

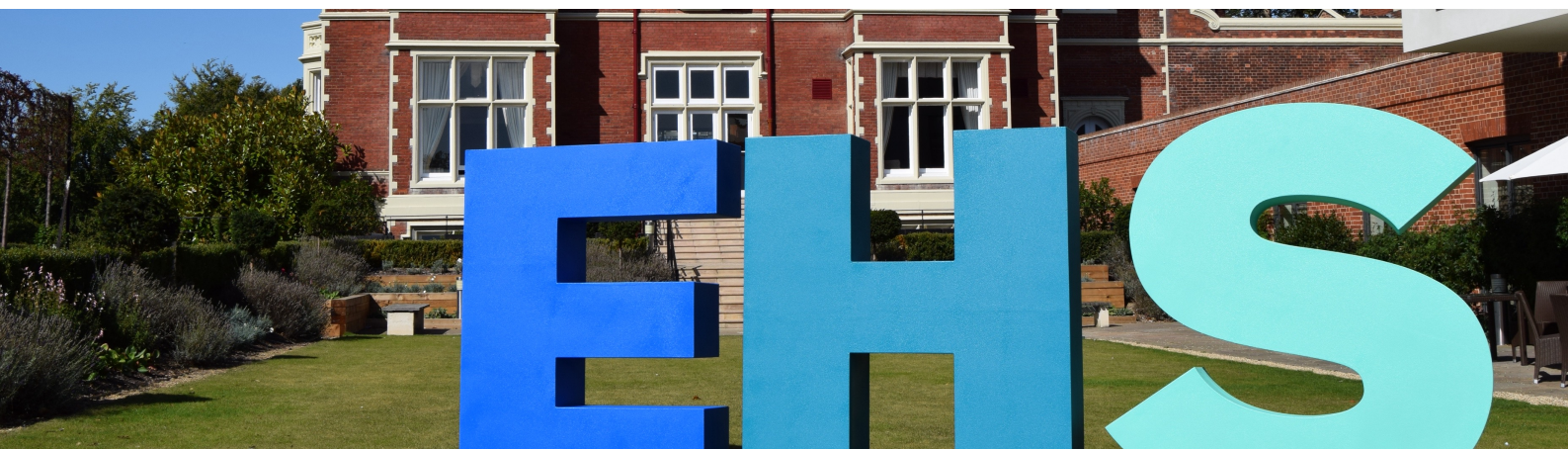
Interview with Edge Hotel School alumnus Vivien Schaper



We were delighted to catch up with 26 year old Vivien Schaper, who graduated from the Edge Hotel School back in 2016 with a BA in Hotel Management. Vivien is currently Front Office Supervisor at Heckfield Place, a five star luxury hotel in the beautiful Hampshire countryside.

It's been a while since your degree but looking back, what would you say were the main benefits of studying at EHS?

"The Edge Hotel School offers a degree course like no other in Britain. What particularly appealed to me, was how the theory is supported by the practical experience at the 4 star Wivenhoe House Hotel. During the accelerated two-year programme, you rotate around all the hotel's departments, taking on more responsibility as you progress through the degree levels. Looking back I gained a great deal of experience which I didn't necessarily appreciate at the time. Now I'm leading a team as a Front Office Supervisor, I find I'm much more responsive to situations because I experienced so much during my studies."



As well as the professionals at Wivenhoe House, home of the EHS, did you get any opportunities to meet other people in the industry? And how did that help you?

"EHS provides students with so many opportunities that really go above and beyond a traditional degree. Networking events, career fairs, guest lectures and involving the students in industry events are a huge part of the experience. I attended Master Innholder events and took part in a charity fundraising event held at the Edge Hotel School which raised over £18k!"

I was awarded a Savoy Educational Trust Scholarship and through that I met Danny Pecorelli, Managing Director of the Exclusive Collection. That enabled me to organise work placements during term breaks at Pennyhill Park, one of his beautiful 5-star hotels. Once I'd graduated, I joined the Exclusive Collection as Reservations Coordinator.

Would you say that studying at EHS has given you the skills you need for career success?

"Absolutely! Perseverance and resilience are vital to succeed in this industry. Working in hospitality can be incredibly rewarding in terms of job satisfaction, but it is almost more of a passion than a career choice.

The end goal for you and your team is to make your guests' stay as enjoyable as possible and ensure that the highest standards of customer service are met. That can be challenging and you need to be resilient to keep a smile on your face and make your guests happy.

You must be a team player, appreciating others and treating all your co-workers with respect, no matter what position they hold. And you really need to have great attention to detail!

Integrity is key, be humble and genuine with everyone including your guests as this allows you to build a great foundation to create unforgettable stays"

What's the best piece of advice you've received since starting out in the industry?

"Take the lessons from today, reflect and learn from them for a better outcome tomorrow'. After every working day, I reflect upon what went well and what I could improve both for myself and the team. This is particularly true during these difficult times where we have had to adapt and change processes at short notice to meet government regulation."

That's very topical! Covid-19 has greatly affected the hospitality industry. What would you say to a young person thinking about a career in hospitality now?

"Hospitality is a special career to pursue, do not let the last year persuade you to view it negatively when other industries were similarly affected. Hospitality is like a big family that sticks together and helps each other out. It is incredibly rewarding, dynamic and if you feel passionate about it and you give your all to it, there is nowhere you can't go. I cannot recommend working in the hospitality industry enough."

Well that's a ringing endorsement of the industry! Thinking about your own career, where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

"I would like to continue to rise through the ranks with the aim to one day be a General Manager of a Hotel, preferably 5-star. Following on by becoming Managing Director and after that – well we'll have to wait and see!"

We certainly will and we hope that you'll keep in touch with us here at Edge to tell us how you're getting on.



To find out more about studying at the Edge Hotel School visit:
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/edge-hotel-school>