



HOTELIER

THE SHMS INTERNSHIP MAGAZINE

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Live & Learn *Hospitality*
in *Iconic Swiss Palaces*



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Bachelor of Arts in International Hospitality



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Contributors



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Editor's Notes

Caux Editor



Dear Readers,

My name is Minnie Kexin Zhu, a first-year student at SHMS at Caux and the Internship and Career Ambassador for Fall 2025. I am excited to introduce the first edition of the SHMS Digital Magazine! Together, let's explore new ideas, share knowledge, and foster meaningful connections. Whether you're here to learn, create, or simply be inspired, we're delighted to have you with us!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Minnie Kexin Zhu".

Editor-in-Chief
BA1-4 Class

Leysin Editor



Dear Readers,

My name is Maryia Shnyp, a final-year student at SHMS Leysin and the Internship and Career Ambassador for Fall 2025. I am thrilled to present the first edition of the SHMS Digital Magazine! This magazine has been created to celebrate and highlight the incredible journeys of our students. We truly hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as we enjoyed working hard to bring them to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maryia Shnyp".

Editor-in-Chief
BAHE1 Class

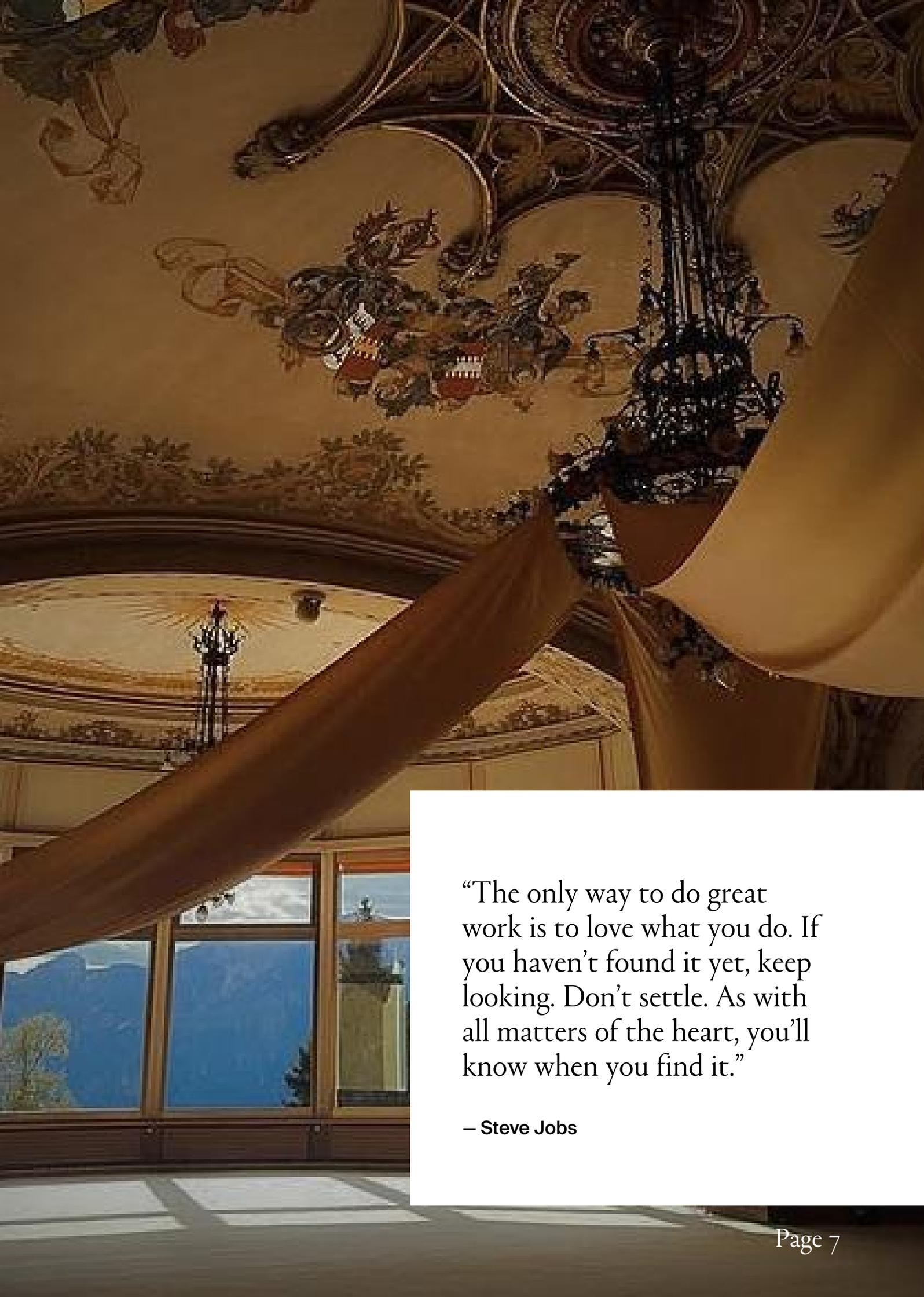
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Live & Learn *Hospitality*
in *Iconic Swiss Palaces*





