

A month in the life of an intern

Having graduated from University with a BSc in Oceanography, I was keen to continue my learning. I saw an email update from DAN advertising the internship program, so I decided to jump into the deep end and apply for a place. Looking back now, I am grateful for the opportunity to attend DAN Europe's HQ in Roseto degli Abruzzi, Italy, to gain further understanding of behind the scenes at DAN and to make some great new contacts for my network.

During the month based in Roseto there were various lectures and talks that covered what DAN do together with updates on their current research. These were given in person and sometime by Skype video, by researchers affiliated with DAN. Knowing the talks were mostly about current dive medicine, I was quite nervous that I might be out of my depth, especially surrounded mostly by other medical students or doctors. Thankfully, this was not the case, I did not feel this way at all, other interns and speakers were especially welcoming and explained everything thoroughly.



The first week outlined the different aspects of DAN, including insurance, emergency response and public communications. I think quite a few interns were quite surprised with how much DAN are active in. The following weeks' focus became all about publications and current research projects, delivered by a variety of specialists who are associated or work for DAN directly. For example, the DAN EU project on cognitive autonomous diving buddy (CADDY) and Green Bubble project for sustainable diving.

The final weeks were then dedicated to training and research practice, looking at gas bubble formations and risk factors. Massimo Pieri taught the Dive Safety Laboratory techniques, covering data collection, input and collation. Using specialised doppler recording equipment we learnt how to effectively measure the divers blood flow as well as capturing potential bubbles post dive. These recordings are then analysed and graded by senior researchers to gain further insight in possible predispositions for the bends. Learning and becoming qualified to collect this research has allowed me and others to become active researchers during our own time, on dive trips. As qualified DAN research assistants, we can now request to borrow a

doppler machine to collect and contribute data at any dive site.



On completion of the training we were able to put our learning into practice on the Tremiti Islands. Our group worked with two dive centres on Tremiti to collect as much bubble data as possible on divers who had just surfaced. All the recordings taken are then added to the database, giving increased validity to any findings. This in turn will then go on to increasing safety boundaries for recreational diving with the hope of reducing adverse events.

Overall, spending the month learning about safe and responsible diving was extremely beneficial and something I am now more passionate than ever. Living with the other interns was another bonus, making great new friends while exploring the local cuisine. We even managed to find time for sunbathing and swimming in the Adriatic Sea! Highly recommended...



About the author

Leander has been a water baby from day one, with a career path to show it. As a qualified oceanographer, commercial diver and PADI Instructor, she spends as much time devoted to marine conservation and dive safety as possible. Despite completing the majority of dives in the UK, Leander is able to appreciate other beautiful dive sites across the world, including Mozambique, Italy, Iceland, Malta and the Bahamas.

