

César
Ritz
Colleges

LAUNCHPAD

THE INTERNSHIP MAGAZINE
WINTER EDITION | VOLUME 1

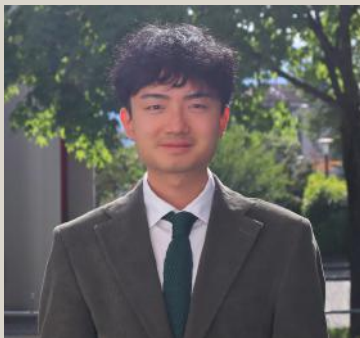
Learn to Lead.
Lead to Succeed.

Contributors



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Fall Term
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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the very first edition of Launchpad! As the Internship Ambassador, I'm excited to share this platform where we can celebrate the inspiring journeys of our fellow students. My passion for internships began with my first experience at the Fairmont in Hawaii. It was an eye-opening opportunity that taught me so much, not just about hospitality, but about growth, resilience, and the joy of connecting with people. Since then, I've loved hearing students' stories about their internship journeys—the lessons learned, challenges faced, and moments that made the experience unforgettable. In this magazine, you'll find inspiring stories from fellow students who have honed skills, embraced opportunities, and cherished experiences.

Here's to launching new beginnings and sharing stories that help us soar!



Stefanie Kovalev
Internship Ambassador



Editor's Note

To the Readers,

Lí hó! A warm greeting in Taiwanese.

My name is Alex I Chun Hung from Hospitality Term 6, and it is a privilege to serve on the SAF for Winter 2026 as both Internship Ambassador and Editor of Launchpad. At its core, hospitality is about meaningful storytelling and genuine human connection. Much like this magazine itself, which is a reciprocal exchange.

Through Launchpad, our aim is to offer value that extends beyond the page. Searching for an internship can be an uncertain and often daunting process. But there is no single definition of the “right” internship. What matters most is to keep contemplating what you want and step out of your comfort zone.

Think boldly, take initiative, and trust the process.
Enjoy the read.

