

2014

A year with Venture

Overview

An internship with Venture is a one off experience that will give you an insight into how a small travel company works to deliver its various trips. Your role within the company may include online marketing, social media, website development, accounts, trip development (research), leading and everything in between. Depending on how well you adapt to different roles within the business, you may have the opportunity to travel to Japan where much of this company is based. Here you will get hands on experience, through leading half day tours in the cultural hub of Japan, Kyoto.

Review

At the beginning of the year I was involved with the social media side of things for the company. Initially I was put in charge of planning posts and getting more followers/likes on our accounts; helping to boost our reach online. Website development and page design was also a skill I developed, allowing me to keep the website up to date with current information and trips. During the summer I visited and participated in a few sporting events, the Pier to Pub and Mountain to Surf at Lorne, and a triathlon in Horsham. Because the company is involved with a lot of fitness based camps/tours/trainings, it was good for me to see how other companies run their own events. This helped me get a feel for what people were looking for in an event, from the drink stations to the crowds cheering you on, it was all very helpful for my understanding on events and the organisation involved; and to look at this from a company's perspective gave me even further insight. I was also involved in an open water swimming camp along the Great Ocean Road, which was a fantastic experience. I was a support leader on this trip as Aaron Davis the founder of Venture was the main leader, this camp gave me my first taste of a trip and how much effort needs to go in to make it run smoothly. Venture owns a house in the beautiful Grampian's National Park (Halls Gap) and to get a bit more use out of it, we decided to try and run some tours in the area. Mainly mountain bike riding along some of the back roads, but we also offered trail running and other fitness based activities for tourists and locals in the area. This was a good project for me to have a go at, as it would allow me to see something from start to finish. It involved a lot of planning and advertising through social media as well as print based



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media in the town. We had some interest in the programs, however it was really a trial and error type process, so we weren't expecting too many clients; overall though it was a great learning experience. For much of February I was based in the company house in Kyoto, Japan. This time was spent learning about the Japanese side of the business and also undertaking a leader training course to familiarise myself with the expectations and requirements of being a guide in a foreign country. Because I have a keen interest in running I was able to head out and explore the trails in the mountains nearby, as later in the year the company was looking to run a trail running camp, so I was just helping to get some of the research out of the way. Once back in Australia it was back to the Grampians house to continue with local tours. Living in the house alone, without TV can be a little solitary and quiet, so just prepared for that. June, July and August were spent back in Japan. But not only in Kyoto, but also Tokyo! One of the most exciting and full on cities in the world. These are the summer months in Japan and the only time when Mount Fuji is able to be climbed safely. Although sometimes 30 degrees Celsius at the base, it can be near freezing on top so remember to pack your woollies! First I had a training climb with another leader, but from then on I was in charge of getting clients from Tokyo, to the 5th Station (Hut) on Mount Fuji. We would then climb up to some of the closer huts to the summit (approximately a 5-6 hours climb), where we would rest from 7pm – 2am. Then it was time to hike to the summit for sunrise at around 4:30am in the morning! Although a very tiring experience, it was always a very special experience. When I wasn't climbing mount Fuji or checking out the quirky suburbs in Tokyo (in my free time), I was back in Kyoto running the local tours. A cycle tour in the morning and a walking tour in the afternoon, around the beautiful city of Kyoto. Although generally quite enjoyable, you will get groups of people who maybe don't tend to gel that well together, or appear to not be very content with the services you are providing them. You need to expect and be prepared for situations like this as they will pop up from time to time. For a couple of weeks I was also placed as Urban Adventure's Manager, which was a challenge and step up from what I had previously been doing with the company. It involved coordinating other leaders, as well as organising private tours with clients. It doesn't sound like much work, but it can be quite intense when there is a lot going on at once.



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After my 3 months I was back in Oz for a little rest before co-guiding a large Australian trip with 27 clients for 3 weeks. This was the biggest challenge yet. There was unfortunately some major issues with this trip, as the group had booked what they were hoping was going to be an extremely informative and educational 3 weeks, although Jade (the other leader) and myself were not equipped with the in depth knowledge they required. So there was times of frustration, anger, disappointment, however it was great to be able to do our best with the situation and give the group the best "aussie" experience we could. After travelling from Sydney to Melbourne, to the Great Ocean Road, to the Grampians and Kangaroo Island. Then to Uluru, Alice Springs and Darwin before concluding in Sydney, you could say we were all pretty well bugged by the end. By the end of the trip everyone had enjoyed themselves, thankfully. However there were some very high pressure situations along the way that you need to be ready for. I doubt Venture will ever be involved with a tour like this again, so there is no need to worry about this kind of situation happening again. I was off again to Japan for another month (all of October) and this time I was based in Kyoto, as a full time manager of the Kyoto Urban Adventure tours. This was again a great experience and one that does require a lot of organisation and scheduling to make sure everything is set to go. I met many great groups of people along the way and this is what keeps you going in this industry I believe. My final month in November was a quieter month, it included some trip research in the nearby Grampians before concluding with another open water swimming camp along the Great Ocean Road. I was in charge of all the accommodation bookings as well as surf hire for support in the water (stand up paddle boards). My sister also joined me on this trip, as we required 2 people in the water, making sure all our competent swimmers were safe in the water. My gap year in 2014 was an incredible experience that has given me a taste of what **real** life after school and University might be like.

Healy Hammerton



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