“The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it.”

– Steve Jobs



Nicolò Boschi Colombo

Meet Nicolò, a hospitality enthusiast from Italy. He completed his internship at The **Ritz-Carlton, Osaka**, where he broadened his skills and deepened his passion for the industry. He looks forward to sharing his story with you.



What was it like living and working in a new country or city?

Living and working in Japan was very different from anything I had experienced before. At the beginning, I felt a bit lost because the culture, the city, and even the daily rhythm were new to me. But step by step, I started to understand how things worked. I enjoyed the discipline, the organization, and the kindness of the people. Even if it was challenging, it was also exciting because every day I discovered something new about the country and about myself.

What did you learn about yourself through that experience?

I learned that I can adapt faster than I expected and that I am stronger in difficult situations than I thought. I also discovered that I enjoy working in high-pressure environments, because this pushes me to improve. The experience showed me that I can live far from home and still find my balance, especially when I stay focused on my goals.

What kind of difficulties did you face during your internship in Japan, and how did you handle them?

One of the main difficulties was the language barrier. Sometimes I could not fully understand what my colleagues meant, especially during busy moments. Another challenge was adapting to the work standards, which were very high and very precise. I handled these difficulties by asking questions, observing a lot, and learning from my mistakes. Little by little, I became more confident, and communication with the team became much easier.





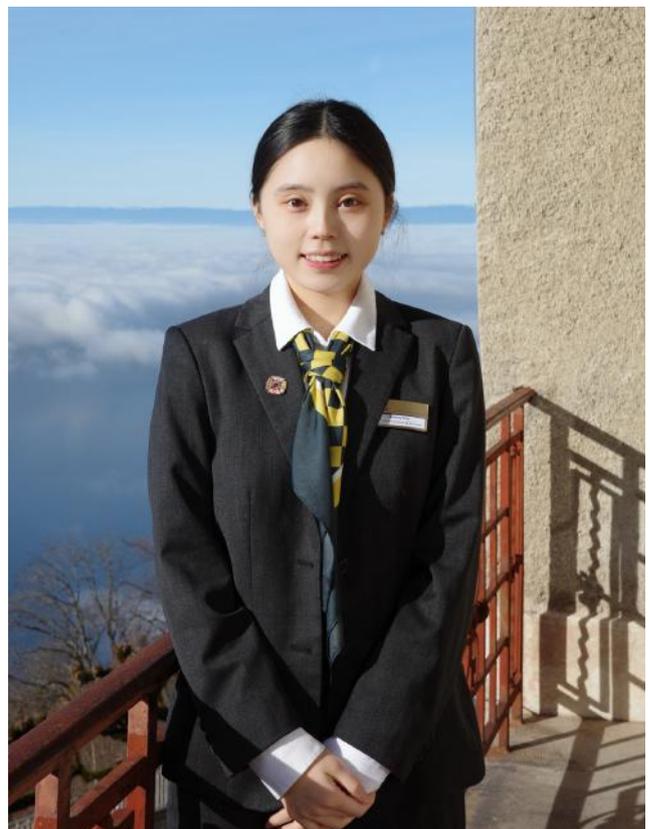
Susanna Yang

Meet Susanna Yang, a hospitality student from China who completed her internship in **Interlaken at Gallery Metropole** in the Sales Department. Working in one of Switzerland's most scenic destinations, Susanna gained valuable insight into sales operations and the importance of building strong guest relationships.