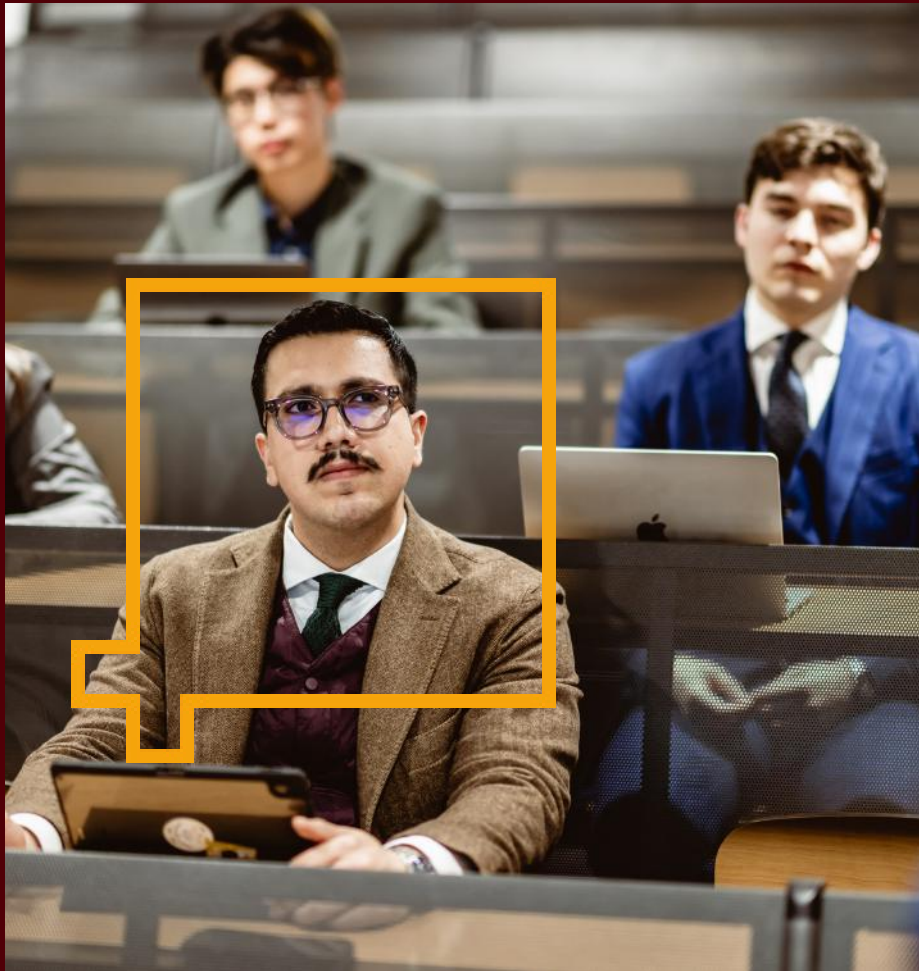
alex hung

Alex I Chun Hung
Internship Ambassador



César Ritz

Change-Makers



At César Ritz Colleges Switzerland, practical experience is what transforms learning into real-world capability. Internships allow students to step into professional environments, apply their skills, and grow through everyday challenges.

By working alongside industry professionals, students develop the mindset, adaptability, and hands-on experience that give them a clear advantage when launching their careers, progressing from student to professional, and ultimately to future industry leaders.



Ravshan's Journey at Ritz-Carlton Geneva

by Stefanie Kovalev

Ravshan Khusenov, a Hospitality Business Management student at César Ritz Colleges Switzerland, has always been drawn to the art of luxury hospitality. “My passion for hospitality and my desire to immerse myself in the excellence of Swiss hospitality inspired me to move to Switzerland and pursue my studies at César Ritz,” he shares. Originally from Uzbekistan, Ravshan graduated with a gold medal from the International Mathematics School, reflecting both his dedication and strong academic foundation.

During his internship at the Ritz-Carlton Geneva, Ravshan joined the F&B Service department at the Living Room Restaurant.

“A typical day involved preparing the bar and terrace for service, welcoming and assisting guests, taking orders,

serving beverages and food, and maintaining high standards of service throughout the day,” he recalls. Beyond day-to-day operations, he also contributed to special events and collaborated with other departments to ensure seamless guest experiences.

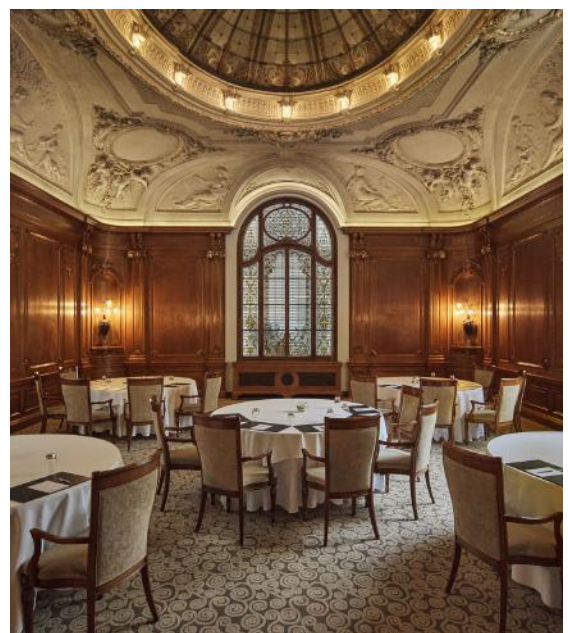
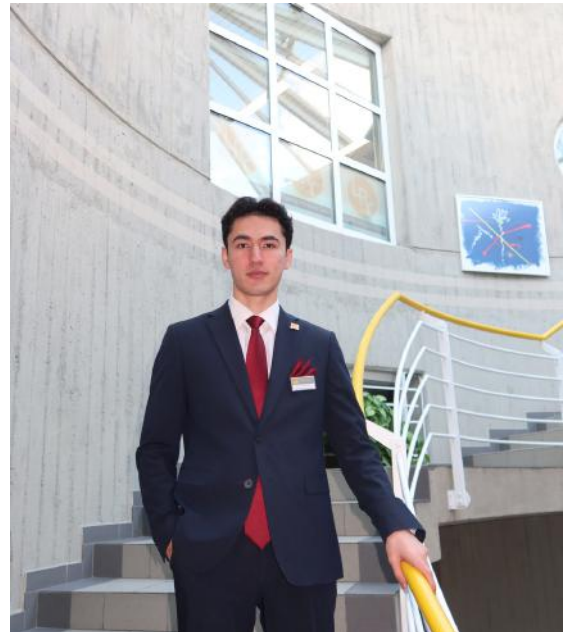
Ravshan highlights the invaluable lessons he gained from working alongside the F&B team. “I learned the importance of teamwork, communication, attention to detail, and professionalism in a luxury hospitality setting,” he notes.

