



## INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

### Testimony



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Mc Gill

**IIP mission:** Paris, FRANCE

Process Industry – Food Market

Air Liquide R&D Centre

Let me begin by saying what an amazing experience I had this past summer! I had the opportunity to participate in the Air Liquide International Internship Program (IIP), which I applied for through the McGill Management Career Centre (MMCC). The internship required myself and two other engineering students from McGill, Melanie Arsenault and Genevieve Leclerc, to move to Paris, France for three months.

Being in Paris from June to August was definitely an experience in itself. After a draining flight overseas, I arrived in the Charles de Gaulle Airport and found myself drawn to the roof. It just so happened that the new addition/renovation had collapsed two weeks prior to my arrival (not a very comforting arrival).

After two hours, we got our baggage and stepped out to meet our human resource representatives, who were holding Air Liquide duffle bags and hats to brand us as Air Liquide Interns.

Keep in mind that this was a great moment for me, as I've always dreamed of getting a movie star welcome. We could not see their faces because they were blocked by big, cardboard Air Liquide signs.

To give you a bit background on the company, Air Liquide, founded in 1902, is an international group that specializes in industrial and medical gasses and related services. The firm operates in 60 countries through 125 subsidiaries and employs more than 30,000 people.

Air Liquide can be divided into five different business lines: Industrial Customers, Large Industries, Electronics, Healthcare and Related Activities. Some of the industries that Air Liquide serves are food-processing, steel and oil refining, electronics and paper.

There were 26 other interns from eleven different countries participating in Air Liquide IIP, all from other well-respected universities such as MIT, University of Texas and University of Tokyo.

Air Liquide's head office is in France and it has many other offices including the Claude Delorme Research Centre (CRCD). Six interns worked with me in the CRCD. I worked as a Food Cryogenic Marketing Intern in the Process Industries Markets. Quite the title, eh?

Since we lived in Paris and worked outside of the city in a village called Jouy en Josas, we had to commute an hour and fifteen minutes each way, five times a week. The depth of our conversations made up for travelling time.

Imagine the conversations between students from Italy, China, Uruguay, Spain, Canada, Turkey and Nepal. Our mission was to solve the world's problems one day at a time! We ended up learning about the unique aspects of each culture. What an enriching experience!

My internship did not begin until June and thus my brain was not in top form. My first day at work was June 14, 2004 (I remember the date precisely). This was the day that, after a month of watching Oprah Winfrey and taking my dog for walks by the river, I was expected to quickly get over my jetlag, speak French, multitask, sit at a desk,

wear corporate attire, wake up at 6:30 a.m. and commute (two trains and a bus). As imagined, when I came home, I was exhausted.

This "itinerary" was a shock to my system. Perhaps 4 weeks in the wheat fields of Saskatchewan was a bit too long?

It did not take long to get used to the working life: evenings off and weekends free to venture around Europe were not a bad deal. The other interns and I managed to travel to quite a few places, including Barcelona and Geneva, and Avignon. I was also very fortunate to have my parents come visit me in France for 10 days. We put on a BBQ for them so they could meet all the interns. We traveled to Avignon together and at my insistence, my father took a picture of me dancing on the bridge and singing "Sur le pont d'Avignon ont y danse, ont y danse" at the top of my lungs. Also, it was remarkable to see so many recent B.Com grads backpacking around Europe. It was great to see some familiar faces and also to see B.Coms drink a more civilized drink than Molson Ex, such as French wine. These people were really living it up, as they knew when they returned to Canada they had to settle down and start their corporate jobs.

Air Liquide treated all its interns impeccably well. Every detail was organised, from our flights and accommodations to our metro passes, lunch and even social/educational events. Halfway through my internship, we had what they called an Integration Seminar where we learned more about the company and had the opportunity to spend more time with the other interns. We had two days of planned events, including taking a tour of Cryospace and dinner and dancing at El Barrio Latino. Since I was the only Management student from McGill participating in the internship program at Air Liquide, I found certain technical aspects of the educational activities somewhat difficult to understand. For example, when we were given a speech by a top executive at one of our seminars and he showed us a PowerPoint slide illustrating financial measures such as forecasted sales turnover. He looked over at all of the interns sitting down and said, "I'm sure this doesn't interest you." Wait! That was of interest to me! I did not understand the tanks and machines we had been shown previously that day; I understood this and only this.

So I encourage all of you to talk to the Internship manager, Rohan Crichton at the MMCC for more details on the application process. Remember, internships run throughout the year (Fall, Winter and Summer) and in order to participate in the program you must have only 12 credits of classes left to complete. Could this be why I'm still roaming around the Bronfman, or is it that I just can't get enough? If you have any questions about my experience at Air Liquide or with the MMCC internship program, I would be more than happy to answer them. Good luck with classes and recruitment this semester!

**By Leila Hesselson**

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