

J-1 VISA CASE STUDY



Huong came to Florida from Vietnam in 2010 on a J-1 visa to be a part of an internship program in hospitality management. She graduated from college in 2009 with a bachelors degree in tourism management and business administration. In her last year at college, Huong attended a lecture about internship opportunities in the United States. At this lecture, she learned about the J-1 internship and trainee program in hospitality management. Because Huong's interests were in managing and operating an international tourism organization, this program sounded like a dream come true. She paid \$5,000 to a foreign recruiter to be placed in the

program with the expectation that successful completion would aid her future career in Vietnam.

Huong was happy to learn that she was accepted to the J-1 program and would be working in Florida at a major hotel and resort chain. She signed her training plan that outlined how she would learn about front desk operations, housekeeping, and back office operations. She paid another \$1,000 for airfare to the United States.

When Huong arrived in Florida, she was shuttled to a large apartment complex with dozens of other young interns and trainees. She was told that she would be living in a three-bedroom apartment with 5 other people and that each month she would have \$450 deducted from her paycheck. On her first day of work, Huong was placed in the housekeeping department. She expected to stay there a couple months. Unfortunately, she stayed in housekeeping the entire length of the program along with all the other participants. Instead of learning how to manage a large upscale hotel, she was learning how to make beds and clean toilets. Huong tried on many occasions to get out of housekeeping. She spoke to her supervisor at the hotel and with Human Resources. She contacted her J-1 sponsor and contacted the program in Vietnam but no one would help her. "If the program had stayed true to its original purpose, I have no doubt it would have benefited all of us. But I didn't have to come to the United States to learn how to make beds. I could have done that at home and not borrowed thousands of dollars from my family."