Under the mentorship of senior staff, he participated in training sessions covering service standards and operational procedures, which deepened his understanding of high-end hospitality.

The internship also allowed Ravshan to refine his personal and professional skills. “I developed advanced customer service skills, improved my teamwork and communication abilities, and learned to anticipate guest needs in a high-paced environment,” he reflects. A particularly memorable experience was assisting a VIP guest with a personalized service request, which “reinforced the importance of attention to detail” and the impact of thoughtful service.

The workplace culture at the Ritz-Carlton Geneva made a lasting impression. “The company culture is professional, inclusive, and excellence-driven. My colleagues and supervisors provided guidance, support, and constructive feedback, which made me feel welcomed and valued as part of the team,” Ravshan explains.

Looking ahead, Ravshan is determined to pursue leadership roles in luxury F&B operations. “My short-term plan is to continue gaining experience in F&B departments and develop my skills to eventually become an F&B Director. I aim to further develop my leadership abilities, and in the long term to open my own hotel.” he says. He encourages other students to embrace similar opportunities: “I would highly recommend this internship, as it provides hands-on experience in a high-standard luxury environment, valuable mentorship, and opportunities for personal and professional growth.”



Dubai Dreams: Sophia's Internship Journey

by Stefanie Kovalev

The path to luxury hospitality was anything but linear for Term 5 Hospitality student Sophia Carrozzo. After completing an Italian high school focused on ancient studies and preparing for medical school, she realized her true passion lay elsewhere. “I understood medicine wasn’t my path, so I chose hospitality,” Sophia explains. Drawn to the dynamism and emotional depth of the industry, she set out to build an international career rooted in excellence.

Sophia completed both of her internships at Kempinski Hotel & Residences Palm Jumeirah in Dubai, a destination she had visited before and admired for its extraordinary standard of luxury. She discovered the opportunity through the school’s career office postings and secured her placement during IRF.



“Dubai inspired me—the level of luxury they reach is unbelievable. I wanted to learn from the very best,” she says.

As a Management Trainee in the Front Office, Sophia rotated through guest experience, reception, and concierge. Her days began early, often filled with check-ins, check-outs, cash and card transactions, handling guest requests, and resolving complaints with professionalism.



Trained by both the Duty Manager and the Executive Hotel Manager, she quickly absorbed Kempinski's culture of precision and European-rooted luxury. "The team aimed for excellence in everything, and I learned to do the same," she adds.

Throughout her internship, Sophia mastered property management systems, time management, guest-satisfaction platforms, and the art of communicating confidently. The biggest challenge—handling demanding guests while multitasking—became her greatest growth point. "Check-in after check-in, problem after problem, I became confident in my abilities," she reflects.

While she realized her future may not be inside hotel operations, the internship clarified her passion for luxury and heritage. Sophia now plans to pursue a master's in luxury management and dreams of entering the watchmaking or jewelry industry.

Her advice to future interns: "Take every chance to learn, connect with people, and never settle. Do not wake up to mediocrity but to excellency."





