

Interview with Hotelschool Ter Duinen apprentice

Hotelschool Ter Duinen's magazine, The Gazette, spoke with apprentice Pieter Béatse about his experiences undertaking an apprenticeship at Hostellerie de Plaisance, a two-Michelin-star restaurant in Saint Emilion, France.

Below is a translation of the interview featured in the magazine:

The Gazette: How was your internship? Was it difficult to adjust in the beginning?

Pieter: The welcome was warm. I was picked up at the train station and taken to the internship's accommodation. We stayed there with 2 interns and 6 student workers. There was at first a language barrier and that didn't make it any easier. While they understood me, I could not understand all of them. This has to do with the local vocabulary and accent. After two months, I can say that I now speak French relatively fluently.

The Gazette: What did your daily program look like?

Pieter: I get up at 7:00am and after getting ready, I walked to the restaurant, which was a mile away. Then we worked until 11:30am and then had lunch together. At that time, the staff would eat together. There was almost 60 employees in the brigade, from the cleaning ladies to the pastry chef.

After our lunch we worked until about 3:00pm, and did not start the evening shift again until 5:30pm, which would run until 11:00pm-12:00am. During the afternoon breaks, I worked on my internship studies, so that I had the weekends completely free. The business would then be closed on Sundays and Mondays.

The Gazette: Did you have a good relationship with the staff and local internship mentor?

Pieter: The first two weeks were very challenging due to a language barrier between me and the chef. I called my teacher, who told me to persevere, and on my dad's advice, I spoke to the administrative assistant of the restaurant because she understood English and arranged the internship. She communicated with the chef and explained the problem, and since that moment, everything went fine.

The Gazette: Where did you work in the kitchen?

Pieter: I was initially on the cold side, then I worked on the snacks for a week with the chef de partie who was always very busy. That was difficult to work together. Then I helped with the garnishes on the hot side (pastas, potato preparations and so on). At the end I was looking at the hot meat preparations and sauces.

The Gazette: Did you miss your family and friends?

Pieter: As I said at the beginning, I had a bit of a hard time the first few weeks. After three weeks I travelled back home for a while. As it was a day's drive, I asked for an extra day off, which I did receive without any problems.

Afterwards, I worked the rest of my internship and completed it without a visit from family. At the end of my internship, my dad came to pick me up with his classic car. A beautiful ending. I did receive one visit from my teacher, where the chef allowed me an evening off. I thought this was very generous of him. We were allowed to sit on the terrace together enjoy an aperitif and enjoy a gastronomic meal in the bistro. Super!

The Gazette: The Gazette is concerned about what we can teach our young readers. If someone chooses this top business, what tip would you give?

Pieter: If you get the chance to do an internship there, definitely do it! Do not hesitate.