

Surakarta, Indonesia
Clinical Internship, IFMSA
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Arrival

Before travelling I was required to have health insurance and a visa which could not be obtained upon arrival as this does not include unpaid working or interning.

As I'm from Northern Ireland, I travelled to Dublin where I took Emirates Airline to Dubai and then on to Jakarta, two 8 hour flights. In total this return trip cost €800. I then took another 1 hour flight from Jakarta to Surakarta (aka Solo) where I was picked up from the airport by my CP who took me to my accommodation.

Accommodation

Our accommodation was a hostel, there were 9 girls and each had their own room. The room consisted of a mattress on the floor with a sheet and pillow but no duvet (too hot), some drawers, a table, a chair and a small bathroom which had a toilet and shower head.

Unfortunately there was no kitchen at all (we eat outside every day) and no fridge, so dairy products must be eaten the same day they were bought. There was no air conditioner, only 1 fan per room which meant at night it was hot. Also local mosques woke you up quite early. It was kept clean by the owner but the country has many insects and rodents that you cannot keep out as the hostel was not a closed building. Mosquitos and geckos were very common (bring anti-itch cream) and sometimes also mice and cockroaches in the bedroom but thankfully never me. There was a common area to relax, just some sofas and a table but often we were told to be quiet.

Our accommodation was a perfect 5 minute walk from the hospital where we were working.

Internship

On the first day my CP took me to the hospital, she took me to meet my supervisor, the head of the Pediatric Surgery department, Dr. Suwardi.

We started ward rounds everyday at 6am. You could start at 8am if you did not want to attend rounds, they did not mind but then you do not learn as much. Surgeries start from 8am but they are very relaxed and with no rush so sometimes they start at 9 or 10am. We were provided with all equipment and clothing needed for operations. We did also have to work every Saturday however this meant we finished the required minimum 18 days within 3 weeks which meant there was more time to travel after!

We also attended meetings and case reviews, as well as write a report on a current patient which you then had an important part to assist in this surgery.

The supervisor, residents and students were very very nice and helpful, always answering questions.

The city

The city is about 46km² with around 3.5 million people living there. It was also busy and hectic, driving was crazy with no rules.

We travel by walk but mostly uber and gojak (moped taxi).

Solo is a very unwesternised city and there is only a small number of restaurants for alcohol, and only beer. You should keep covered and not only wear holiday clothes.

Close to us we find a small sports centre where we go to swimming pool but we are stared at in bikini. There is not a lot to see and was not great social scene in this city for foreigners but the locals are very very lovely and will always help if you need!

Outside city is important temples Prambanan and Borobudur (largest buddhist temple in the world) and some nice waterfalls.

Food

The food tasty but is very spicy! (For little spice say "Tidak pedas" It is also very sweet. It is mostly made of rice with fried meat (chicken), tofu, tempeh and vegetables. Some very nice desserts. They drink refreshing ice tea.
You cannot drink tap water here.

Travelling

Travelling during the exchange is not so easy as we had to work also Saturdays. The nearest biggest city was Yogyakarta where we travelled to 3 times and met with other IFMSA outgoings. The social scene for westerners there was much better and together we organised water rafting trip. We were also there for Independence day so it was very exciting to see the city so nicely and colourfully decorated.

Mostly everyone travelled after their exchange as it is so cheap and backpackers heaven. Best way to travel on Bali is to learn to drive moped (very easy), private taxi and boat. We went to Karimunjawa islands which were Paradise perfect. Also travelled all over Bali, to Lombok and Gili islands.

I travelled for 3 weeks with one girl I met on exchange, it was great as we had same ideas and plans. We tried surfing, snorkelling and scuba diving.

Overall appreciation

Although the exchange accommodation was not great, the experience I had there was wonderful. The doctors were very helpful and educating and I was able to assist in surgeries and see things I would not normally see.

Indonesia is such a beautiful country with friendly locals and travellers from everywhere. Here you will meet amazing people to have adventures with and make great memories as well as see some of the most beautiful beaches and scenery in the world.

Stay at least 2 weeks extra!

I would seriously recommend coming here, I do not regret anything except that I could not stay longer.