London Calling: Mark-Antony at Mandarin Oriental

by Stefanie Kovalev

For Mark-Antony Joinville, interning at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London, was “nothing short of an amazing experience.” He rotated between two distinct departments—Dinner by Heston Blumenthal, the hotel’s renowned Two-Michelin-Star restaurant, and Guest Experience within Rooms Division.

This allowed him to witness and contribute to luxury hospitality from both an operational and highly

personalized service perspective. Working at Dinner by Heston taught him the precision, discipline, and creativity required in a world-class dining environment. In Guest Experience, he discovered how the smallest gestures can transform a stay.

“Across both departments, I gained a deep understanding of what delivering the exceptional truly means,” he reflects.



Of course, the experience also came with challenges. Balancing multiple guest requests during peak periods while maintaining flawless attention to detail tested his adaptability. He credits his supportive and highly professional team for helping him consistently uphold Mandarin Oriental's exceptional service standards.

This internship proved pivotal in shaping Mark-Antony's career goals. Exposure to multiple departments broadened his understanding of the industry and provided clarity about the path he hopes to pursue. As he puts it, "This experience has helped me understand where I want to build my future in hospitality."

Throughout his internship, Mark-Antony strengthened his communication skills, developed the ability to anticipate guest needs, and learned to stay calm and confident during high-pressure moments.

Some of his favorite memories were created during the festive season, when the Guest Experience team elevated the hotel's holiday atmosphere. Mark-Antony fondly recalls helping personalize guest rooms with custom Christmas trees and delivering festive cakes, gifts, and thoughtful touches. "Seeing guests' reactions made every effort worthwhile," he shares.



Top of the World: Paolo in St. Moritz

by Alex I Chun Hung



Paolo De Gregorio, a Term 6 Hospitality student at César Ritz Colleges Switzerland, has been immersed in the world of hospitality since childhood. Growing up in Naples, his family owned a Bib Gourmand-awarded Italian restaurant, which is the place that shaped Paolo's early connection to the industry. "Hospitality has been my passion since I was a child," Paolo said.

During high school, Paolo specialized in languages, studying English, German, and French. Yet, despite his strong academic foundation, he felt compelled to challenge himself further. "At some point, I wanted to step out of my comfort zone," he explained. That decision led him to Switzerland, widely regarded as one of the world's leading

destinations for hospitality education. Reflecting on his time at César Ritz, Paolo noted, "Over the past two years, I've improved and grown a lot, both personally and professionally."

Paolo completed his second six-month internship as a Front Office Trainee at Grace La Margna St. Moritz, a five-star boutique hotel that opened in the summer of 2023. Unlike many properties in St. Moritz, Grace La Margna operates year-round, offering a distinct positioning within the destination. "The hotel I worked in is very different," Paolo said. "The design is modern and contemporary, so when you enter, it doesn't feel like a typical St. Moritz property."

What's interesting is that Grace La Marna was not new to Paolo's career journey. When applying for his first internship, he had submitted an application to the same hotel but was unsuccessful due to the position being filled. For his second internship, however, Paolo reconnected with the property after meeting the Human Resources Manager and Assistant Executive Manager at the International Recruitment Forum. There, he expressed his strong motivation to join the team and specifically applied for a Front Office role.

"I wanted to explore Front Office, as I had always worked in Food & Beverage," he explained.

Paolo recalled his onboarding as both intense and rewarding. During his first week, he received comprehensive training under the guidance of a supervisor and quickly became proficient in property management systems such as Opera Cloud and HotelKit. "My supervisor felt I was capable and confident, so by the third day, she allowed me to start handling check-ins," Paolo said.

While his first guest interactions came with natural nerves, his confidence soon took over.

"I enjoy chatting with guests, so that part came naturally to me," he added.





Throughout the internship, Paolo experienced morning, afternoon, and late shifts. His responsibilities included check-ins and check-outs, arrival and departure checks, guest profile management, billing and payments, handling guest requests, interdepartmental communication, as well as managing loyalty benefits and room upgrades.

