

The Internship

This year 10 clerks were chosen for the program: two from NYU, and the remaining 8 from a select group of other US and European law schools. Several of the clerks assist two judges, but most work exclusively for one judge. The internship involves the same types of activities as a US clerkship, though there is perhaps more of a focus on research than drafting work. Clerks also attend hearings, oral arguments and other court proceedings. The official languages of the Court are English and French and clerks may be assigned to a judge who works in either language. Having said that, if a clerk is assigned to an English-speaking judge, French ordinarily will be used only for communications with Court staff and reading legal texts and commentaries. Clerks are placed either in individual offices or 2-3 person offices. They are given a personal phone line and computer and have full access to the Peace Palace library.

Living in the Hague

The Hague is a lot more vibrant and picturesque than I imagined. Although the feel of the place is quiet and the pace leisurely, the city has several charming streets lined with restaurants, bars and cafes. The locals are very friendly and most, if not all, speak excellent English. Having said that, the Hague is not known for its speedy service, and you will be told repeatedly to “be patient” when asking how long it will be before your food, bankcard, or internet will arrive.

Art-lovers will find much in the Hague to keep them occupied. The Hague’s Maurituis gallery, for instance, houses works by Van Dyke, Rubens, Rembrandt, Mondrian and a room-full of paintings by Vermeer, including the Girl with a Pearl Earring. The Peace Palace, in which the Court is located, is another of The Hague’s tourist attractions and makes for an extremely charming office! A google search will bring up a photo of the palace but it is impossible to capture the rose gardens, pond and magnificent interior that you walk through to get to your desk.

Getting Around

Most people get around town by bicycle come rain or shine but there is also a good tram network which means that getting around the Hague is easy. The Hague is also close to Amsterdam (40 minutes), Rotterdam (30 minutes), Leiden (20 minutes) and Delft (15 minutes), so perfect for day-trips or evenings out in other Dutch towns. Weekend breaks to other European destinations are also, on the whole, cheap and hassle-free. London is less than an hour away by plane, and Paris a mere 3.5 hours by train.

Tips on Finding an Apartment

The Hague has good accommodation for great prices, certainly as compared with New York or London, but also, I am told, compared to other European cities. On the whole I

would not recommend arranging accommodation from abroad, as it can normally be done in a few days once you arrive in The Hague, and it will help to be in the town to get a feel for the different neighbourhoods and see the apartment before committing. The vast majority of Dutch apartment buildings have impossibly windy staircases (I have seen only one elevator building in 3 months), so it can be important to know what floor an apartment is on, and to check the condition of the building. Many of the current clerks simply took over the apartment of a past clerk, and this is probably the most convenient thing to do, especially if photos can be exchanged and questions asked.

You should expect to pay about 1000 Euros for a good-sized (600 square ft) apartment in a good neighborhood, including utilities. When negotiating a lease, I would recommend agreeing on a price that includes utilities—these normally add approximately 150 euros to the rental price—so that you know in advance what your monthly bill will be, and so that your landlord deals with the companies on your behalf. It may also be possible to negotiate a waiver of the standard broker-fee (equivalent to one month's rent), if one applies. In terms of location, I would strongly recommend living in the Old Centre of town, surrounding the two main streets, Noordeinde and Denneweg. The Hague can be cold and rainy in the winter and being in the center means that you are within a 10-15 walk of the Peace Palace, and an even shorter walk to shops and restaurants.