

SPECIALIZATION SEMESTER (STARS) EXPERIENCE REPORT



Submitted by

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My name is Muhammad Waleed Ansari, I am a EUREC master's candidate at the University of Oldenburg. I am writing this report to share my experience during my specialization in Solar Thermal technology at the CNRS-PROMES laboratory at Font Romeu Via Odeillo, France.



Upon reaching the town we were warmly received by Prof Quentin Falcoz, the specialization program coordinator. As it is a tourist destination so it was challenging for me to find a place to stay during my specialization but Prof Falcoz was kind enough to let me stay at the guest house of the Laboratory for three weeks, it is just at 2 mins walking distance from the research center.

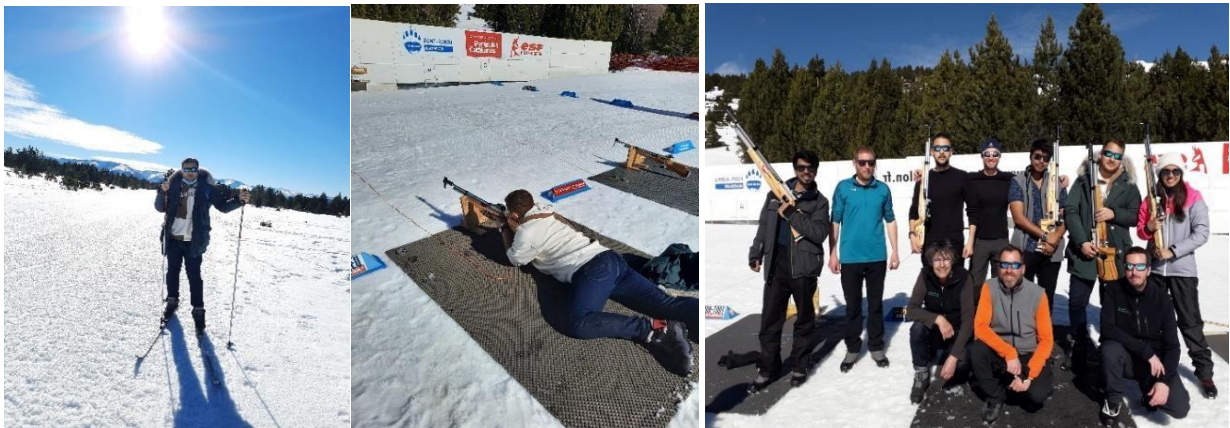


We had a brief kick-off meeting with Prof Falcoz in which he told us about the details of our course modules and other extracurricular activities. Our regular classes started right away. Although the research center was built decades ago it is still maintained and managed in a very decent way. We were vehemently welcomed by the faculty, staff, and other students and researchers. In no time we got comfortable with the people, weather, and

culture of the town. The climate conditions at the town are quite severe during the winter months but we were lucky to get some very good sunny days as well.



We were fortunate in a way because after two weeks of our arrival we went for cross country skiing aka biathlon as the skiing season was at its peak. It was a very exciting and memorable experience. We were provided with the skiing kits by our coordinator and preliminary training was also provided by experts in the sports.



During the course of four months, we were taught a lot of course materials extensively, we had lab experiments almost every week, and assignments, report writing, project, and presentations were a part of every course module.



We also had educational visits to ILLO and Themis power plants. The best part of the research center was its cafeteria, the food quality, hygiene, and hospitality was top-notch. We also had our personal lounge room and a sports room where we would go and relax during our free leisure time.



Our seniors and other peers guided us through every step of our journey, there is no public transport in the city and due to cold weather, it was difficult sometimes to go grocery shopping or do other chores. They always helped us through all thick and thin and their care was very overwhelming as far as I am concerned. I would urge the upcoming students to get accommodation near the research center, buy good quality bicycles, try to learn French, and make as many friends as possible. There are a lot of hiking tracks and fun activities that can be done in a group. You can go for thermal baths, wildlife exploration, hiking, bowling, bar nights and so much more. Because it's already a very small town so you would direly need to socialize and connect with the people living there otherwise sometimes it gets really depressing.



Overall I would say that it was once in a lifetime experience, we studied at the largest solar furnace in the world and were taught by a highly qualified faculty. The air quality is tremendously good at the hill station, after four months I really felt a good improvement in my overall health, fitness, and mental performance.



I encourage all my future friends and juniors to apply for STARS specialization, you would learn a lot and it would be a lifetime experience. I would be available anytime for any kind of help or assistance. Don't forget to visit the breathtaking French Alps. I wholeheartedly thank all the faculty, staff, researchers, and other students for their unwavering and relentless support, love, and care. I shall always be truly indebted.