One particular guest interaction stood out as a defining moment. Paolo recalled assisting a repeat guest who had previously stayed in a Deluxe Room and, on his return, booked a Junior Suite. Expecting a significantly larger space, the guest expressed disappointment and returned to the front desk seeking a solution upon seeing the room. With no alternative Junior Suites available, the guest stated that they would rather accept a downgrade. At that moment, the only available option was the Panoramic Junior Suite, a higher-category room. Paolo took the initiative to consult with

the manager and proposed offering the room as a complimentary upgrade. The manager agreed.

“The guest absolutely loved it,” Paolo said. “When I returned to reception, he told me he would book the same room again for his next stay.”

For Paolo, the experience reinforced a core hospitality principle. “Sometimes you need to prioritize the guest experience over revenue,” he said proudly. His manager later commended him for handling the situation with professionalism, flexibility, and adaptability. “When guests come back and specifically ask for you, that’s a big achievement,” Paolo reflected. “It means they feel comfortable and safe with you.”

Although Paolo did not rotate formally through other departments, he received exposure to Marketing and Guest Relations. “That was especially important in our hotel,” he explained,

“because when one department was busy, others would step in to assist, so one needs to know a bit of everything.” Local knowledge proved particularly essential in a luxury destination like St. Moritz, where guests frequently seek unique recommendations and activity guidance. Working in a smaller property also allowed Paolo to collaborate more closely with other departments, giving him a broader understanding of hotel operations compared to a large chain environment.


Beyond technical competencies, Paolo believes the internship strengthened his soft skills most significantly. “The two most important lessons for me were communication and flexibility,” he said. Whether interacting by phone or in person, with guests or colleagues, having clear, professional communication in a multicultural environment proved essential.

Equally important was the ability to adapt quickly to unexpected situations.

“Looking back on those six months, those are the skills I’m most proud of developing.”

Looking ahead, Paolo plans to join a Management-in-Training program in the Rooms Division, with a particular interest in Guest Relations. During his internship, he discovered a strong passion for guest-facing roles and relationship-building. “In Guest Relations, you have more time to interact with guests,” he explained. “It’s also a great opportunity to build a professional network, which is extremely important.” In the long term, Paolo also hopes to pursue a master’s degree focused on entrepreneurship. His ultimate goal is to expand his family business and to eventually establish a company of his own.





“The first thing is that you have to like what you do. Hospitality is not an easy industry, you need to be ready to commit yourself fully. Every position has its own difficulties. You need to know how to deal with different types of guests, especially guests from different cultures. Therefore, be passionate, make mistakes and learn from them.”

**Paolo De Gregorio
Front Office Intern
Hotel Grace La Margna St Moritz**

Redefine Your Path with Huyen

by Alex I Chun Hung



Khanh Huyen, from Vietnam, is pursuing a dual Bachelor of Arts degree in Hospitality Business Management at César Ritz Colleges Switzerland and Washington State University. Studying hospitality management has been Huyen's dream since she was in the ninth grade. A pivotal moment came when she attended the César Ritz Open Day in 2022, what began as curiosity quickly turned into conviction.

Nearly two years into her studies at César Ritz, Huyen's confidence in both herself and her career direction has only strengthened. "César Ritz has supported my personal growth, leadership development, and entrepreneurial thinking, the skills I know I can apply across diverse

industries in the future," she says.

Huyen's first internship took place in Switzerland at a historic five-star hotel, where she worked as a Food and Beverage intern; for her second internship, however, Huyen made a choice that set her apart from many of her peers. Rather than continuing along a conventional hospitality track, she returned to her home country to work as a Sales Intern at UT Trading and Services Company Limited, a diversified enterprise rooted primarily in the construction sector. "I chose a different and more complex path with a broader purpose," she explains. "I wanted to challenge myself and expand my business perspective."

UT operates across two major business divisions: commercial and industrial, with the industrial arm specializing in construction materials, renovation projects, and new developments. These operations require close coordination across departments within the commercial arm, including sales, where Huyen was placed. During her internship, she worked directly with clients, managing product sales and consultations, particularly within UT's extensive paint product supply business.

