

The WSJ San Francisco office

The WSJ has been hosting Burns fellows for a number of years now, but not in its SF office. Bureau chief Jonathan Krim, however, was very welcoming and open to the idea of hosting a fellow for the first time.

The SF office consists of approximately 50 people; most of them working for the SF tech section (including me), the US news section (politics etc.), videos, venture capital, and on top of that the website market watch.

Due to the 3 hour time difference to NYC, the work day at the Journal in SF is more compact. The editors have several conference calls with NYC in the early morning hours, and the reporters have simply less time for stories that are supposed to be for the paper.

Since the office is much smaller than the one in NYC, the atmosphere is more personal. I got to know most people at the office during my time, became friendly with several of them, and people went out for after work drinks every once in a while. Besides me, there was only one other intern in the office for a couple of weeks, which was also good to get tasks assigned.

I had told both my editor and the bureau chief right in the beginning that I was planning on writing 50% for them and 50% for my home outlet NZZ, and they were totally fine with it. Whenever I'd have to do research for my home newspaper, they were totally supportive. The reporters at the Journal were also helpful in providing contacts and discussing story ideas. And whenever I had time, I got to write pieces for the WSJ – mostly for its online section, but also for print. Especially for the online blog digits, there is a large demand for daily stories.

Overall, I strongly recommend the “WSJ SF tech office”, as they call it, very much to those fellows interested in writing for an English speaking outlet. It is a great opportunity to try out writing in English and, at the same time, get clips of one of the best newspapers out there. The WSJ edits its pieces heavily anyways – even among its own reporters –, so

the main task for the reporter is to get the reporting right and get a good story angle. The editor will then help to straighten out the writing part and adjust it to the WSJ's unique style.

Living in San Francisco

San Francisco is a wonderful city to live in. There are so many places to explore both in- and outside the city, and the Silicon Valley is its own treasure box for stories on top of that. Life on the West Coast is quite mellow. Though my coworkers were working very hard during the day (and mostly not taking lunch breaks), the office cleared at about 5 to 6 pm every day. Some colleagues were passionate swimmers, others really into hiking, and happily shared the best tips to explore the SF area.

August, however, is one of the coldest months in the Bay area and especially in San Francisco. Temperatures are between 15 and 20 degrees Celsius, and it is often foggy and windy. September was, however, warmer and sunnier. For those looking for a hot Californian summer, San Francisco is not really the place to go – unless you leave the Bay area on a regular basis and escape to Silicon Valley, where it's hot and sunny.

As far as costs are concerned, San Francisco has currently the most expansive rent market in the US. Finding a place to stay will be very expensive and very hard. I ended up living in Noe Valley, which is really in style right now and was really fun, though a 20 minute walk from Bart. Muni runs rather unreliably, and though Uber is a great alternative, it does add up if you use it on a regular basis. So I would suggest starting the hunt for an apartment early and try to get somewhat close to Bart.

With regard to security, San Francisco is supposedly a safe city; however I did witness a stabbing on a bus between two men right at the beginning – not a good experience. Taking buses in some neighborhoods is not the best idea, not even during the day. Also, there are many many homeless people, especially in the financial district where the WSJ is located.

The Burns fellowship

For months I've dreaded the moment when I'd write this report. It would mean the fellowship has ended, and I didn't want it to end.

We had been told during the orientation week to reach out to alumni in time, and I had planned on doing so – but time flew by and I ended up reaching out to only very few alumni. So I strongly recommend doing that!

The past three months have been fantastic beyond words, both professionally and personally. Thank you SO much to the IFJ and the ICFJ for facilitating it all, for matching us with US-outlets, the wonderful week in DC and for supporting us at all times.