I completed my first internship as a sales assistant at Gallery Metropole in Interlaken, Switzerland. This six-month experience was one of the most meaningful chapters of my education so far, and it provided lessons and insights that will stay with me throughout my future career.

Among the many things I learned, the most important was the value of genuine human connection. Working in sales and interacting continuously with guests showed me that even small acts of kindness can make a real difference in someone's day, including my own.

I still remember my very first customer. She knew that I was an intern and still learning,



yet she remained patient, gentle, and incredibly kind, even though she was in a hurry because she was traveling with a group. Her attitude gave me confidence and encouraged me to keep improving.

As time went on, I also met customers who were so touched by my assistance that they asked to take a photo with me. Others returned to the store, greeted me by name, and told me they wanted to be assisted by me again. These moments made me feel truly appreciated and showed me the impact of sincere and caring service.

Working in an international environment allowed me to meet guests from all around the world, which helped me develop strong communication skills. I learned how to speak confidently with guests of different cultures, how to listen actively, and how to adjust my approach depending on the situation.

◆◆
Hospitality is not about perfection. It's about connection. And internships are where you learn to connect—with guests, with colleagues, with the heart of the business.

- Horst Schulze, Former President of
The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company

I also strengthened my problem-solving abilities. There were many moments when unexpected situations happened, and I learned to stay calm, think quickly, and find solutions in a positive and professional way.

Hospitality is full of surprises, and this internship taught me to stay flexible, positive, and proactive, even on busy or challenging days.



Over time, I discovered that I could be outgoing, confident, and even take the lead when necessary. I learned that I enjoy working closely with people and that I adapt well to new places and new responsibilities. Living and working abroad helped me become more independent, allowing me to travel, meet new friends, and manage my own life in a completely new environment.

Overall, my internship at Gallery Metropole was a truly wonderful experience. I felt supported every day by my colleagues, I grew both personally and professionally, and I developed confidence that will guide me throughout my career. I am grateful for the warm work environment, the opportunities I received, and the memories that will stay with me for a long time.

Taliah Nassif

Meet Taliah, a dedicated hospitality student from Saudi Arabia whose passion for the industry extends far beyond the classroom. While pursuing her studies, she completed her internship in the kitchen at **OAK, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Ghent, Belgium.**



Looking back on your kitchen experience, how have you grown or changed since starting your first internship?

Looking back on my kitchen experience, I've grown in ways I never expected. Technically, I became much faster and more precise, and I developed a stronger attention to detail and the ability to problem-solve under pressure, even fixing mistakes on my own. Personally, I became more confident and brave, and I discovered a side of myself I didn't know existed. In the beginning, being the only intern, the youngest in the kitchen at just 18, and surrounded by highly experienced chefs made me feel weak and out of place. Speed was my biggest struggle, and they often commented on it. But the long hours, the workload, and the environment pushed me to improve quickly. The moment I truly realized how far I'd come was when new interns arrived later on, seeing the difference between where I started and where I was then made me genuinely proud of my progress.





What advice would you give to other young women who want to pursue a challenging role in the culinary world?

My main lesson from this experience is to believe in yourself, even when challenges or pressure make you doubt. You are capable of more than you think, and learning to handle pressure especially in demanding environments like the kitchen is part of personal and professional growth. One piece of advice I would give to other young women is to understand your own strengths and never let others define your limits. Also, don't be afraid to ask for help or make mistakes; they are opportunities to learn and improve, and they will help you grow faster than you expect. If I can do it, so can you.

Who had the greatest impact on your internship experience, and how?

One of my coworkers had the greatest impact on my internship experience. She was the person who supported me the most, especially on days when I felt overwhelmed or not strong enough to continue. She always believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself, and she constantly encouraged me to keep pushing forward. She saw strength in me even during my lowest moments, and having someone like her in such a demanding environment made a huge difference in my confidence and motivation.

OAK



How did working in a high-pressure, full-day kitchen environment influence your personal and professional growth?

Working in a high-pressure, full-day kitchen had a profound impact on both my personal and professional growth. The intensity of the environment forced me to adapt quickly, stay calm under stress, and develop discipline and resilience. I learned to work efficiently, solve problems on the spot, and maintain focus even when the hours were long and the workload was heavy. Personally, it showed me my own strength and confidence; I realized I was capable of far more than I ever imagined. Professionally, it sharpened my speed, attention to detail, and independence, skills that I know will stay with me throughout my career. The experience taught me that pressure is temporary, challenges can be overcome, and that growth often comes from the moments when you push yourself the hardest.