The role demanded rapid immersion into product knowledge. Huyen learned to navigate product specifications, functional applications, color systems, and pricing structures, while also

developing a professional, consultative approach to client relationships. It was a sharp contrast to her hospitality background, but one that pushed her to grow quickly and decisively.

UT's internal culture played a significant role in shaping her experience. Weekly meetings emphasized guidance, collaborative problem-solving, and constructive feedback. "I felt safe to learn, experiment, and grow," Huyen says. "We supported one another through both challenging and rewarding moments." Within this environment, she noticed a marked increase in her confidence, sense of responsibility, and professional maturity.



Still, the transition was not without difficulty. Huyen recalls that her first month was particularly challenging. The workload was heavy, and the breadth of product knowledge required felt overwhelming. Early mistakes such as recommending unsuitable products to clients initially shook her confidence. “It was discouraging,” she admits, “and I realized that relying on product sheets and a single mentor wasn’t working.”

Rather than retreat, Huyen reassessed her learning strategy, and then adopted a more proactive approach. She sought advice from multiple colleagues, closely observed how experienced team members engaged with clients, and practiced analyzing customer needs in real time. Gradually, uncertainty gave way to clarity, and curveballs became a catalyst for growth.



One of the most memorable moments of her internship came when she got the opportunity to collaborate with UT’s Event Team. As the company celebrated its 20th anniversary, Huyen served as the Master of Ceremonies for a gala event attended by more than 200 guests. “It was especially meaningful to me because I was also 20 years old at the time,” she says.

The role required weeks of preparation, late-night rehearsals, and meticulous coordination. When the event finally unfolded successfully, the applause marked more than just an outstanding execution, it marked a personal breakthrough. “That experience taught me that a script is only a guideline,” Huyen reflects. “Successful delivery depends on flexibility, audience engagement, and the ability to handle unexpected situations.”

Looking back, Huyen is confident that stepping into a completely different industry was the right decision. The crossover prompted her to rethink what her education truly represents. Working in a corporate environment allowed her to develop a broad spectrum of transferable skills, from customer orientation – strategic thinking – communication – emotional intelligence – to problem-solving – all capabilities that extend far beyond any single sector.. At the same time, her hospitality background proved to be an asset rather than a limitation. “Hospitality is a universal language, it exists in every service and business industry, not just in hotels,” Huyen says.

Beyond professional development, the internship also shaped Huyen on a more personal level. Reflecting on the experience, she notes that her greatest takeaway was not merely acquiring skills, but learning how to navigate life with greater intention. “It taught me to move with planning, patience, and purpose, without rushing recklessly,” she says.


Huyen particularly pointed out the anxieties many young people face today. “People worry about wasting time or not achieving enough,” Huyen observes. “But time moves forward regardless of how anxious you feel. So there’s no need to panic about it slipping away.” What truly stays, she believes, are human connections, shared moments with loved ones, and one’s inner resilience, values, and health. “Pursuing achievement doesn’t mean you have to rush through life, because success isn’t about moving faster, it’s about moving steadily in the right direction, with the right mindset.”



For students currently searching for internships, Huyen offers pearls of wisdom shaped by lived experience. “Internships don’t have to match your major perfectly,” she says. “What matters is that they align with who you are.” She encourages young professionals to explore industries that genuinely spark their curiosity, even if the path feels unconventional. “These experiences help you understand yourself better and uncover your strengths.”

Huyen also emphasizes the importance of workplace culture. “Work will always be challenging, but the right environment gives you a sense of belonging,” Huyen reflects. To her, signing a contract represents more than securing a role; it is a commitment to personal growth.

Huyen knows that her César Ritz Colleges studies and internships are only the opening move, the first chapter in what will be a full and rewarding professional career in the eventual industry of her choosing.



**“When one chapter of life comes to a close,
what matters most is what you carry forward
with you.”**

**Khanh Huyen
Sales Intern**

UT Trading and Services Company Limited, Vietnam

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