

PROMOS Report – [REDACTED]

I stayed at the German Jordanian University in Jabal Amman from 01.10.2024 until 01.02.2025.

My motivation for this study abroad experience stemmed from three personal pursuits; two intellectual and one socio-cultural. Firstly, I have wanted to learn and practice the Arabic language for many years. It was amazing to have the opportunity to realise this dream, even in part, through not only a weekly class at the university but also private tuition through a language exchange partner I met in a Café. We remain friends and continue our exchange virtually. Secondly, the specialisation for me in psychosocial support afforded me a deeper understanding of my chosen career as well as a unique insight into perceptions of mental health and psychological concepts from across the world. Finally, in a more personal sense, I sought the opportunity to learn more about the middle east from the inside and to form my own perception of such a controversial region. Learning about the culture and different mindsets among the people I met there, as well as unlearning many biases I had developed through western misconceptions and media, is a treasured experience which I hope never to forget.

The preparation for this trip was lengthy and somewhat precarious due to the recent conflict in the countries neighbouring Jordan. On a more superficial level, and based on extensive research, I bought some clothing items in order to be more appropriately and respectfully dressed according to the culture and customs in Jordan. I also swapped clothes with some of my friends and was gifted a hijab, which I used on a few occasions in Amman. On a more significant note, I faced some setbacks and challenges in arriving to Jordan as my flight was cancelled three times before I was able to successfully fly from my home country to Amman. This was due to the regional conflicts affecting the airspace and this created a substantial amount of anxiety among our cohort – making the first bias to unlearn the assumption that regional conflicts makes every country within it dangerous. Nevertheless, I am so very pleased that I made it eventually.

The visa was very simple. Upon arrival, I paid 40JD for the initial visa. One month later, I went to the police station and paid 60JD for a two entry visa, valid for 3 months. Once the first person in the cohort figures out the process at the police station (which many landlords assist with), it is very simple. It does involve signing and fingerprinting but actually this is a good sign that Jordan is well protected.

I was very fortunate to stay in a lovely apartment in Jabal Amman, just 15 minutes walking from the university campus, which I found through a previous student. The cost was 225JD per person (we were two people) plus bills which were 10 – 20 JD per month. Jabal Amman is very tourist and foreigner friendly, as well as Jabal Al Weibdeh. These are the two areas where most students live. You can expect simple but spacious apartments, often with a balcony or rooftop to hang out on. The shower

can be hit or miss but otherwise everything functions normally. You should not drink the tap water though.

Financially, it was a similar cost to living in a western European city so I did struggle towards the end and had to ask a friend for assistance. The costs are very mixed. Food costs the same as or more than Germany, whereas alcohol costs significantly more. Taxis are much cheaper than Germany and more common, yet entrance to events and tourist places was much the same or more expensive. It was difficult to find work because of the language barrier, but I did help an English school for one day by filming a video and made 20JD! Jobs can be less formal than in Germany.

The study routine was mostly consistent with classes in the mornings (mostly), though there were more cancellations than I think were reasonable. However, there was ample time to study and the best part were the field visits to organisations around Jordan. For example, we visited one of the biggest refugee camps in the world, as well as an MSF hospital.

The teachers at the host institution were lovely and very approachable. One was not so well prepared but the others were excellent. It was always a supportive atmosphere and despite some poor organisation of information and deadlines, my opinion was valued. I also liked the teaching room because it felt modern and light, without distractions. There was no university library as such, but I often used the public library Al Shoman Foundation library. Otherwise, I spent time at home or in cafes around the city. If you live near Rainbow Street, my favourite is called Geisha.

Daily life is simple and understated in Amman as a student. One acquires a certain set of places to enjoy (cafes, bars, restaurants) and local people are very friendly and hospitable. Exploring Jordan every so often was also a highlight – especially Wadi Rum! There is not so much to do in the city for such a long city, but you do feel that you become part of life there, especially by joining social groups. I highly recommend The Idea Chamber which is a social hub/ NGO who encourage making friends and learning through daily social groups based on common interests.

The best part for me was the food and the friendly and funny local people, whereas the worst was feeling uncomfortable as a woman because many men do stare too much. I also loved learning and speaking basic Arabic, which I use in my job now.

My top tip is to learn some basic Arabic before you arrive to Amman! It will enrich your experience so much and allow you to connect with amazing local people and organisations on a deeper level – including the teachers. I also encourage you to forget any idea that the middle east is extreme and conservative – you will soon see a very different side to it where people are very easy going and open-minded. Try to avoid being in the foreigners bubble (unless you want that) by making Jordanian friends and exploring different parts of Amman and Jordan.