Hassan Daghestani

Meet Hassan, a hospitality enthusiast from Saudi Arabia with a deep commitment to delivering exceptional service. His journey includes an impactful internship at the **Grand Hotel des Bains Kempinski in St. Moritz, Switzerland**, an experience that shaped his passion for the industry.



What skills or procedures did you learn that you believe will be most useful for your future career?

One of the most valuable skills I learned during my internship was operational adaptability. Working across several housekeeping sections taught me how to quickly understand procedures, follow brand standards, and maintain efficiency even under pressure.

I also developed strong attention to detail, from room setups to quality checks, which is essential in any hospitality role, especially in Rooms Division. These skills will directly support my future career, as they help me understand guest expectations, manage teams better, and ensure consistent service quality.



Can you share one interesting story from your internship that you will always remember?

One moment I will always remember from my internship happened unexpectedly. One day, I was sitting alone in the lounge where the hotel streamed EURO football matches. I was enjoying my drink when the General Manager walked in and asked if the seat next to me was taken. I said no, and he sat down. At first, I was a bit surprised and nervous, but he started a friendly conversation about me, my

internship, and my background as a Saudi trainee.

The next day, several employees approached me, saying, “We saw you sitting with the GM yesterday! What were you talking about?” Since usually only selected staff get breakfast with the GM, everyone was surprised I had my own spontaneous version. It became a proud little moment I won’t forget and made me feel more connected to the team.

Can you describe what a typical day during your internship was like?

At the start of each day, since I was a trainee in the Housekeeping Department, I would first check which section I was assigned to - whether it was Rooms, Public Areas, Laundry, Florist, or another part of the division. The day always began with a short team briefing in that specific section. The supervisor would assign tasks, decide who works with whom, and give us the list of rooms or areas we were responsible for. We also reviewed the status of each room - whether it was vacant, check-out, stay-over, or due for check-in - because each status required a different type of service and preparation. If my assignment for the day was Public Areas, then I would follow a schedule that covered different zones throughout the day: elevators, staircases, VIP areas, hallways, lounges, and so on. Each department had its own routine and duties; however, the structure was always the same: we would start with the meeting, understand the plan, get to know our teammates for the day, and then begin working based on clear tasks and standards.

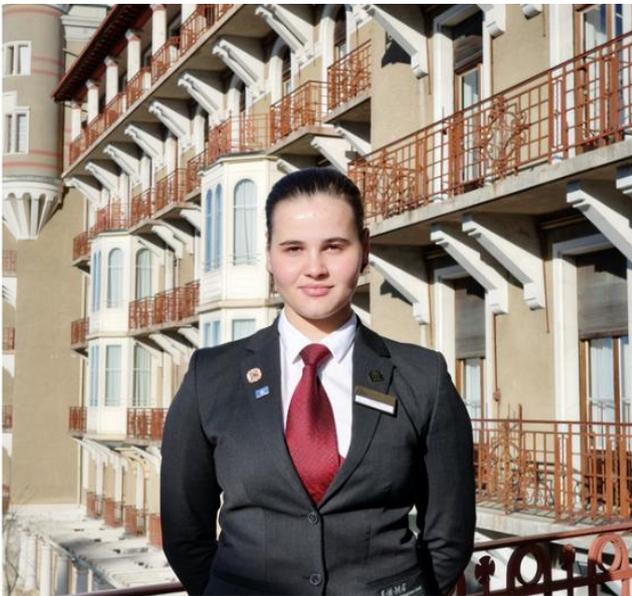


Swiss Hotel Management School played a great part in shaping who I am today. The journey prepared me to face obstacles, embrace opportunities, make decisions, and create connections.

- Eliza Zephir, Class of 2018
Sales and Marketing Executive, The Merchant House

Vesa Sefaja and Rron Sefaja

Meet Vesa and Rron, a sister-and-brother duo studying at the Swiss Hotel Management School. Both completed their internships in **Lucerne - Vesa at the Renaissance and Rron at The Hotel Autograph Collection**. Experiencing two different properties within the same city allowed them to gain unique perspectives on the industry. They also shared valuable tips on what to do - and what to avoid - during an internship, offering guidance for future hospitality professionals.



