sufficient funding can be raised.

The selection criterion is merit based and in particular experience and evidenced ability to engage in serious legal research and writing will be paramount. Persons from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, women and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Please submit a letter of application to Lisa Thornton Inc at

***info@thornton.co.za* or**

PO Box 1377, Saxonwold 2132,

along with a CV of no more than three pages in which you outline your academic credentials, professional credentials and any other information that you consider relevant, and one or two writing samples, which must highlight your abilities to research, analyse and write, by 6 December 2002.