

# Profile: Rebecca Stanley

## Hometown:

Auckland, New Zealand

## Program:

Work France

## Tell us about where you lived and what you got up to in France?

I'm living in Montpellier, the capital of the Languedoc Roussillon region in the South of France. I work in an English pub and live with a French family. When I get the chance I try and explore the local region or go further afield to discover other parts of France.

## What are some of the experiences that you had which made an impact on you?

Spending time with French families, experiencing their culture, lifestyle and food. Travelling around France and soaking up the history. Meeting French people who are genuinely interested in where you are from and want to learn more about your culture whilst offering you the opportunity to experience their own. Meeting other foreigners who are also living and working in France.

## Were there any times that were hard?

The initial job hunt was difficult as many people just take your CV and you never hear back from them. Even French people struggle to find work and in Montpellier there are a lot of students so you are competing with them to find jobs. It's also not easy to find a job as a foreigner when you don't have a strong grasp of the French language unless you are aiming for jobs that are specifically for English-speakers.

## Top 3 experiences iso far?

- 1) Flying above the coast of Brittany with a French friend who has his pilot's licence.
- 2) Hitting the piste in the ski resort of Val d'Isere
- 3) Seeing a traditional "course Carmarquoise" (running of the bulls) in a small village in the Carmargue and then dining on Taureau (bull) in the sunshine on the terrace of a French family.



## Did you take a language course and was it beneficial?

Yes, I spent 2 months at a language school here in Montpellier before I started work. It was hugely beneficial as I met my host family who I continued to live with after the course and I improved my French to an acceptable standard. I was also able to get my teacher to help me put my CV into French and cast an eye over my cover letter.

## What is your typical day like?

No day is the same for me as my work timetable changes each week and I also help my host family with day to day tasks as they arise. I generally get up and help my host family a bit around the house, then I might go to the gym (to combat all the cheese, bread and pastries I've been eating), maybe meet some friends for a coffee in the afternoon, help cook dinner at the house and then head to work at the pub in the evening.

## How did you find employment?

I was lucky enough to walk into the pub with my CV in hand at the end of summer when a number of existing staff decided to leave. I had been around all the English and Irish pubs in town and it was a case of being in the right place at the right time but also of being a bit persistent. I don't think it's good enough to just leave your CV with the first staff member you see. You need to ask to speak to the manager. I did this and ended up having an interview virtually on the spot. I went back a week later to see if she'd considered me and then a few days later she rang to say I had a job.



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Did you find France a good base to travel throughout the rest of Europe? Where did you go and what bargains did you find?

I'm planning on doing most of my European travel after my time in France. I also feel that I've wanted to make the most of my time in France and therefore see as much of the country as I can before exploring the rest of Europe. From my trips to Brittany in the west and Strasbourg in the east I have realised that France is an immense country with so much to see and do. Montpellier has proved to be a good base for travelling within France but I have also done a couple of trips into Spain: to Barcelona and the Spanish Pyrenees.

Renting a holiday house with a group of friends in a small village about 15 minutes drive from one of the touristy cities near the Spanish Pyrenees proved to be inexpensive compared to much of the accommodation you find in the ski stations.

I also got a 12-25 year old card for the SNCF (French rail system). The card costs 49 euros, is valid for one year and gives you up to 50% off the normal price of train travel. You can buy it anytime before your 26th birthday. I have easily got my 49 euros worth!

Do you have any advice for someone who wants a France adventure?

Regardless of what sort of job you are looking for you will need at least a basic level of French to get by in France. I imagine there are more work opportunities for foreigners in Paris, but just remember it is an expensive city to live in so maybe think about looking for work in other cities or in the provinces.

Doing a language course is not only helpful to improve your French, but also for making contacts who might be able to help you in your job search.

Did you have a good experience abroad with IEP and did you feel supported by them?

Overall it has been a good experience. I have to say I have been lucky enough to have everything fall into place for me here and I haven't had to use the services of Aquarius during my time in France too much. I did however find the visa assistance and information, provided by IEP prior to my arrival in France, useful for giving me an idea of what to expect upon my arrival and how to go about finding work. I also found Katrina at STA extremely helpful in assisting with my travel arrangements, especially after I had left NZ.

What did you find valuable in going to France on an IEP program?

For me it was a matter of knowing that I wanted to spend a year in France but not having the time on my hands or the know-how to go about organising my trip. It's also been valuable just knowing that there is help available to me here in France if I need it.

What is next for you?

Back to NZ to soak up the atmosphere during the Rugby World Cup. I'm not entirely sure what I'll do in terms of my career, but I know that I've got the travel bug now and a trip to South America is high on my agenda.



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