

# Can I do an internship in Africa? Yes you can, and you should!



Maxime Chaury got interested in Africa very early on with the adoption of his brother and sister from Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) when he was nine years old. Subsequently, he fed his interest in the continent with his reading in African history and literature, his non-profit commitments, academic study and professional experiences. Curious and eager, Maxime came to Sciences Po for a wide-ranging education with an international perspective. Maxime graduated in 2015 with a Master of International Public Management from the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA). He now works as a consultant for Roland Berger in Casablanca. After several experiences in Africa, he is convinced that the continent is a land of opportunity for those who want to develop their initiative and entrepreneurial skills.

## What was your study path at Sciences Po?

(M.C): I studied on the Paris campus and spent my third year on exchange at the University of Chicago, before returning for a [Master of International Public Management at PSIA](#) (Africa and Emerging Economies concentration). While at PSIA I had the opportunity to do a gap year in Vietnam, and a semester-long programme alongside the army cadets at Saint Cyr military academy. During my studies at Sciences Po, I also volunteered as treasurer for [ASPA \(Sciences Po for Africa Association\)](#).

## What are you doing now and where has your career taken you so far?

(M.C): I am currently based in Casablanca (Morocco) as a consultant for Roland Berger, the European leader in strategy consulting. We support African companies and government bodies in their development, performance improvement and implementation of innovative and sustainable strategies. Previously, I was a communication and political affairs intern at the French consulate in Cape Town (South Africa), a business analyst

for Business France in Hanoi (Vietnam), a business developer for SNCF Geodis in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) and for Rocket Internet in Algiers, before working as a private equity analyst for Adenia Partners in Abidjan (Ivory Coast).

## What are the advantages of an internship in Africa?

(M.C): First of all, in today's world, building an international CV and being open to diversity is not just an asset; it's a necessity. An experience in Africa is ideal from this perspective and lets you discover countries that are very different in terms of culture, languages and lifestyles.

In addition, because Africa is a continent with rapid growth and many projects but a relative lack of qualified personnel, you are sure to be given more responsibility and more chances to use your initiative than you would on an internship in Europe, where the market is more saturated. So in my opinion, it is an excellent opportunity for anyone who wants to develop their adaptability and entrepreneurial skills.

## What difficulties did you encounter on your internships in Africa?

(M.C): I had no particular difficulties. That's really the message I want to get across: there are many opportunities in Africa for those who are willing to step out of their comfort zone, and in my opinion there is little risk—it's more a question of Europeans overestimating the risks, due in large part to the media coverage of the continent.

In fact, in the half a dozen African countries that I have had the opportunity to visit, it was really easy to settle in and the living conditions of an intern are better than in Europe. Unlike in Asia where the language barrier can be a problem, most people in Africa speak good English, French or Portuguese.

## What advice would you give our students or recent graduates who want to do an internship in Africa?

(M.C): Set your prejudices aside. No matter where you do your internship, you will learn a lot on every level (culturally, professionally, socially, etc.), so be open to opportunities, even if they're not in the country you were aiming for to begin with. Also, don't be afraid; if you fantasise too much about the dangers of life you'll end up never leaving your house. Apart from some very specific areas (part of Somalia, South Sudan or eastern Congo for instance), most African countries are safe provided you are vigilant and follow any advice your local colleagues and friends give you.

In short: yes you can, and you should!

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