What lesson will you carry into your future career?

I will carry the lesson that consistency and attention to detail are what truly shape the guest experience. Every interaction contributes to the overall impression. High standards in service, cleanliness, and communication ensure guests feel valued. Consistency builds trust; detail shows care and professionalism. These principles apply to any customer-focused field. Mastering them creates memorable experiences and lasting relationships.



DOs by Vesa

- ✓ DO set tables according to standards.
Take orders accurately while maintaining friendly, attentive guest interactions.
- ✓ DO store liquor properly.
Follow precise drink recipes, and serve alcohol responsibly by monitoring guest consumption.
- ✓ DO manage inventory consistently.
Schedule staff efficiently, and ensure strong quality control throughout service.



DON'TS by Rron

✘ DON'T be lazy.

The most important one would be laziness. Avoid taking things personally with the guests or colleagues during your service.

✘ DON'T engage in heated exchanges.

Always remain professional and try to be as friendly as possible, even in the face of anger or frustration.

✘ DON'T start doing the task before understanding it.

I would say pay very close attention to detail. Make sure you know how everything should be placed and how everything should look before you actually start doing it.



Have you ever had the experience of 'making mistakes and gaining growth' or 'solving problems by mistake' in your internship?

Of course, we always say there is room to improve for anything that you do. In the beginning, it was really hard for me because I had a very early shift and I wasn't used to getting up that early - there was also a totally new system of working. Working at the breakfast buffet was fairly straightforward, but the cooking and dishwashing made it feel more complicated for me, as it was the first time I've ever done these tasks. The kitchen was the most challenging and required a lot of detail, and you have to be very careful when cooking. In time, I got the hang of it, and it became more comfortable.



Serena Zhou

Meet Serena Zhou, a hospitality student from China who embraced the opportunity to complete her internship anywhere in the world - and chose the iconic **Mandarin Oriental, Milan** in Italy. Immersed in one of Europe's most stylish cities, Serena gained valuable experience in luxury hospitality while learning from an internationally renowned brand.



During my internship at Mandarin Oriental Milan, one moment I will never forget was being trusted to train new trainees on my fifth day. It was surprising and encouraging to be given such responsibility so early on. I still remember the excitement and motivation I felt in that moment, realizing that my team already believed in my potential. That trust became the foundation of my confidence throughout the internship.



MANDARIN ORIENTAL
MILAN



Enhancing the guest experience

One afternoon, after check-out, my housekeeping colleague found a small teddy bear left behind by a young guest. Instead of just mailing it back, I created a photo book showing the teddy “working” around the hotel: answering calls at the Front Desk, helping bellboys, driving the courtesy car, enjoying a spa treatment, relaxing in the pool, and having a mocktail in the Mandarin Garden. I included a handwritten letter telling the teddy’s story and shipped it with the book to our Madrid property. The family was deeply touched, and the team appreciated the creativity and attention to detail.

A warm or impressive moment

My manager left the deepest impression on me. She led with warmth, positivity, and encouragement, which made everyone in the team feel appreciated and motivated to do their best. Her leadership reminds me how important encouragement is in hospitality. For example, during a very busy shift, she noticed I was stressed and took a moment to comfort me and give me confidence.

Learning from mistakes

On my last day, I made a mistake with a guest’s personalized towel initials. I immediately told my manager, and although her feedback was firm, it was fair and educational. With the help of my colleagues, we corrected it quickly. That moment taught me the importance of attention to detail, accountability, and teamwork.



Synne Gjermundsen Mork



I first came across the hotel during my first semester, when I was searching for my first internship. I told the SHMS career coaches that I wanted to work somewhere in Europe, somewhere with a strong work culture, and ideally somewhere I could save money. They suggested Iceland right away, and I rejected it instantly. As a Norwegian, I wanted something “different” from home.

