

Research internship at Salk Institute, San Diego

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After months of preparation my Californian dream finally begun! From January till September 2019 I had the opportunity to do my internship, as part of my master's programme, in the Laboratory of Genetics of Rusty Gage at Salk institute, San Diego. I have worked, together with my supervisor Abed Al Fattah Mansour, on the *in vivo* organoid model, in which a human brain organoid is transplanted to a mouse brain. My aim was to define the interaction of the grafted organoid with its host's neurovascular system to study the functionality of the neurovascular network. My internship was a great opportunity to experience doing research at one of the leading research institutes of the world, being surrounded by very ambitious people. During my work, I gained a lot of knowledge about the work with stem cells and organoids. Moreover, I have learnt many new techniques to process organoids and analyse data. Overall, thanks to my supervisor, I improved my research skills enormously and know now how to perform good and efficient research.



Although, I have spent many hours on the lab (usually from 9.30 am to 7.30 pm during weekdays and a few hours in the weekend), I really enjoyed my time in San Diego. Living there was like the Californian dream, with 18-25 °C and sunshine all year round, every day felt like a holiday. Imagine yourself watching the sunset at the beach at the end of the day, after a long day of work. Or when you finish a little earlier, you go for a swim in the ocean or a surf session and immediately forget all the stress of your day. Yes, that's life in San Diego! The city itself has a lot to offer too, such as a neighbourhood with all delicious Italian restaurants ("Litte Italy"), wild sea lions chilling on shore, fancy clubs in Downtown and a baseball stadium. I also had the chance to make a lot of weekend trips with my new friends and housemates to discover the beautiful nature of America and Mexico. Close to San Diego, there are many national parks, such as Death Valley and Yosemite, and they all offer great hiking opportunities to explore the most amazing places.

Altogether, these 8 months were the best of my life. Both the internship and the life in San Diego were amazing experiences and I would recommend everyone to do an internship abroad! Therefore, I would like to thank the Nora Baart Foundation for their financial support.