Then at IRF, I visited The Retreat’s stand, where I met my future manager, and everything changed. We barely talked about work; we just connected. The atmosphere felt warm, human, and strangely familiar. Once they explained their service concept: assigning each receptionist four to five guests, planning personalized itineraries, writing welcome notes, giving long guided tours, I realised this wasn’t standard hospitality. It was exactly what I had been looking for without knowing it. My internship at **The Retreat at Blue Lagoon, Iceland**, became one of the most defining experiences of my life. The Retreat is a five-star superior hotel built directly into one of the world’s most famous geothermal wonders. With its mineral-rich blue water, white silica mud, and volcanic landscape, the area feels almost otherworldly. Guests come for its healing qualities, its beauty, and the feeling of stepping into a warm, natural sanctuary in the middle of Iceland’s lava fields.



One of the craziest moments happened in my first week as a butler. I was assigned a family of long-time regulars, and three hours before they arrived, their household manager told us they wanted a full Christmas tree in their suite. The hotel never offers that because many guests come to Iceland specifically to escape Christmas. But there we were. I drove an hour to buy a tree and ornaments, rushed back, decorated frantically, and somehow pulled it off. Their stay went perfectly, and I still keep in touch with their personal assistant and household manager. That first week taught me how to stay calm, think fast, and trust myself even when I felt completely out of my depth.

The Retreat's "no-limit" approach completely reshaped my understanding of hospitality. Whether it was sourcing a specific tea, arranging rare culinary experiences, or joining guests on hikes, going beyond expectations was not only allowed but encouraged. The philosophy was simple: if even one guest left genuinely happy, we had succeeded. The biggest personal growth I gained was confidence. At the beginning, I constantly doubted myself and hesitated to trust my knowledge. Over time, I realized that guests don't expect perfection, but genuine care and initiative. Once I trusted myself, interactions became more natural and problem-solving much smoother.





My year in Iceland was also shaped by nature reminding us who's in charge. The Retreat is located in Grindavík, a town heavily affected by volcanic eruptions. During my stay, I experienced five or six eruptions and managed the challenges that came with them, from guest evacuations to finding alternative accommodation and adapting to constant ground tremors and spontaneous car alarms. Although stressful at first, the area was closely monitored, and I never felt unsafe. Witnessing a volcano erupt up close is something few people experience, and despite the disruption, it became one of the most unforgettable parts of my year.

Working in Iceland also made me realize what kind of hospitality environment I belong in. Icelandic culture is warm, open, low-hierarchical, and unpretentious. You treat guests with genuine curiosity and friendliness, not formal stiffness. And after working in more traditional hotels, I now know that I thrive in places where personalization is encouraged, where going the extra mile is normal, and where human connection comes before scripts.



Looking back, this internship didn't just help me grow; it showed me the kind of hospitality I love and the kind of environment where I can actually make a difference.

Evelina Agapitou

Meet Evelina, a Hospitality Student from Greece who completed her 1-year internship in the United States. Through an intense, fast-paced and adaptive hospitality programme, she gained hands-on experience across four luxury hotel properties in Florida.



During your internship, what was the most "interesting or unexpected" thing that happened to you?

Internship – what a great way to gain experience and to test one's capabilities in real-world situations! Equally important, it tests an individual's flexibility to unexpected events and adaptability to different environments. Throughout my internship, I had to overcome a lot of challenges, including a bug-infested accommodation, surviving hurricanes, navigating different management styles, seeking alternative internships due to unexpected factors such as the temporary closure of a hotel and change of ownership and management of another, while also adapting to a variety of different systems and management styles. These are just a few of the challenges that were thrown at me in only the first few months. Certainly, the most unexpected

thing that happened was that I had numerous transfers between four hotels. It was something that I did not anticipate when I started the internship. I started in Naples, Florida, and then moved all the way to Miami Beach. In every transfer, I had to adapt to fast-paced and constantly changing environments where the property management systems and SOPs would differ, in addition to the property culture and management styles. Additionally, when I moved from Naples to Miami Beach, it was during high season (around Christmas time), which was extremely demanding in terms of learning new operations, but I love a good challenge and proved myself in no time. I even got to train others within a week of being there because of how fast I adapted to the systems and work, which I am really proud of.

What advice would you give to future hospitality students on choosing an internship, and what do you think are the most important criteria to consider?

One of the most important things when looking for an internship, and especially your first one, is researching the brand, culture, location, and values. Even if a brand has a certain culture, it can differ for each location. There is something called “Glocal”. Glocal is a mixed concept of globally shared norms, attitudes, behavior, and actions that allow individuals, as well as groups and organizations, to make



decisions and resolve issues locally. Glocal shows that global and local levels of social, political, and economic life are increasingly intertwined, instead of the world being uniform. It is essential to understand this concept, especially when going abroad for an internship and in a country where you have never been and do not know how people behave there. A name might look attractive on your CV, but there is nothing

better than finding a brand and a location where you can grow and where your values are aligned. It can play a huge role in your motivation and how you integrate into the job. My advice is RESEARCH, RESEARCH, AND MORE RESEARCH. Not knowing is a choice. Information is out there, and especially when it comes to your career and your well-being, it is important to be informed and to know what you are getting yourself into.

Could you describe what it was like to work in a hotel that operates under high standards, such as Forbes or Michelin?

Well... It was strict. Very strict. You need to hold yourself to a very high standard to comply with Forbes and Michelin. This includes appropriate language on the phone and via email. The biggest difficulty in the departments I operated in was speaking with the appropriate language over the phone without vocal disfluencies or filler words such as “ehhh”, “ummm”, “ohhh”, “uh”, “like”, “you know”. Hotels like The Ritz-Carlton have elaborate manuals addressing most aspects of the work and offer useful, standardized training.





Can you describe a memorable guest interaction you experienced during your internship?

During my internship at the SLS South Beach, I got an amazing opportunity to do room setups. One of my most memorable interactions was when I did a proposal setup for a guest. The guest was planning to propose in the room after their dinner and had already ordered the package of rose petals in a heart. After I completed the setup, I had so many extra rose petals, so I asked the guest if it would be ok for me to get a bit more creative with the setup. He agreed, and I decided to write “Will you marry me?” inside the heart with rose petals, put rose petals in the entrance of the room, and also sparsely around the bed.

I had assigned a bottle of champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries as complimentary amenities to really elevate the guest experience and make it memorable, since a proposal (usually) happens only one time. What drives my motivation to provide great guest experiences is a quote by American memoirist and essayist Maya Angelou: “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Keeping this in mind, I have made the impossible-possible to put smiles on guests’ faces, and it has been worth it more than I can express. The guests whom I made this setup for came down the next day to meet me and tipped me for the experience that I created for them.



Ellie Cheung

Meet Ellie, a hospitality student from China who completed her internship at **LUX Belle Mare* in Mauritius, Africa**. Immersed in a vibrant luxury resort setting, she gained valuable hands-on experience and deepened her passion for the hospitality industry



◆ You should never be afraid to work more or work hard - everyone starts from zero, like a blank sheet of paper, and it is through effort and experience that you gradually shape your skills and confidence.

I worked as an F&B intern at LUX* Belle Mare in Mauritius, a beautiful and multicultural island located in the southeast of Africa - with a rich mix of Mauritian, Indian, European, and Chinese communities, where people speak Creole, a unique blend of French and English. I chose Mauritius following advice from my career coach, as I wanted to experience

◆ something different from Hong Kong. Mauritians truly value work-life balance; you will see families gathering on the beach from morning until sunset, singing, playing music, sharing homemade food, and even inviting strangers to join them on Sundays. I also hoped to work in a resort environment where guests stay for longer periods, which allows staff to provide more attentive and personalized service, which is an opportunity that is difficult to find in Hong Kong.

During my six-month internship, I worked in the Food and Beverage Department, rotating through four restaurants - Beach Rouge, Mondo, Duck Laundry, and Amari by Vineet - as well as spending two months in Room Service.

Working as a hostess helped me understand different cultural habits. For example, Muslim guests often confirmed repeatedly whether all the food was halal, and European guests typically preferred having a three-course meal. I also learned to recognize surnames and make quick assumptions; for instance, if the surname was Middle Eastern, I avoided recommending pork dishes. If the guests were Muslim and did not drink alcohol, I removed the wine glass from the table immediately after they were seated. These details were important, showed respect and were things you learned gradually through day-to-day experiences.



One story I'd like to share happened while I was working at Duck Laundry, the Chinese restaurant. A Forbes guest visited the hotel, and I was assigned to welcome her. Since she was a very important guest, everything had to be perfect to ensure she had an unforgettable experience. It was a valuable moment that pushed me to perform under pressure and continue improving myself. Everyone was fully focused and giving 110% effort - it was also a great opportunity to practice attention to detail and teamwork.





“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



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